



EFL STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN GENRE-BASED WRITING TASKS

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Abstract : *This study aims to explore EFL students' intercultural awareness as manifested in genre-based writing tasks. Employing a qualitative research design, the study involved undergraduate EFL students from Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya. Data were collected through students' written texts, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to students' intercultural awareness across different writing genres. The findings reveal that students demonstrated varying levels of intercultural awareness, particularly in their ability to incorporate cultural perspectives, address audience expectations, and apply genre conventions appropriately. While some students showed awareness of cultural differences in written expression, others tended to rely on local cultural frameworks, resulting in limited intercultural representation. The study also found that genre-based writing tasks provided meaningful opportunities for students to reflect on cultural values and practices within academic writing contexts. These findings suggest that genre-based writing instruction can serve as an effective pedagogical space for fostering intercultural awareness among EFL students. The study offers pedagogical implications for EFL writing instruction in higher education, particularly in multicultural and international academic contexts.*

Keywords: Intercultural Awareness, Genre-Based Writing Tasks, EFL Students

Abstrak : *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi kesadaran antarbudaya mahasiswa EFL sebagaimana tercermin dalam tugas menulis berbasis genre. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan mahasiswa EFL tingkat sarjana di Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya. Data dikumpulkan melalui teks tulisan mahasiswa, observasi kelas, dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang berkaitan dengan kesadaran antarbudaya mahasiswa pada berbagai genre tulisan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menunjukkan tingkat kesadaran antarbudaya yang beragam, terutama dalam kemampuan mereka mengintegrasikan perspektif budaya, mempertimbangkan ekspektasi pembaca, dan menerapkan konvensi genre secara tepat. Meskipun sebagian mahasiswa menunjukkan kesadaran terhadap perbedaan budaya dalam ekspresi tertulis, sebagian lainnya cenderung bergantung pada kerangka budaya lokal sehingga menghasilkan representasi antarbudaya yang terbatas. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa tugas menulis berbasis genre memberikan peluang yang bermakna bagi mahasiswa untuk merefleksikan nilai-nilai dan praktik budaya dalam konteks penulisan akademik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran menulis berbasis genre dapat menjadi ruang pedagogis yang efektif untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran*

antarbudaya pada mahasiswa EFL. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi pedagogis bagi pembelajaran menulis EFL di pendidikan tinggi, khususnya dalam konteks akademik yang multikultural dan internasional.

Kata Kunci : Kesadaran Antar Budaya, Tugas Menulis Berbasis Genre, Mahasiswa EFL

Kunci

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural awareness has become a fundamental component in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in increasingly multicultural and globalized academic contexts. Intercultural awareness refers to learners' ability to recognize, understand, and respect cultural differences while engaging in communication across cultures. In EFL learning, this awareness enables students to move beyond linguistic accuracy and develop sensitivity toward diverse cultural perspectives embedded in language use (Hua & Le, 2024; Saharani, 2023). Previous studies indicate that EFL students' intercultural awareness influences how they interpret meanings, express ideas, and position themselves when interacting with texts and audiences from different cultural backgrounds (Erlangga & Anam, 2024). Without adequate intercultural awareness, students may rely heavily on local cultural assumptions, which can limit the effectiveness of communication in global academic settings. Furthermore, integrating intercultural awareness into EFL instruction helps students develop more inclusive and flexible communicative competence, which is essential for participating in international academic discourse (Fauzi et al., 2024). Therefore, intercultural awareness is no longer an optional component but a core dimension of EFL learning.

In higher education, the importance of intercultural awareness is increasingly emphasized as universities prepare students for global academic and professional environments. EFL students at the tertiary level are expected not only to master language skills but also to engage critically with cultural diversity in academic communication. Research shows that intercultural competence supports students' ability to communicate effectively with international audiences and adapt to culturally diverse academic expectations (Yusri & Andriyanti, 2024). In university contexts, intercultural awareness is particularly relevant because academic tasks often involve cross-cultural texts, perspectives, and audiences. Moreover, higher education institutions play a strategic role in fostering students' intercultural sensitivity through curriculum design and instructional practices (Noviyanti, 2024). When intercultural awareness is systematically integrated into EFL instruction, students become more reflective, open-minded, and culturally responsive in their learning processes. Studies also suggest that classroom practices that expose students to multicultural content and perspectives can significantly enhance their intercultural understanding (Bakay, 2023; Chen, 2024; Hidayah & Ali, 2024). As a result, developing intercultural awareness in EFL classrooms is essential for preparing students to function effectively in global academic communities.

One instructional approach that has gained attention in EFL writing pedagogy is genre-based writing. Genre-based writing emphasizes the relationship between language, social context, and communicative purpose, enabling students to understand how texts are structured to meet specific audience expectations. This approach helps EFL students recognize that writing is not merely a linguistic activity but also a socially and culturally situated practice (Liu, Ismail, & Ahmad, 2024). Through genre-based instruction, students learn to analyze models of texts, identify genre conventions, and apply these conventions in

their own writing. This aligns with Novitaningrum, Imaniar & Aulia (2024), who found that collaborative engagement with texts encourages students to construct meaning more actively and express their ideas creatively through language. Additionally, genre-based writing provides opportunities for students to engage with cultural values and norms embedded in different text types (Istiqamah, 2024). By working with various genres, EFL students can develop greater awareness of how cultural meanings are constructed and conveyed in academic writing. Therefore, genre-based writing tasks offer a pedagogical space where linguistic development and intercultural awareness can be fostered simultaneously.

Previous studies have extensively examined intercultural awareness and writing instruction in EFL contexts, although limited research explicitly connects intercultural awareness with genre-based writing tasks. Several studies have focused on EFL students' intercultural awareness in multicultural classrooms, highlighting variations in students' cultural sensitivity and communicative competence (Saharani, 2023; Erlangga & Anam, 2024). Other research emphasizes the integration of cultural aspects into EFL curricula as a means of fostering intercultural competence and effective communication (Fauzi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies on genre-based writing have demonstrated its effectiveness in improving students' understanding of text structure, purpose, and audience in EFL writing classrooms (Liu et al., 2024; Istiqamah, 2024). However, most of these studies tend to focus either on intercultural awareness or genre-based writing separately. There remains a lack of qualitative research that explores how intercultural awareness is manifested in students' genre-based writing tasks. This gap suggests the need for further investigation into how EFL students negotiate cultural meanings within genre-based writing practices.

Given the limited research connecting intercultural awareness and genre-based writing in EFL higher education contexts, this study seeks to explore EFL students' intercultural awareness as reflected in their genre-based writing tasks. By employing a qualitative research design, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how students incorporate cultural perspectives, address audience expectations, and apply genre conventions in their writing. Investigating students' written texts, classroom practices, and perceptions allows for a more comprehensive analysis of intercultural awareness in academic writing contexts. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to EFL writing pedagogy by highlighting the potential of genre-based writing tasks as a means of fostering intercultural awareness. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for EFL instructors and curriculum designers in higher education, particularly in multicultural and international academic settings. Ultimately, this research seeks to strengthen the integration of intercultural dimensions into EFL writing instruction and support students' development as culturally aware academic writers.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore EFL students' intercultural awareness as manifested in genre-based writing tasks. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth examination of participants' experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes within their natural learning contexts. As proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), descriptive qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena as they occur in real-life settings, allowing researchers to capture participants' lived experiences in a rich and holistic manner. In the context of this study, a qualitative approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of how

intercultural awareness is reflected in students' written texts, classroom interactions, and reflections during genre-based writing instruction.

The participants of this study consisted of undergraduate EFL students enrolled in a writing course at a university where English is taught as a foreign language. The students were selected using purposive sampling, as they had prior experience completing genre-based writing tasks as part of their academic coursework. This sampling technique ensured that the participants were information-rich and relevant to the research focus. The study was conducted in a higher education setting, where genre-based writing instruction was implemented to support students' academic writing development and cultural awareness. All participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study and provided informed consent prior to data collection.

Data were collected through multiple qualitative instruments to ensure data triangulation. The primary data sources included students' written texts produced through genre-based writing tasks, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The analysis of students' written texts focused on identifying cultural perspectives, audience awareness, and the application of genre conventions. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how genre-based instruction facilitated students' engagement with cultural content during the writing process. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions of intercultural awareness and their experiences in completing genre-based writing tasks. These varied data sources enabled a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure as suggested by Ary et al. (2010). First, all qualitative data were transcribed and repeatedly read to achieve familiarity and immersion. Next, the data were coded to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes related to students' intercultural awareness, cultural representation, and genre use in writing. The identified themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and relevance to the research questions. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation across written texts, observations, and interviews was applied. Member checking was also conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and to strengthen the credibility of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings and discussions derived from the study, and it elaborated based on the problem of this research.

1. Result

The findings revealed that EFL students demonstrated varying levels of intercultural awareness in completing genre-based writing tasks. Some students were able to incorporate cultural perspectives beyond their local context by acknowledging differences in values, practices, and viewpoints when addressing particular topics. These students showed awareness of audience expectations and attempted to adjust their language use and content to suit broader or international readers. However, many students still relied heavily on local cultural frameworks, which resulted in limited intercultural representation in their written texts. This reliance often led to generalized explanations and culturally specific references that were not sufficiently contextualized for readers from different cultural backgrounds. The

findings indicate that while students possessed basic cultural knowledge, their ability to critically engage with intercultural perspectives in writing remained uneven.

The results also showed that students' intercultural awareness was closely related to their understanding and application of genre conventions. Students who demonstrated stronger control of genre features such as purpose, structure, and audience were more successful in integrating intercultural elements into their writing. In contrast, students who struggled with genre awareness tended to focus primarily on content delivery without considering how cultural meanings are shaped by genre expectations. In several cases, students produced texts that followed surface-level genre structures but lacked deeper engagement with cultural perspectives. This suggests that genre-based writing tasks can facilitate intercultural awareness only when students clearly understand the social and communicative purposes of different genres. Without such understanding, intercultural content remained superficial or implicit.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that students' reflections and classroom interactions played a significant role in shaping their intercultural awareness. Through genre-based writing activities, some students became more conscious of cultural differences and began to question their own assumptions during the writing process. Classroom discussions and guided tasks encouraged students to compare cultural practices and reflect on how these differences could be represented in written texts. Nevertheless, other students showed limited reflection and tended to reproduce familiar cultural narratives without critical evaluation. These varied responses suggest that students' intercultural awareness develops gradually and requires sustained instructional support. Overall, the results highlight that genre-based writing tasks provide meaningful opportunities for fostering intercultural awareness, but their effectiveness depends on students' genre knowledge, reflective engagement, and exposure to diverse cultural perspectives.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that EFL students demonstrated varying levels of intercultural awareness when engaged in genre-based writing tasks. While some students were able to integrate cultural perspectives and adjust their writing to suit different audiences, many relied predominantly on local cultural frameworks. This tendency resulted in limited intercultural representation and reduced sensitivity to diverse cultural viewpoints. These findings align with previous studies suggesting that intercultural awareness in EFL contexts develops gradually and requires explicit pedagogical support (Saharani, 2023; Erlangga & Anam, 2024). The results further confirm that intercultural awareness in writing extends beyond linguistic competence and involves higher-order cognitive processes such as reflection, comparison, and cultural interpretation. In this regard, students' limited use of intercultural perspectives suggests challenges not only in language use but also in cognitive engagement during the writing process. Similar observations were reported by Novitaningrum (2023), who found that EFL students often struggle to apply cognitive strategies such as planning and revising, which may hinder deeper cultural reflection in writing tasks.

The discussion also highlights the significant role of genre-based writing in shaping students' intercultural awareness. Students who demonstrated a clearer understanding of genre conventions such as communicative purpose, audience awareness, and textual organization were more successful in incorporating intercultural elements into their writing. This supports previous research indicating that genre-based approaches help students

understand writing as a socially and culturally situated practice rather than a purely linguistic activity (Liu, Ismail, & Ahmad, 2024; Istiqamah, 2024). Genre-based writing tasks encouraged students to consider how cultural meanings are constructed differently across genres, thereby promoting greater cultural sensitivity. However, when students lacked genre awareness, their writing tended to remain descriptive and culturally narrow. This finding suggests that explicit instruction in genre conventions is essential to maximize the intercultural potential of genre-based writing activities.

Furthermore, students' engagement in reflective and interactive learning processes emerged as a key factor influencing their intercultural awareness. Classroom discussions and guided writing activities provided opportunities for students to articulate, negotiate, and reassess their cultural assumptions. This finding resonates with learner-centered instructional approaches that emphasize interaction and reflection as essential components of effective writing instruction (Novitaningrum & Agustin, 2024). The Think-Talk-Write (TTW) strategy, for instance, has been shown to support students' cognitive engagement and idea development, which are crucial for expressing intercultural perspectives in writing. Through structured interaction and reflection, students are better able to process cultural differences and represent them meaningfully in written texts. Thus, genre-based writing tasks that incorporate interactive strategies can facilitate deeper intercultural understanding.

Overall, the findings suggest that fostering intercultural awareness in EFL writing requires an integration of genre-based instruction, cognitive strategy development, and reflective learning practices. These results support previous studies that emphasize the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in EFL classrooms (Byram, 2021; Fauzi et al., 2024). Intercultural awareness does not automatically emerge through writing practice alone; rather, it must be intentionally cultivated through instructional design that encourages students to engage with diverse cultural perspectives. Therefore, EFL instructors should design genre-based writing tasks that explicitly address cultural dimensions and promote critical reflection. By doing so, students can develop not only their writing competence but also their ability to participate effectively in multicultural academic discourse.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reveals that EFL students demonstrate varying levels of intercultural awareness in genre-based writing tasks, particularly in their ability to integrate cultural perspectives, address audience expectations, and apply genre conventions. While some students show awareness of cultural differences and attempt to represent them in their writing, others rely predominantly on local cultural frameworks, resulting in limited intercultural expression. The findings highlight that genre-based writing tasks can serve as an effective pedagogical space for fostering intercultural awareness when accompanied by explicit guidance and reflective activities. Therefore, integrating intercultural dimensions into genre-based writing instruction is essential to support students' development as culturally responsive academic writers in EFL higher education contexts. Future studies are encouraged to investigate a wider range of genres and instructional contexts to further enrich understanding of intercultural awareness development in EFL writing.

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