



# **Raising Indonesian EFL Learners' Intercultural Awareness through Asian Folktales-Mediated Tasks**

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## **Abstract**

Evolving learners' intercultural awareness (ICA) has been one of the goals for 21st century learning competencies. Nevertheless, ICA has not been commonly developed through Asian folktales. To fill this void, the present action research aims to showcase a practical insight into the teaching by the adoption of folktales to raise Indonesian EFL learners' intercultural awareness. Eleven students joined an EFL learning center in Pekalongan, Indonesia were recruited to participate. Data were garnered through classroom observation and semi-structured interview. The data were analyzed employing a thematic analysis. Framed in Yuanhua and Ying's (2015) intercultural awareness fundamentals, study findings demonstrate that the students viewed cultural aspects from what they experienced, embedded cultural resources, such as symbols, languages, norms, values, and rituals in learning process, promoted self-regulated learning in intercultural communication, engaged in interpreting and comparing cultural contents among Asian folktales, and communicated cultural resources in their daily lives. This study concludes with some empirical and practical implications for how folktales are incorporated into teaching to foster EFL learners' intercultural awareness.

**Keywords:** *Intercultural awareness, Intercultural competence, EFL learners, Asian folktales*

## INTRODUCTION

The assimilation of culture into the second language curriculum has advanced rapidly in recent years. The education systems in several Asian countries have extended to resolve themselves toward 21st century learning. More Asian societies are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan in this century (Lee et al., 2014). One of the aspects which has been indicated among these education goals for 21st century learning competencies is evolving learners' global and intercultural awareness (Sofi, 2022). Education for international understanding, as promoting loyalties beyond the nation becomes the essence of 21st century to raise the concept of citizenship for international perspective for some section of society (Häkkinen et al., 2017; Hill, 2012). This international understanding is required to foster an ethos of curiosity, solidarity and shared responsibility through education programs, such as intercultural education (Häkkinen et al., 2017; Perry & Southwell, 2011).

Intercultural awareness (ICA) is a conscious understanding of the role that cultural forms, behaviors, and mechanisms of understanding may play in intercultural communication (Byram, 2012; Byram et al., 2002) and an ability to apply these conceptions in real-time communication in a responsive and context-specific way (Baker, 2011). Culturally appropriate or attentive instruction, intercultural fluency in the classroom, multicultural education, social justice education, critical pedagogy, and transcultural education are some of the academic lenses that have been used to investigate the effect of culture on teaching and learning in classrooms (Dasli & Simpson, 2023). Magos (2018) conducted research about students' diversity beliefs and their intercultural competences and the result showed that students who had not been learned in a culturally diverse setting needed less commitment to reconcile multiple viewpoints than students who had been taught in a culturally diverse context. Building determination also entails feeling confident while facing cultural differences. They were more confident in intercultural interactions because they had had those encounters in a variety of environments (Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2019).

In correlation with intercultural awareness, Byram et al. (2002) argue that it is not necessary to travel overseas to teach intercultural expertise since ICA is more concerned with developing skills and not the transmission of factual information. Instead of going abroad, teachers can use folktales as a media to transmit intercultural awareness. Folktales have significant intercultural scope and can promote the historical background information to be discussed as well as transmit values and morals on which their views would be formed (Mantra & Kumara, 2018). Not only are folktales historically related and represented a country's cultural identity, but it is also accurate that there are no limitations to their symbolism

(Mphasha, 2015). In certain circumstances, it was possible to explore folktales in order to teach young learners about a range of traditions and cultures (Vieluf & Göbel, 2019).

Folktales are both linguistic and cultural materials, and therefore can be useful for helping learners to explore both the language and the culture at the same time. However, the value of folktales from different cultures (which have been adapted from the oral form into written English) as ELT materials seems to have been under-utilized in the context of teaching English as a second language/teaching English as a foreign language (Lwin & Marlina, 2018). Lwin (2016) carried out a study of defining a comparative examination of folktales from the community of learners and those from other Asian cultures. The results indicated that learners could gain not only a critical understanding of their own society, but also a knowledge of Asian societies' rich cultural diversity.

Intercultural awareness has not been commonly developed in an EFL classroom (Ribeiro, 2016). Moreover, interculturality and intercultural society, as well as the creation of intercultural competence through non-formal education, are underappreciated and underutilized terms (Civelek & Toplu, 2021; Steele & Leming, 2022). Therefore, this study attempts to make certain contributions to the related practical understanding into the teaching. This provides empirical and practical insights into teaching based on socio-cultural aspects as well as making students aware of how important intercultural understanding for their real lives is. The following research questions guide the whole part of this study:

1. In what ways do Asian folktales-mediated tasks promote EFL students' intercultural awareness?
2. What are the students' responses to the intercultural tasks in which they are engaged?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Intercultural Awareness Fundamentals**

Intercultural competence was initially adopted in the field of language pedagogy to enhance the idea of communicative language teaching (CLT), in which communicative competence (CC) is framed beyond native speakerism due to the importance of English as a global lingua franca (ELF) (Baker, 2011; Dunworth et al., 2021). In other words, CC, which is based on the ELF view, emphasizes non-natives speakers' sociocultural experience as it leads to a better comprehension of multilingual experiences (Rutgers et al., 2021).

The impact of such activity can be assessed not only in terms of active information sharing, as in most communicative language instruction, but also in terms of the growth and maintenance of human relationships (Byram et al., 2002). Without the influence of teachers or

educational institutions, understanding, behaviors, reading and relating skills, and discovery and conversation skills may all be learned by experience and reflection. If students are learned with the assistance of a teacher, the teacher has the possibility of integrating the learning experience into a larger instructional concept (Lavrenteva & Orland-Barak, 2022).

Byram proposes the five major components of ICC factors involved and their interactions based on these conceptual perspectives. The first major is knowledge. It contains cultural norms, traditions, and society symbols. The second is attitudes, including curious and flexible attitudes, values, and behaviors (Byram, 2012). The third is skills of interpreting and relating which recognize relationships between documents from different countries. The fourth is skills of discovery and interaction. This skill explores and negotiates cultural beings (people), perspectives/culture, and skills into authentic communication and interaction. The last major is critical cultural awareness/political education, which contains cultural perspectives and traditions (Byram et al., 2002).

To support Byram's theory, definite teaching approaches are used to enhance learners' enthusiasm and effectiveness in obtaining cultural knowledge. As a result, intercultural awareness fundamentals in English teaching is proposed in order to develop the intercultural awareness of English learners (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015). The first element is practicality fundamental. Students outperform in acquiring cultural general assembly comprehension than in the other two areas, literary works, geography, legacy, and spiritual beliefs and values. This indicates that students will eventually be able to comprehend cultural awareness that is directly related to their daily lives (Li et al., 2023).

The next fundamental is step-by-step fundamental. Teachers must completely understand their students' level of knowledge and language skills before or during the teaching process. Yuan et al. (2020) states that "step-by-step" teaching methods perform more effectively in the classroom. Since the teaching process is more efficient, the interaction between the teacher and the students becomes more emotionally open and positive. It also has the added benefit of resulting in fewer errors at each step.

The third element is appropriateness fundamental. Language teaching should integrate language skills and cultural teaching in accordance with the needs of the teaching content and the language skills of the students. It is crucial to prevent two aspects in the teaching process: teaching genuine language ability without implementing culture and teaching excessively cultural understanding while ignoring basic language ability (Lavrenteva & Orland-Barak, 2022). Language and culture are strongly linked and cannot be isolated because language is a culture within itself. Teaching culture is closely linked to teaching languages. Culture learning

enables students to broaden their understanding of people's lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and values (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015).

The last is student-centered fundamental. Students who learn with a student-centered strategy do not accept the teacher's knowledge passively. They are required to take full initiative in developing their cultural awareness, with the teacher serving as a facilitator rather than a master of the class. Darsih (2018) added that teachers also play an essential part in developing and fostering student learning, enables multiple learning styles, and encourages students to take self-directed learning.

### **Intercultural Awareness Strategies in Language Teaching**

The first strategy for promoting intercultural awareness is mergence and interpretation. This approach can assist students in deeper understanding cultural awareness, attempting to make learning more productive and effective. The combining approach involved incorporating cultural and linguistic subject matter. Baker (2022) proposed this approach can raise students' awareness of thinking, because they saw improvement as an outcome of using the supportive materials and achieving with other students to talk about it. It emphasizes the importance of providing support based on a growth concept, rather than telling students how to act (Byram, 2012).

The second is comparison and role-play. The teacher must assist and guide students in creating comparisons, so they explore both similarities and differences. Comparing two cultures in the classroom provides students develop a better understanding of the differences between them (Byram, 2012). When arranging class activities, the teacher can ask students to "act out" various social and cultural situations relying on the learning resources. This activity may stimulate students' interest, establishing through them a great work ethic (Bale & Pazio Rossiter, 2023). They may try to use the proper language and involve all cultural aspects. Role play helps students develop their potential to communicate with and understand each other, as well as their speaking skills in the target language (Martin et al., 2019). Thus, surroundings encourage students to pay more attention while learning and encourages them to use role-playing techniques.

The third is assisted teaching method. Seeing as students prefer to learn cultural understanding through reading literature, the teacher can bring students to some literature or demonstrate the different cultures that is essential to learn. Intercultural awareness and competence can be developed in students during the reading process (Byram et al., 2013). Reading literature, in assisting potential students understand the language they have learned, is

an appropriate approach to learning regarding background diversity such as geography, background, attitudes, cultures, and norms (Eide et al., 2022). Literature has previously been found to be an excellent method for teaching about people's ways of life. Literature can be explored in order to gain a better understanding of diversity, and culture can be studied in order to obtain a good comprehension of literature (Moecharam & Sari, 2014).

### **Folktales as Cultural Resources**

Folktales transmit cultural traditions from one generation to the next, increasing people's understanding of their common historical information structures and putting them in a stronger position to engage in decision-making and negotiations on matters that affect them (Virtue, 2007). It is embedded in the trend to make folklore studies more empirical, and it has influenced the way humanities scholars discern trends of cultural transmission in massive folklore collections (Kim et al., 2018). Folktales are stories that convey messages that are both understood and important to the intended audience. Even though certain folktales are amusing, they contain moral teachings. People's attention is drawn to their external surroundings because of the set of ideals. People have the ability to initiate communication with their environment, as well as with the people in their environment (Mphasha, 2015).

Folktales lead to cultural evolution and the unique interpretation of the folktales in an unusual world makes it possible for people to redefine their personal and social identities (Anggraini et al., 2022). They indicate how traditions are imbedded in everyday cultural practices of the present. Folktales tend to be one of the most effective of the many kinds of cultural art forms in culture that help to establish ideals in the community (Creese et al., 2009). Overall, it is considered that folktales, regardless of their origins, are an accurate representation of parts of the life, society, and background of the community in which they originate (Thi & Nhung, 2016).

Malderez (2010) addresses folktale's four primary roles. The first role of folk tales is to provide entertainment or entertainment. The second is the role it plays in cultural validation. The third role of folklore is discovered in the role that it plays in teaching, and the fourth role is revealed in the role that it plays in keeping cultural integrity. Folktales help individuals learn about their culture, which influences their way of thinking, values, behavior, and attitudes, and also their everyday routines (Mantra & Kumara, 2018). Folktales assist learners in distinguishing between moral ideals, personalities, and rude phrases. Furthermore, folktales assist learners improve critical reading abilities, fluency, vocabularies, and interpretation of special incidents to a large extent (Macfarlane, 2020).

## METHOD

To address the two aforementioned research questions, the present study employed action research, that highlights “changing people’s practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which their practices are carried out” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 51). In this regard, Asian folktales adapted in this study was an endeavor to elevate EFL learners’ intercultural awareness. This action research study was overtaken in an EFL learning center situated in Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia consisting of eleven EFL learners. They were students derived from different schools who took EFL courses. The students aged 11-12 volunteered to engage in this research. They were young EFL learners who had joined a seven-to-ten-month English course.

When conducting the action research, four stages of instructional procedures were organized, i.e., warm-up activity, while-reading activity, post-reading activity, and role play. In the warm-up activity, the first researcher started this activity by assisting students in recognizing China on a globe map since Yeh Shen’s setting is in China. This activity indicates that highlighting some key geographic characteristics made the learners pay specific attention to the folktales which were being discussed. A video was also employed by the researcher to bring these characteristics to reality. During while-reading activity, the learners were drawn to “Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella story from China” and “Bawang Merah Bawang Putih” folktales. In the first section, the researcher enabled students to explore their responses to the questions that were provided, and then they organized the unknown vocabulary which was found in folktales.

Meanwhile in the post-reading activity, the researcher arranged a folktale-related speaking activity. As the learners were young, a simple task of recognizing and analyzing feelings, such as sadness or loneliness or beliefs or optimistic behaviors, such as respect, empathy or solidarity was implied. There were comparisons between what the characters felt at the beginning of the plot and what they perceived afterwards, the language differences, the symbols, and the assumption of similarities’ in “Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella story from China” and “Bawang Merah Bawang Putih”.

The learners could improve their critical thought and optimistic attitudes toward others by contrasting them to existing circumstances. For example, they should consider what would happen when the story ended. Written exercises were also suggested. In the role play, the researcher challenged students to do some story-related role playing. Strong and optimistic values, such as respect, tolerance, openness and understanding towards others, were required to develop their character in this practice.

Data were garnered through classroom observation and semi-structured interview. Classroom observation was carried out to inspect how the EFL learners engaged in Asian folktales-mediated tasks to raise their intercultural awareness. Further, the researchers used Indonesian language for the interview considering the use of first language in interviews can avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the questions and offer fair opportunities for students to provide opinions (Churchill, 2020). The interview results were then transcribed by the researcher and translated into English.

The data were analyzed employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns and find themes through data which have been collected. Widodo (2014) proposes five steps that the researchers needed to consider. These include listening continuously to a recording, transcribing the data, interpreting the data using each term and participants' sequences, conversing whether the data corresponds to the intent of the participants, and creating data integrity by asking participants regarding feedback on data interpretation.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Step-by-Step Fundamental: Viewing Cultural Aspects from what I Experience**

The first emerging theme in this study is step-by-step fundamentals. It recognizes the ability of giving consideration to the progressive stimulation of cultural aspects by providing the simple to the hard and complex in a systematic and step-by-step manner in teaching (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015).

Informed by the results of classroom observation, considering Yeh Shen's setting is in China, the researchers began folktales-mediated tasks by aiding students in recognizing China on a world map (Figure 1). The researchers engaged them by asking some questions such as “Do you know China?”, “Which Asia is China?”, and “Where in the world is China?”

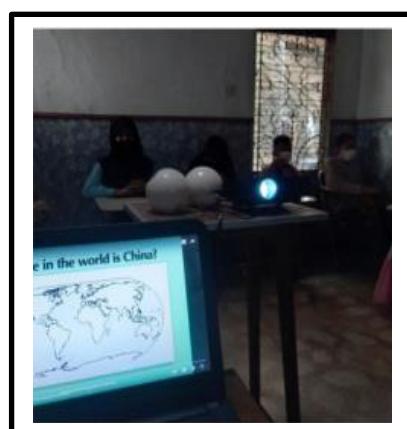


Figure 1. Recognizing China on a World Map

In addition, the students were also asked to highlight geographic characteristics in China as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Highlighting Geographical Characteristics

Figure 2 illustrates how the students were drawn into some of China main geographic features. Figure 1 and Figure 2 portray that the EFL learners paid their attention to some relevant information to the Asian folktales, including geographical characteristic of China. This demonstrates that not only did the researchers anticipate the topic, but also enhanced the enthusiasm of the students and involves them in the topic by doing warm-up exercises (Mphasha, 2015).

The students also recounted their responses while engaging in this activity, as shown in the interview data. It is evident from the following vignettes:

Student Vignette 1

*“We are asked to point some of its key geographic characteristics and given an overview of the situation of China at the start of the class, (ask question)” (Student 1, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

Student Vignette 2

*“We don’t immediately analyze after reading; earlier, we were asked about China location on a world map (ask question)” (Student 2, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

The phrase “we are asked to highlight” and “we were asked about” indicate the teacher addresses basic questions about subject matter or insights at the start of class, which can attract students’ attention and emphasize their influences to gaining knowledge over the instructor’s. These findings confirm Thorne (2003) stating that restoring to a certain question throughout the class can help providing perspective and consistency. It is regarded as a simple task (Özdemir, 2017).

Step-by-step fundamental provides teachers to give learners with essential information to perform better what activity before engaging on a challenging task. Students are instructed to begin with easy tasks (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015). Step-by-step teaching approaches are more effective in the classroom. The relationship between the instructor and the learners becomes more emotionally open and happy as the teaching process gets more efficient (Yuan et al., 2020). It also has the added benefit of reducing mistakes at each stage. Then, step-by-step instruction greatly assists teachers in generating the study because students find it easier to follow the learning flow and absorb the content of the lesson.

### Appropriateness Fundamental: Embedding Cultural Resources in Instruction

The second discovered theme is appropriateness fundamental. This theme is about learning language which should include cultural components in its instruction (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015). Informed by the observation results, the researchers utilized the appropriateness requirement in this study.

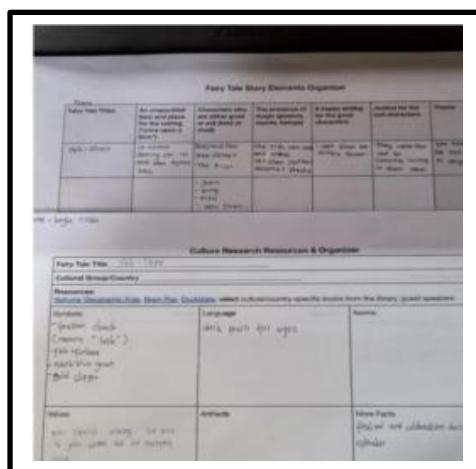


Figure 3. Students' Folktale and Culture Research Organizer

Figure 3 depicts that students are not simply instructed to read during while-reading activity. They are encouraged to seek out and understand cultural components. Students use culture research and folktales story elements organizer to find cultural elements. Drawn in Figure 3, learners can identify cultural aspects based on their categories. These results are in line with Talbert et al. (2019) demonstrating that learners comprehend the concept of culture in folktales. Culture elements include symbol, language, norms and value and ritual (Talbert et al., 2019).

Throughout this folktales-mediated task, students shared their perspectives while reading folktales. This can be proven by students' interview data:

Student Vignette 3

*“We did not only read the tale, but we also organized the cultural components into a cultural organizer (cultural elements)” (Student 1, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

Student Vignette 4

*“We are instructed to look for cultural aspects in the narrative as we read it (cultural elements)” (Student 3, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 16, 2021).*

The findings agree with Tolosa et al. (2018) pointing out that EFL teachers should use culture as a conceptual resource for meaning-making, and that culture education should be regarded as interlanguage and multicultural inquisitive conversations with learners. The importance of better collaboration among EFL teachers from various sociocultural origins is emphasized. Culture is an essential part of language learning and teaching language. Culture classroom should be a planned, interesting method in which the implicit is revealed. Teaching culture is presently seen as an aspect of values education focused on critical thinking and the development of tolerance for diversity (Rutgers et al., 2021). The objective of culture education in EFL should be to develop intercultural communication skills.

Language teaching, on the other hand, must combine language skills and culture education based on the demands of the teaching topic and the students' language skills (Yuan et al., 2020). Lavrenteva and Orland-Barak (2022) assert that teaching culture is inextricably linked to language teaching. Students can extend their awareness of society's habits, attitudes, beliefs, and values through cultural learning (Byram, 2012; Byram et al., 2002).

### **Student-centered Fundamental: Fostering Self-Regulation in Learning**

The third emerging theme found in this study is student-centered fundamentals. Students are encouraged to pursue self-directed learning in student-centered instruction (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015). In this case, one student described the activities that she engaged in while learning as follows:

Student Vignette 5

*“We discussed the cultural components and their meaning and presented our findings in front of the class (Think-Pair-Share) (Student 3, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 16, 2021).*

The interview data portrays that the students engaged in self-regulation in learning through discussing and presenting. This also accords with Mundelsee and Jurkowski (2021)

reporting that think-pair-share activities in the classroom involve active learning techniques. Learners through student-centered techniques do not passively acquire teacher information. They need to make the effort to increase their cultural understanding, whereas the teacher simply leads and facilitates.



Figure 4. Discussing Cultural Elements

Figure 4 reveals that the students were divided into two discussing groups. This illustrates how students are led to discuss and exchange opinions about the culture they identified using the components organizer.



Figure 5. Reporting the Discussion

Figure 5 showcases how the students present the results of the discussion. In this think-pair-share approach, the teacher is essential in fostering and promoting student learning, allowing for a range of learning styles, and encouraging students to engage in independent study (Darsih, 2018). The think-pair-share promotes learners' critical thinking. Using this technique in the classroom can give opportunity for learners to improve their critical thinking abilities. Teachers should keep creating curriculum that integrate active teaching techniques like think-pair-share in order to improve students' critical thinking (Kaddoura, 2013).

Mundelsee and Jurkowski (2021) also recommend that think-pair-share significantly improves learners' speaking competence and engagement in learning because of discussing, producing, and thinking in a group rather than separately. It can also create more exciting classes and better educated learners.

Students-centered learning has a positive overall influence on learners' cognitive participation so the impact of student-centered learning on involvement is larger than those of teacher-centered teaching methods (Talbert et al., 2019). Student-centered is also proven to contribute to improving language learning when compared to teacher centered. This improvement might be attributed to students' active engagement in absorbing cultural competence in an EFL classroom. Individuals who take control of their learning are more concentrated and motivated (Kassem, 2018). As a result, they become more productive learners. Improvements can also be attributed to developmental factors, which may result in learners performing more passionate efforts in their learning. Focused and motivated students learn cultural competencies more effectively, and their attitudes in class optimize.

### **Comparing and Interpreting: Using More Balanced Eyes**

This action research also promotes comparing and interpreting as the next theme. Teachers should assist and guide students in making comparisons (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018) and analyses in arranging them to investigate both similarities and differences (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015). In this circumstance, students explore their experiences on how they engage in interpreting and comparing two folktales (Byram, 2012). This is evidenced in the following interview excerpts:

#### Student Vignette 6

*“We discuss with friends and operate internet research to get the right ideas and sources (Think-Pair-Share)” (Student 1, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

#### Student Vignette 7

*“We talk with our classmates, combine the results of identification so that we can compare two folktales, and exchange ideas (Think-Pair-Share)” (Student 2, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

#### Student Vignette 8

*“Internet research can be very helpful in determining the meaning of symbols found in folktales (Internet research)” (Student 4, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 16, 2021).*

Portrayed in the interview data, the students engaged in the analysis and comparison by discussing, exchanging ideas and looking for and saving images from the Internet that are

relevant to both “Yeh-Shen” and “Bawang Merah Bawang Putih”. Student 2 found that internet research helped them analyze and interpret Asian folktales. These results corroborate the findings of Kim et al. (2018) suggesting that distributing and facilitating in the Internet search, as well as using the internet research in class, lead learners to the understanding of the symbols they discovered.

Informed in Figure 3, the students developed discoveries about cultural elements, which are discussed and exchanged ideas. As a result of their presentation, several cultural elements, such as symbols, language, values, and rituals, can be found in “Yeh-Shen”.



Figure 6. Comparing and Interpreting

Based on the classroom observation, Figure 5 and Figure 6 capture how the students demonstrated their interpretation and comparison between “Yeh-Shen” and “Bawang Merah Bawang Putih”. From their perspectives based on their research and analysis, the symbols contain feather cloak and fish which mean “luck” and azure blue gown which mean Chinese traditional attire. Afterwards, they compare to *Bawang Putih*’s attire which is *kebaya* (Javanese traditional clothes for females), one of Indonesian traditional attire. Fish and feather cloak is also a cultural symbol of good luck and prosperity and can bring happiness, marriage, and family (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015).

The language they encountered was *tiny feet and shoes*. Yeh-Shen was said to have very small feet to wear golden slippers. Feet have a special symbolic meaning in ancient Chinese culture (Luk, 2012). Men preferred small feet because they were exotic, beautiful, and feminine. Foot binding was thought to have started in the late Tang Dynasty and lasted nearly a thousand years in China (Fitzgerald, 2013). Meanwhile, the students compare with *Bawang Putih* (The Garlic) who is skinny, slim, white, also with long black straight hair. The illustration for the *Bawang Putih* meets the Indonesian beauty standards confirmed (Özdemir, 2017). The findings reveal that students are able to compare the cultures that exist in the two folktales, which costumes and attires are included in the symbol (Lwin & Marlina, 2018). Besides, the

students know how to recognize appropriate sources, make comparisons other people's results and findings, and evaluate the findings by gathering evidence from resources (Fertig, 2005).

### **Practicality Fundamental: Communicating Cultural Resources in Daily Lives**

The last theme highlighted in this study is practicality fundamental. Students are directed to correlate learning with their daily lives through language learning which is integrated with culture (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015). This is demonstrated by the interview data:

#### Student Vignette 9

*“In role play, we are supposed to develop stories and portray characters such as Cinderella that are relevant to our daily life (correlating to their daily lives)” (Student 2, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

#### Student Vignette 10

*“We created a tale by putting ourselves as Cinderella nowadays in a role play (correlating to their daily lives)” (Student 3, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 16, 2021).*

#### Student Vignette 11

*“We change the storyline such that Cinderella is more courageous, and the stepmother and stepsisters are more sympathetic of our situation (attitude)” (Student 4, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 16, 2021).*

The interview data depicts that the EFL students correlated the story to their lives by roleplaying while Student 3's response explains how they correlated it by modifying the plot thread in a respectful manner. This is in accordance with Byram et al. (2002), asserting that in attitudes aspect, students are expected to be more sympathy and respect.

These findings are also supported by the classroom observation as shown in Figure 7:



Figure 7. Performing Role Play

Figure 7 illustrates that the teacher instructed students to create a roleplay inspired by the Asian folktales of “Yeh-Shen” and “Bawang Merah Bawang Putih”. Thus, in feeling that they are positioned as Yeh-Shen or Bawang Putih. Before initiating a role play, the teacher assisted by asking intriguing questions such as “what would you do if you were Yeh-Shen or Bawang Putih?”, “would you be an evil if you had a step sister like Yeh-Shen or Bawang Putih?”, “How do you want your story to end?”, “Are you expecting for assistance from a royal like Yeh-Shen?”, or “are you attempting to address the problem on your own, like Bawang Putih?”

In addition, they also applied the value of each story into the role play. This interview excerpt is of evidence:

**Student Vignette 12**

*“From these two stories we learn that we must do good if we want to be treated well, so we apply it to roleplay (value)” (Student 1, Interview, Researcher Translation, October 14, 2021).*

The statement above shows that students can absorb the value of the story and relate it to their personal lives. They develop tolerance, respect, and openness in this practice. This attitude is needed to develop their intercultural awareness. They have self-awareness and self-respect. This mindset is required for them to acquire intercultural awareness. Perry and Southwell (2011) propose that self-awareness is the capacity to use knowledge about oneself in intercultural contexts to cope with challenging conditions. Furthermore, self-respect is defined as the ability to respect oneself and to behave respectfully. Both produce Empathy, or the ability to comprehend the emotions and worldviews of others.

When the learning process is integrated to everyday situations found in the school or surrounding area, it assists the learner in grasping actual concepts rather than imagining. Furthermore, by being familiarized with learning from everyday reality, students will discover how to apply what they have learned and how to implement in real issues (Frese, 2015). Practicality fundamental enables pupils to exceed in gaining cultural general assembly comprehension. Students will ultimately understand cultural awareness that is closely connected to their daily lives (Yuanhua & Ying, 2015).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study promotes practical insights into teaching by promoting EFL learners’ intercultural awareness (ICA) through Asian folktales-mediated tasks. These study findings are organized into five categories. First, step-by-step fundamental gives consideration to the

progressive stimulation of cultural aspects by providing the simple to the hard and complex in a systematic and step-by-step manner in teaching. Second, appropriateness fundamental provides teachers to employ folktales in learning since they integrate cultural components because learning language should include cultural components in its instruction. Next, student-centered fundamentals have a positive overall influence on learners' cognitive participation. This might be attributed to students' active engagement in absorbing cultural competence in an EFL classroom. Fourth, comparing and interpreting in ICA reports on how students engage in interpreting and comparing the content. Students know how to recognize appropriate sources, make comparisons with other people's results and findings, and evaluate the findings by gathering evidence from more than one resource throughout exploration. Last, practicality fundamental proposes students to correlate cultural resources with their daily lives.

The study findings mediate teachers in generating the study because students find it easier to follow the learning flow and absorb the content of the lesson. The use of folktales may be utilized to engage students in fascinating learning. However, students get meaning-making learning. By guiding them into self-directed learning, students may be focused and motivated to learn cultural competencies. Learning something which can be seen, especially if it is frequently encountered in everyday life, helps learners distinctly remember. Moreover, this study, undertaken through the perspective of action research, describes how EFL students analyze and interpret folktales to raise their intercultural awareness. Using different techniques and approaches, future studies might continue to investigate the students' intercultural understanding. Furthermore, because this study was done utilizing folktales, further researchers can utilize other intriguing tools.

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