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## Students' Perceptions in a Diverse Language Classroom: The Case of One Public University in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Diversity in language learning classrooms is important subject to study. Diversity affects students' viewpoints and their success in language learning. Diversity does not exist without challenges; therefore, the emphasis here explored how diversity appeared and how the students accommodated the diversity to promote learning goals. This paper presented students' perception of diversity in an English language classroom at one public university in Indonesia. This exploratory study aimed to better understand diversity to meet students' needs. By conducting a survey, the questionnaire and interview aimed to collect information about (a) demographic data (age, gender, and nationalities), but not limited to students' level, culture and socioeconomic status, (b) students' viewpoints about diversity and (c) how to accommodate the differences. The result showed that positive viewpoints referred to cultural awareness, knowledge acquisition and relationship while negative one referred to the difficulty to tolerate differences. Some recommendations are derived from the results.

### Keywords

Cultural differences, diversity, demographic data, language classroom socioeconomic status

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## Introduction

Diversity in teaching and learning English is an interesting topic to discuss. The diversity of backgrounds and demographic conditions in English learning and teaching is a challenge for teachers. Teachers are expected to create a conducive and balanced atmosphere based on students' linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom (Schwartzter, Haywood, & Lorenzen, 2003). A significant difference occurs in the teaching process in the classroom, where in the past, teaching English as a foreign language requires lecturers to focus solely on the language component. Different learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and different levels of English ability are the three points the teachers should consider. To better suit learners' needs, teachers try to find what the students are expecting. It is now recommended that there be a good balance of cultural, personality, intellectuality and language acquisition aspects. That's because student diversity is the most important part of language learning (Alyan, 2011).

Learning can be impeded by class diversity. The increasing diversity of universities stems from various trends: globalization, student and teacher migration, broader access to higher education (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009), and subsequent adult education. As a consequence, university students and teachers display personal, cultural, and economic demographic characteristics that impact student learning. Students experience different learning styles and various learning habits in such diverse classrooms. Amongst other things, the impact of class diversity on student learning depends on the activities proposed by multicultural and multi-age instructors.

Then, learning a language means that learning its culture. Chinh (2013) reported that culture in English language teaching has traditionally focused on English-speaking countries' target culture. However, English as international language (EIL) has led to significant changes in ELT's teaching and learning culture practice. Instead of relying on the paradigm of native speaker competence and target culture, ELT's culture teaching now aims to develop learners as intercultural speakers in a globalized context. Given the need to integrate diverse cultures into ELT practice as a platform for learners to become intercultural speakers, the attitudes of learners towards this issue are paramount. Next, although there is a modest positive correlation between social class and achievement, it should not be assumed that this relationship applies to all children from families with low socioeconomic status. There are many exceptions (Comer, 2005). Thus, it can be concluded that poor learning achievement is not an inevitable result of low socioeconomic status. Teachers can direct and invite parents to participate in their children's education, and this can improve student achievement.

Academic achievement, generally, is defined as the extent to which students have reached the learning goals. A study conducted by Liu, Peng, and Luo (2019) reports that academic achievement is one of the key indicators for evaluating student performance and educational achievement. Socioeconomic status of the family is the main factor influencing academic achievement, but the relationship between SES and academic achievement may vary across different socio-cultural contexts. The results indicated a moderate relationship between SES and academic achievement. Moderation analysis indicated that the relationship between SES

and academic achievement has gradually declined in recent decades; SES has a stronger correlation with language achievement than science/math achievement and overall achievement. These findings were discussed from the government's educational policy perspective. One kind of diversity in language learning is learning styles. Learning styles are different ways of learning. They involve learning methods, especially for a person who is presumed to be the best person to learn. The learning styles are the conditions, according to James and Gardner (1995), which allow the student to perceive, process, store and recall the contents of the learning. Peirce (2000) believes that learning style is the way people like it over other learning methods, such as school learning. Teachers, school managers and other members of the educational team should take into account differences in student learning styles. Research has shown that focusing on the individual differences and learning characteristics of teachers and other teachers' teams is an important factor in improving student quality and improving student academic achievement (Safe, 2008; Tella & Adeniyi, 2009).

Personality differences also plays important role that the teachers should pay attention to. Actually, academic achievement is regarded as an important criterion for quality of education. On the other hand, students differ across a wide range of variables. In other words, they do not only differ in personality, family background, age and gender, etc. but also display different attitudes and emotional responses to the environment. Students have distinctive characteristics of personality that make them ready to take different views on the world and therefore to act differently in various social and educational environments. Taking these differences into account, educators can help recognize the individual differences between their students. Predictors for academic achievement often lie in one extreme and non-cognitive variable (e.g., personality features, socioeconomic status, etc.) with cognitive measures, intelligence and mental capabilities. Despite the results of the studies, in order to predict academic achievement, different results were obtained. The role of cognitive abilities and characteristics in academic performance was consistently highlighted (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). Educators have always asked if personality characteristics can help them achieve higher academic achievements. Based on the descriptions above, this study tried to answer (a) how the students perceived diversity in language learning process and (b) how the students accommodated those differences in order to better reach the learning goals. This research aimed at exploring students' perception of diversity to enlighten teaching practice in the university and knowing the ways how the students tried to accommodate diversities in language learning. The information provided in this study about students' perception of diversity in the classroom contributed to increase the understanding of students' experience in one specific international university. Diversity presence presented its own challenges, so the focus of this study was to investigate how students perceive the diversity present in English learning and teaching processes, especially in intellectual abilities, culture, ethnicity, gender, personality, learning styles, and socioeconomic status. The aims of this study were formulated on the basis of the research questions: (a) How did the students see diversity in language learning classroom and (b) How did they accommodate the diversity?

## Literature Review

### *Cultural diversity*

Culture deeply influences the process of learning and teaching English. Cultural aspects contribute to the identity and self-concept of students and can influence students' beliefs and self-value behavior and expectations, social relations, language use, and other patterns of behavior. Students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds have a significant impact on their ability to learn English. The study illustrates that if students have access to learning material that is appropriate to their culture; their understanding is greater than if the culture is not compatible with the student culture. In a study by Yousef, Karim, and Janefeshan (2014), 95 students from three different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the Middle East (Arabic, Kurdish, and Turkish) were tested using English reading materials containing culturally similar content and culturally different content. The results of these studies indicate that the mean scores of students are very different because students tend to get high scores when students recognize cultural differences.

### *Socioeconomic status*

A study conducted by Rodriguez-Hernandez, Cascallar, & Kyndt (2020) reported that socioeconomic status is measured by education, occupation, income, household resources, and neighborhood resources, while higher education academic performance is measured by achievement, skills, and persistence. The meta-analysis also reveals a positive yet weak relationship between the SES and higher education academic performance. University experience, previous academic achievements and work status were more closely related to academic performance than SES. Students attend schools every year that represent a variety of socioeconomic situations. Socioeconomic status refers to an individual or group's level of education, income, and professionalism. Although both higher and lower socioeconomic status students attend school, it is difficult to ignore the effect of lower socio-economic status on student achievement. Students with a lower socio-economic status often face additional challenges, including a lack of resources for learning, difficult conditions for learning and poor motivation that adversely affect their academic performance.

### *Language differences and learning styles*

In many non-English - speaking countries, linguistic diversity in teaching English as a foreign or second language is a compelling challenge. In their study of 50 Chinese adult English learners, data gathered by Wu, Wu, and Le (2014) further expresses the contrast between languages in a rather different situation. The students' survey in the study revealed that due to their own orthographic language structure and their accents, they felt frustration because of extreme difficulty expressing themselves correctly in English. In addition, Chinese students were concerned with pragmatics or their feelings about how they use language in social settings, plus their own learning skills, and how trust was a serious problem for them (Aydin & Koch, 2012). Students' own suggestions to alleviate learning

problems included spending more time practicing speaking to enhance their accents, which could enhance their trust; they should also think of learning English as a competition to encourage and motivate them to study harder (Wu, Wu, & Le, 2014). Then, in particular, for example, the pronunciation in Indonesian, as stated in (Pujiyono: 2013) and (Roach: 2009) differs from that in English. Because Indonesian does not have the sound /θ/ and /ð/, the two sounds may be difficult for students to pronounce.

Students differ in their styles of learning. The manner in which different learners may have distinct learning styles and strategies is another aspect of diversity. Learning styles refer to the typical way of learning for a child and arise from cognitive and personality-based variables, while learning strategies refer to the manner in which learners manage their learning experiences and efforts consciously. The interest in learning styles derives from successful learners' studies (Brown, 2007). Student achievement is also affected by individual preferences in the learning environment and conditions. As individual learners, there is only one learning style inherent to students (Dörnyei, 2009).

### ***Personality differences and student diversity in English language learning***

Studies conducted by Krashen (1985) and Gass and Selinker (1994) have covered the relationship between personality and language learning. These experts indicate that there is a clear connection between personality and language acquisition, as personality determines the comfort zone of the learner. So, learners of a second language or foreign language, according to their personality, will make a choice of strategies and skills. Many students with lower levels of previous education expressed frustration with their inability to understand and learn English. Previous educational background influences the learning styles they are used to. Then, many contradictions emerge when discussing how gender affects participation and learning in classrooms. While some students said they felt no difference, others said they did. The students expressed many opinions on the multicultural influence of their own participation and their classmates. While some students felt an individual's nationality or culture was irrelevant in the classroom context, others felt that diversity was favorable or unfavorable. Many students emphasized the importance of scrutinizing students' demographic conditions. Although many students feel that age has no effect on learning English activities, others say age gives its own color in classroom learning. Some students feel younger students have an edge in class and learn faster. Age can also influence beliefs about goals students think can achieve.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design, site, and participants***

This exploratory study was aimed to know students' viewpoints toward diversity in language learning and how the students cope with the challenges. To answer the research questions in this setting, a descriptive survey design applied. This study took place in an English Education Study Program of a public university in South Sumatera. We chose this university because this university has enrolled a broad range of students coming from various provinces and races. Also, this university is doubling on efforts to promote diversity as it forms students' exchanges from various countries. Besides, this university got an A

accreditation, so that this university can be a model for others. Therefore, we were interested in exploring deeply the students' perceptions on diversity in language learning classroom. We adopted a purposive sampling. Thus, all of the juniors in *Indralaya* class were the participants of this study. The participants were 45 juniors, 6 male students and 39 female students. The participants were at the age of 19-20 years old coming from different races, even provinces. The participants were chosen on the basis of their experiences/stories during their study. The sample used in this analysis was not indicative. The purposes of this study were not to generalize the findings, compare or portray similarities with other universities. Students may differ greatly from non-included students in this sample. However, the sample was large enough to derive and categorize student perceptions that could be confirmed by a statistical sample. This sampling design gave information in their learning context about the perception of diversity by students. It is the first step towards analyzing the problems expressed by students at university level regarding the diversity of language learning. It can provide information on student characteristics and their understanding of diversity. Results can provide valuable data to better understand students' experience of diversity.

#### ***Data collection and analysis***

This exploratory study used an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview to collect the data. The interview was conducted by using communication platform, i.e., Zoom Meeting for the fifth semester students enrolled in Department of Language and Arts, English Language Study Program in one of public university in Indonesia. Questions related to academic courses students studied during the semester using English as a medium of instruction. This ready-made questionnaire (Jeannin, 2013) aimed to collect information about the characteristics of students, learning styles, and opinions about their diversity experience at the university. The information gathered included their demographic data (age, gender), their perception of diversity, and the ways they applied to accommodate the differences. The questionnaire answers were anonymous for the sake of the confidentiality. A semi-structured interview was conducted in order to confirm more thoroughly the students' viewpoints of diversity in language learning classroom and how they tried to assign the diversity.

To collect data during the COVID-19 pandemic, we sent private messages to the 45 English majoring juniors. Before collecting the data, students received a message informing them about the survey. We explained the purpose and provided information on answering questions. We asked all students to volunteer and complete the questionnaire only once. The students' consent reflected the answering questionnaire. Then, for interview session, the students were asked through Zoom Meeting. To analyze the data, we implemented the steps of analyzing the data followed the procedure described by Creswell (2012). The steps were organizing and preparing the data, reading through the data, coding the data into categories, building themes, representing and reporting the findings, and interpreting the data. Besides, member checking was also carried out to confirm the credibility and control of biases by returning the transcribed interview text back to the participants and asking them for its accuracy.

*Ethical considerations*

This exploratory study was dependent on the presence of the participants as the key basis of the data sources. Referring to the ethical considerations, still in Indonesia scope, an IRB authorization process was not used. The researchers covered the participants' identities, places, and the research site through the use of made-up names to keep the privacy of the participants. Then, the contributions of the participants were totally volunteer and their information was privately treated. In other words, the participants' identities were confidential.

**Findings**

This part explained the results of the study. It explored the students' perceptions of learning foreign language in a diverse classroom. It also discussed about some challenges experienced by the students in such condition.

*Students' viewpoints of diversity in language learning classroom*

First, Tables 1 provided some demographic information. See the following tables for detailed information.

**Table 1.** *Demographic information about the respondents*

45 respondents	%	Numbers
Gender	Female: 86.7 Male: 13.3	Female: 39 Male: 6
Age	Min. 19 Max. 21 Average. 20	
Race	Basemah: 4.4 Koming: 2.2 Palembang: 60 Kayuagung: 2.2 Lematang: 4.4 Ogan: 4.4 Banyuasin: 6.7 Others: Lampung: 2.2 Javanese (Java Island): 4.4 PALI: 4.4 Rejang (Bengkulu): 2.2 Bugis (Sulawesi): 2.2	Basemah: 2 Koming: 1 Palembang: 27 Kayuagung: 1 Lematang: 2 Ogan: 2 Banyuasin: 3 Others: Lampung: 1 Javanese: 11 PALI: 11 Rejang: 1 Bugis: 1
Type of Residents	Rental: 11.11 House: 88.89	Rental: 5 House: 40
Parents' Income	Above 5 million: 8.9 5 million: 17.8 Under 5 million: 73.3	Above 5 million: 4 5 million: 8 Under 5 million: 33

Table 2 below showed why students chose to study at universitas Sriwijaya. The table showed the sum of the number of times each answer picked. It gave sums of occurrences and informs about the salience or intensity of endorsement of each reason (Hsia & Spruijt-Metz, 2008).

**Table 2.** *Students' reasons to study at one public university in Indonesia*

45 respondents	Rank 1	Rank 2	%
Having professional skills or program	29	16	64.4
Better understanding about English language	30	15	66.7
Learning in multicultural classes and experience	39	6	86.7
Studying subjects with international examples	2	43	4.4
Improving leadership	3	42	6.7
Develop critical-thinking abilities	9	36	20
Learn how to work in a team	5	40	11.1
Anticipating financial reasons	25	20	55.6
Graduating quickly/faster	1	0	2.2
Others (to study at the best university in South Sumatra)	1	0	2.2

From the table 2 above, it could be shown that multicultural classes and multicultural experience, improving English language skills, and acquiring particular professional skills or specific programs were the four most important reasons why the students chose the university. Also, students' financial was one of the reasons why Universitas Sriwijaya became a place to study, as one said,

“The students choose Universitas Sriwijaya because to improve English (not clear/strong enough, because there are more universities better than Unsri), to acquire specific professional skills or for a specific program (such as, to join *Bidik Misi* or *Unsri* programs that meet the students' needs or to get bachelor degree), and financial reasons (it is strong reason. In other sides, I see that the students have.”

Table 3 below presented the students' problems in facing diversity in language learning classroom.

**Table 3.** *Students' challenges regards to diversity*

45 respondents	Rank 1	Rank 2	%
Age differences	0	0	0
English language differences	8	37	21.6
Diverse cultural backgrounds	11	34	24.4
Diverse initial knowledge in the subject	14	31	31.1
Gender differences	2	43	4.4
Different students' ability to understand the subject	25	20	55.6
Some student do not behave properly in the class	10	35	22.2
None, class diversity is not disturbing for me	11	34	24.4
Other:	0	0	0



Table 3 showed that students mentioned “different students ‘ability to understand the subject” and “diverse initial knowledge in subject” were two the main diversity challenges in language learning process. Then, diverse cultural backgrounds did not seem to be a challenge to the students and they did not feel disturbed by the diversity. This result was confirmed that the students feel diversity as an enjoyment. Students answered a few sentences or words.

“I think all of the above doesn’t really disturb me, but one thing that still be annoyed is when someone is make joke about my mother tongue /local languages which is Javanese. Sometimes, when my accent is mix java and Indonesia, some people always make jokes and laugh about it. They still didn’t really understand that every people has their own accent and local languages. And it’s not polite if they laugh at the language, because every language is beautiful and has it’s own story.”

“I think class diversity is not disturbing for me, because individually I am not person who get disturb by the differences of cultural background, age, or initial knowledge in the subject. So, class diversity is not disturbing for me.”

“I think diversity and multicultural classrooms it is just like a common environment that I used to live in. So, there’s no specific feeling for me because I used to know a lot of people with different backgrounds, etc., and I am comfortable in it.”

“I think diversity and multicultural classrooms. This includes many different factors: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, age, religious belief, or political conviction. All these factors work together to inform how students (and teachers, and everyone else) encounter the world.”

“I think diversity and multicultural classroom not become my obstacles to develop my ability in learning. The diversity even teaches me to learn tolerance and togetherness, although there is often an inequality in some things but so far I can still cope with it.”

**Table 4.** *Students’ perceptions of diversity*

<b>45 respondents</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
Do you think that diversity at your university is appositve opportunity for you?	40	5	88.89

As shown in Table 4, 88.89% of students said cultural diversity was another positive consideration in language learning. In order to explain why they perceive cultural diversity positively or negatively in the survey, an open question was used to ask students.

“I think diversity and multicultural classroom not become my obstacles to develop my ability in learning. The diversity even teaches me to learn tolerance and

togetherness, although there is often an inequality in some things but so far I can still cope with it.”

“I think diversity and multicultural classrooms give me another experience of meeting new people with a different character and it helps me to learn how to respect and appreciate other people.”

“I think diversity and multicultural classrooms give me a lot of insight of a certain culture rather than knowing them from stereotypes created by people. It’s nice to witness cultural differences since despite our differences; we can still unite to support each other’s studies and performance. I also can get a lot of understanding of other cultures better. To conclude, I feel happy when I’m in a diverse classroom, as long as the environment isn’t hostile.”

“I feel new and good at the same time. I need to adapt because of this diverse and multi-cultural classrooms but I also feel good since it is the new things for me and it makes me appreciate it more and enjoy it.”

“I feel great about it. The main reason why I chose *UNSR*I to go to college is because I want a new experience with new people, new environment, new atmosphere, new perspective and view from different people in South Sumatera. In classrooms, I don’t have any difficulty whether it is about how to communicate, socialize, or sharing something. I learn, accept, and act such how I supposed to act as new arrival (*anak rantau*). I have heard this phrase “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”

**Table 5.** Responses toward diversity in language learning classroom

<b>45 respondents</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Cultural Awareness</b>		
Learn from/understand cultures	2	4.4
Experience diversity	4	8.9
Learn to interact	0	0
Be open-minded	11	24.4
Be adjustable	4	8.9
<b>Acquire knowledge</b>		
Learn from others	7	15.6
Share information	1	2.2
Acquire new knowledge	5	11.1
Explore something	3	6.7
Improve or learn language(s)	0	0
<b>Readiness for future</b>		
Career	1	2.2
<b>Relationship</b>		
Make new friends	6	13.3
Networking	1	2.2
<b>Others</b>		

As stated in Table 5, respondents believed cultural diversity was an opportunity because it raised different cultures' awareness and sensitivity. They were able to improve their understanding of different cultures, learn how to communicate and become more open-minded. Cultural diversity had also been a source of improvement in knowledge, exchange, and language. Students saw cultural diversity, embedded in a globalized environment, as a chance to prepare for their professional lives. Finally, students emphasized the possibility of making new friends in a diverse community. Students' statements toward student diversity in language learning classroom were as follows,

“Yes, because going to a diverse school may bring about people, experiences, events, and other things we may not be used to, I'll come to learn how to deal with differing views, beliefs, ideas, and ways of life.”

“Yes, It does, because diversity at my university can make us more care about each other, I mean we all can tolerate each other. Diversity also can make a good way to collaborated each other in the classroom while learning and we can also know about other people perspective or opinion of something.”

“I think so. Like I said before, diversity teaches me to learn tolerance and togetherness. In addition I learned various kinds of culture and behavior of my friends who come from different areas. Also, with that diversity I can get the opportunity to develop my ability in building cooperation with people who have different backgrounds.”

“Yes, it promotes personal growth-and a healthy society. Diversity challenges stereotyped preconceptions; it encourages critical thinking; and it helps students learn to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. It strengthens communities and the workplace.”

“Yes, it is. By having a diverse classroom, I can learn more about other cultures without being biased or any misjudgments. By knowing from the people themselves, I can learn on how to be tolerant towards them so I won't offend them or people with their cultures in the future because the last thing I want is me forming a certain judgment without knowing the real truth.”

“Yes, absolutely I do. The more we learn something about anything then we will understand more how to communicate to various people's characters. Experience is the part that human cannot buy, it needs process. At the end we will go straight down to society, so the more you get to know and understand something new (culture, perspective, knowledge, story) the more you'll be able to put yourself in the community.”

**Table 6.** *Negative views of diversity in language learning classroom*

<b>45 respondents</b>	<b>Rank 1</b>	<b>%</b>
Difficulty to understand others	25	5.6

One of student's responses of this statement was that "I think when someone knows the subject faster than I will feel intimidated and it makes me feel nervous in that class". This meant that without some self-esteem and self-confidence, no successful learning activity could take place. Others' negative judgments to some extent might create anxiety and as a result the student may stop learning. Anxiety was a factor that is closely related to self-esteem, risk-taking, and inhibition. In L2 learning, anxiety could play a significant role if it interferes with the learning process. It was not easy to define, even though it is a common feeling. It came with feelings of frustration, self-doubt, fear, or anxiety. The willingness of a learner to interact had also been linked to anxiety. The number of people present, the topic of conversation, and the formality of the circumstances often affected it. A study conducted by Anggraini (2016) supported this condition. She mentioned that there was statistically significant difference in students' writing achievement on the basis of writing anxiety. Closer analysis found out the reasons why this happened. Writing anxiety is mostly reported as evaluation apprehension; neither stresses apprehension nor product apprehension. Students who experienced medium level of writing anxiety might feel the signs of writing anxiety, but it might not be too harmful for them. On the basis of the students' responses in semi-structured interview, the students agreed that there were some points they offered about the diversity in language learning process. One of the points was cultural awareness.

### **Discussion**

The findings provided data on why respondents chose Universitas Sriwijaya. First, students expected to learn in multicultural classes and multicultural experience, improved their English language skills, learnt professional skills, and financial reasons. These findings came from students at Universitas Sriwijaya who chose to study. Students had already chosen to study at this university and aligned their interest with their individual university choice in the English language and multicultural approaches.

Students struggled to learn with different classmates, with different levels of language and the ability to understand some subjects. This condition appeared to be consistent with the fact that students chose this university to improve their English language skills; their choice was a consequence of the diversity of English. This answer was, in fact, close to one of the main disturbing effects of diversity, "the diverse ability of students to understand the subject," Supporting "diversity of initial knowledge" and "diversity in understanding the subject" should strengthen teachers' attention to students' heterogeneous readiness to learn (Glowacki-Dudka, Murray, & Concepcion, 2012). Cultural diversity was positive for 88.89% of respondents. They perceived that cultural diversity through exchanges with diverse students made them more culturally conscious and knowledgeable. By networking, they also tried to adjust while preparing for their future career. Diversity could not be denied in

someone's life, society and, therefore, communities, places of work, schools, and services for early learning. One substantial contributor to diversity was culture. Culture is a comprehensive concept in itself and includes many elements, such as values and behavioral styles, language and dialects, non-verbal communications, perspectives, worldviews and reference frameworks (Banks, 2006). Culture is also complex in that people, practices and environments are constantly changing and a single definition of culture is therefore difficult to have. Here, learners needed the ability to work with a diversity of people, because they needed to engage with people from many different backgrounds and worldviews in the changing global environment, and to work with a variety of ideas to solve increasingly complex challenges in the real world.

Difficulty to understand others' differences was the negative perspectives of students toward the diversity. Here, it could be true that each student differed in their ability to solve issues and to study. It was expected that the lecturers should not, therefore, place their hopes on intelligence theories and measures. Intelligence can be defined at one level as a general learning ability or the capacity to acquire and use knowledge or skills. Intelligence is defined by the consensus definition expressed by Gardner (1983) as the capacity to deal with abstractions, to solve problems, and to learn. There is no separate intelligence, but every student has only one intelligence in general or has in common Moran, Kornharber, and Gardner (2006). Intelligence, as stated by Jafar (2010), is the ability to solve problems or to create products that are judged by one or more cultural rules. Nine different intelligences are described, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and existential intelligences. Then, in general, the teachers tended to think of students who exhibited a high level of linguistic abilities as intelligent and were therefore influenced by the lecturers' abilities themselves. Students who were capable in other fields could be considered inactive, stupid, and lacking motivation if the teaching focus is on the activation of language intelligence. In conclusion, it was very important to understand the theory of multiple intelligences and their principles, because it opened up different possibilities to help students learn in the process of learning English more effectively and successfully.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this study, the reflections of the participants shed light on the teaching and learning of culture in the Indonesian English as a Foreign Language context. The most important thing was their enthusiastic welcome to diverse cultures' integration into the world practice in English language teaching and learning. The following suggestions were made, based on the results of the study, in order to effectively implement the teaching of diverse cultures in the context of the Indonesian EFL. Students viewed cultural diversity as an opportunity to become culturally sensitive, to learn more, to prepare for their future, and to develop relationships. To develop their English skills and acquire multicultural experience, they chose this university. Teachers should be culturally responsive, supporting students' willingness to communicate in English and interact in a multicultural environment. In order to provide different cultural perspectives on an issue and meet various learning needs, they should value diversity.

In terms of current practice, it seemed some students struggled to participate in class and mingle with other cultural groups. They had probably faced various barriers. Further research should explore this condition. Then, perceived differences in their classmates' ability to understand the subjects suggest that actions should be taken to individualize the experience of learning. Teachers should be better able to reconcile different students' readiness to understand subjects. Just knowing that all students are different from each other is not enough. In the process of second language acquisition, the teacher should also be skilled and willing enough to help the students use these differences to their advantage. The study of individual differences and their pedagogical implications is therefore hoped to further lead to the type of teaching practices that increase the success ratio of second language acquisition.

#### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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