**Integrating Students’ Actional Competence and Ethical Knowledge in ESP Classrooms to Improve Their Intercultural Pragmatic Competence**

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**Abstract:** Students’ Actional Competence (AC) and Ethical Knowledge (EK) are believed as important determinants for the mastery of their Intercultural Pragmatic Competence (IPC), and ultimately their communicative competence. However, studies on students’ IPC in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) settings is still a dearth. We conducted an action research based on a pragmatic pedagogical approach to research on how students’ AC, EK, and IPC are practiced in the classrooms. 120 university students taking ESP classes participated in the research. A methodological triangulation was employed as we gathered different types of data such as need analysis data, pre-and post-test scores, video projects, observation, as well as students’ self-reflection. Even though IPC integration in ESP settings is still in disputes, we noticed the improvement of students’ communicative competence, not only their linguistic competence, but also pragmatic, actional and, ethical competence. Such competences enable them to communicate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Keywords:pragmatic competence, actional competence, ethical knowledge, ESP

# 1. Introduction

Student communicative competence has been broadly received as one of the major goals of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. This teaching paradigm insists EFL learners to be able to communicate well in a wider scope with people from heterogeneous cultural backgrounds. This sort of competence is important for their future workplace especially in this more globalized world. Acquiring students' IPC then becomes important for the students to be able to communicate with people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in which students’ AC and EK are essential for them to master. AC is the heart of communication. Such competence is a part of communicative competence, with which a speaker can comprehend and produce speech acts (Celce-Murcia 2007: 42). Achieving such competence is crucial for inter-cultural communication ability in a more globalized and interconnected era. In the meantime, EK is also important to support student communicative competence as when people talk and act, ethical knowledge will have to be considered for effective communication (Chrisman 2010).

Students majoring in Hospital Management are demanded to have both knowledge on the subject matter (hospital management) and foreign language communicative competence with regard to position in an international workplace [(Pan & Block 2011; Sahoo 2018; Satiti](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/89sK+FYEl+B3z6+JX0D+v55V) [2017; Subandowo 2017)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/89sK+FYEl+B3z6+JX0D+v55V). Since they will be involved in public services requiring foreign language communicative context, they then have to master English as a foreign language equipped with IPC, especially in terms of AC and EK [(Zhu 2017; Zi-rui 2017)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/G4yI+Tcnf+ADwc+ljir). Therefore, IPC is required for their future workplace where the act of communication in English becomes the primary requirement in providing services [(Anandarajan & Simmers 2018; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, & Clément 1998)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/sTRbD+2M4nt).

While Lin (2007) convinces that in this globalized world students have to master IPC to avoid misunderstanding in cross-cultural situations, most studies on IPC have only focused on conceptual issues, and less practical. Few studies providing empirical grounding in this area has been detected particularly in ESP settings ([Kusumawati 2018; Quynh 2016)](https://paperpile.com/c/7E8ZiB/ZKqR+X5Gl+cZ7F). Investigating English teaching that improves IPC aimed at preparing students to have sufficient communicative competence, especially in Indonesian context, is still infrequent. In addition, engaging students to express meanings and intentions through proper speech acts in the real-target context seems to be less practiced. Kecskes in 2012 highlighted the absence of students’ IPC in making real interaction between native speakers and non-native speakers. Therefore, improving students’ AC and EK for them to have meaningful experience in communicating within a particular social and cultural context in English becomes inevitable.

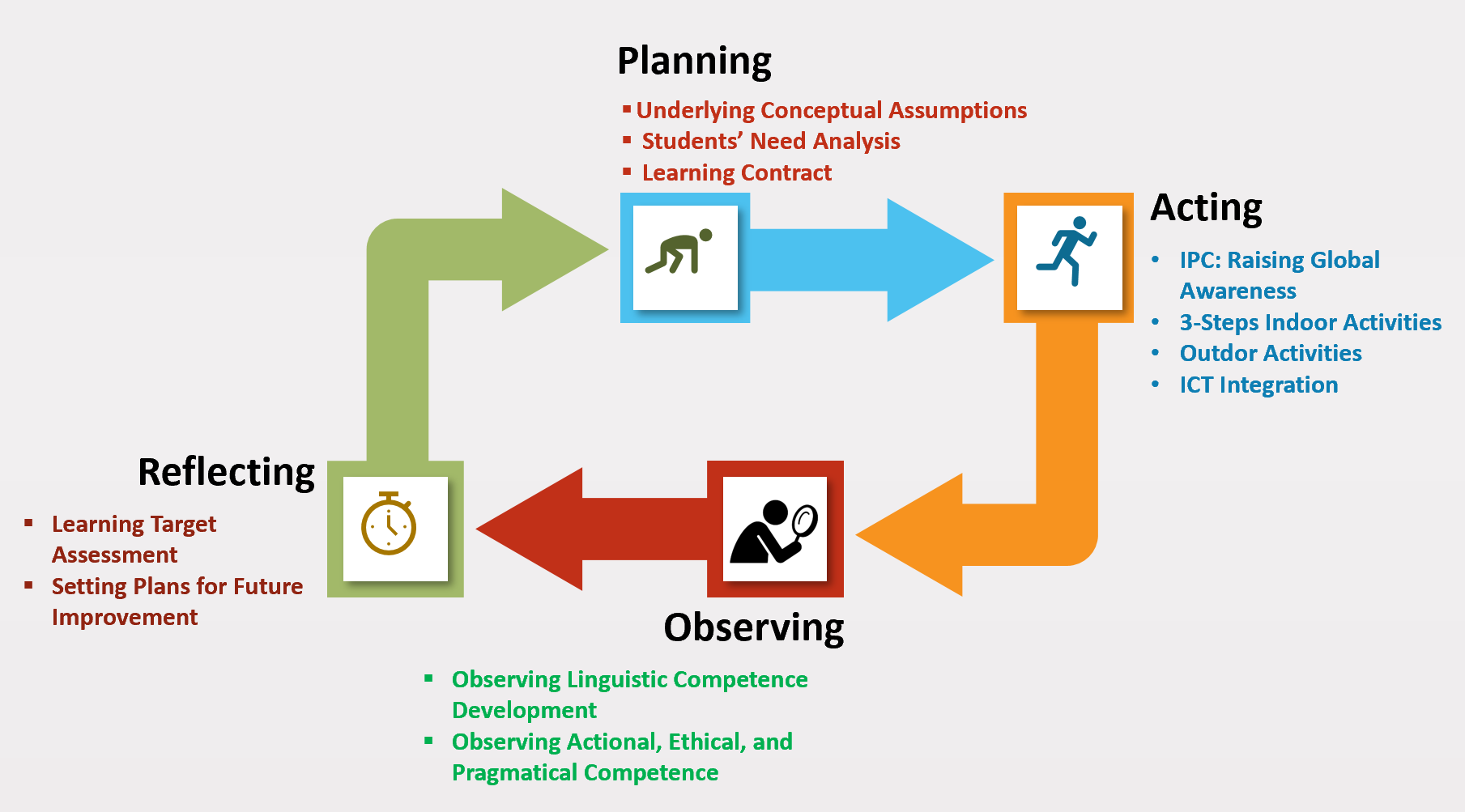
This study was intended to explore how IPC was taught in teaching ESP for students in YKP School of Economics Yogyakarta Indonesia majoring in Hospital Management (HM), and how students’ AC and EK were integrated in their ESP learning. 120 students in YKP School Economics Yogyakarta majoring in Hospital Management were involved in the action research. These students are required to master IPC as a part of their standard competence after the completion of their study. This competence is required for their future work. Therefore, being able to communicate in English equipped with IPC serves as the basic competence in the school.

However, IPC integration in ESP teaching was often vacant during the teaching practice in the classroom and so was in the syllabus for the English Program. Therefore, learning experience in cross-culture settings in the classroom seemed insufficient and lacked engaging students in intercultural dialogues or speaking practice. As a result, students did not have enough chances to practice and to be involved in a wide range of diverse cultural contexts to practice and reflect on what they have learned (Byram 2012). The entire activities only focused on the language rules understanding and lacked real-life experiences. Since students did not have sufficient chances to practice, they were not able to use the linguistic aspects they already learned in their intercultural communication, leading to inability to put their English knowledge into practices pragmatically. Theoretical foundations are discussed alongside the empirical findings taken up in later sections.

# 2. Research Methodology

# 2.1. Methodological Approach

This study employed an action research design in a pragmatic pedagogical approach (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). This research was conducted in four steps: (1) Planning, (2) Acting, (3) Observing, and (4) Reflecting (Figure 1). The Planning step was intended to capture the conceptual assumptions underlying the integration of IPC in the learning activities. The Acting step was carried out to see how far IPC was present during the learning activities. In the meantime, observation was functioned not only for seeing the classroom interaction, but also for the inter-rater validity for the gained qualitative data. At last, in the reflecting step, it was necessary to find out how far students could achieve AC and EK to master IPC. Therefore, how the students learned English in ESP settings were the focus of the learning activities and supported on how their communicative competence improved, especially in terms of their IPC, AC and EK.



*Figure 1. The Action Research Design*

**2.2. Research Context**

The research was conducted in the non-English study program, YKP School of Economics Yogyakarta majoring in Hospital Management. 120 students from Class A, B, and C who attended the English Program held every Friday and Saturday were involved. Most of them were under 18-22 years old and more than 60% were females. For the interview purpose, we selected some students who could best inform the research questions and enhance understanding how they achieved AC and EK to master IPC. In addition, the students were geographically from different regions and had diverse cultural background. Therefore, the action research was conducted in those classes.

**2. 3. Description of Data Collection Procedures**

The current action research employed a methodological triangulation to avoid potential biases, to conﬁrm the suggested ﬁndings, and to satisfy the completeness of data (Heale and Forbes 2013). This study included six sets of data collection using different methods both in qualitative and quantitative ways. The collected data were (1) Pre-test and (2) Post-test from the standardized test in ESP curriculum in the college, (3) students’ project of communicating with native speakers, (4) questionnaires, (5) students’ self-reflection, (6) classroom observations.

In the (1) *pre- and* (2) *post-tests*, students were asked to have a conversation based on the given pictures, making expressions of the given cues, and cultural-related problem-solving exercises. Students’ performances were assessed based on the given instruction. For the (3) *students’ project*, the activity was conducted outside the classroom where they had to make a video of having conversation with some native speakers to practice their IPC, especially in terms of their AC and EK. In the end of the session, students submitted their videos, and we assessed their IPC usage with a form prepared at the previous stages. The assessment consisted of four aspects to assess interaction, behavior, discourse, knowledge, action (Kecskes 2014). For the AC, it consisted of three sub-components: correctness, accuracy, and fluency (Celce-Murcia 2007) while the EK focused on their degree of politeness (Castillo 2009). The form was in 5-point rating scales, ranging from poor to excellent.

The data gained from the (4) a *questionnaire* is to ensure the implementation of IPC based on the students’ perspective. In addition to observation and interview, a questionnaire about the students’ opinions, attitudes, and beliefs was distributed. The questionnaire used closed questions in order for the sake of its ease and practicality with given number of students involved in the research. Statements in the questionnaire used a rating scale from agree to disagree.” Then to avoid poor question wording, confusing question layout and inadequate response options that will affect the reliability and validity of the data, the questionnaire was validated by some expert on the field of interculturalism.

How they perceived the IPC implementation in the teaching and learning practice was probed during the (5) students*’ reflection* part. Despite posing several benefits, students’ reflection can give and enrich the data beyond the researchers’ plan and expectation. This type of data will be richer and objective because based on students’ personal acknowledgment. In addition, it can avoid bias and subjectivity from the researchers. Furthermore, students' reflection which was written in Google Classroom can lead to deeper understanding and new insight into how they acquire the IPC during the learning process. In the (6) *classroom* *observation,* we immersed ourselves in the classroom setting while taking notes and/or recording. The observation was structured or systematic because the data collection is conducted using specific variables and according to a predefined schedule.

**2.4. Research Instruments**

To capture students’ responses toward the implementation of AC and EK, we asked them to fill out the questionnaire to probe their responses toward the efforts to improve their IPC through AC and EK. The questionnaire used five-rating scale adapted from Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric for Educational Purposes (2017). The students’ responses toward the practice of teaching AC and EK in ESP settings were mostly affirmative indicated by their positive responses. 20.83% students felt strongly agree (SA) that the activities were positive (25 of out of 120), 62.5% students agreed (A) (75 out of 120), 12.5% (15 out of 120) felt fairly agreed, and the rest 4.17% (5) disagreed (DA). This means that the higher the number of students responded agreement, the more they were interested in the practice of having communication in English by integrating AC and EK to improve their IPC.

To avoid the biases of the gathered data, we also observed the classroom activities, interviewed some students, assessed the students’ video projects as well as analyzing their written self-reflection. Having integrated AC and EK, students’ IPC was found improved.

**2.5. Data Analysis and Procedures**

We analyzed the pre-and post-test data quantitatively using T-Test to find out their significant difference. The data from the video projects were analyzed using descriptive quantitative by using scoring matrix in a five-rating scale as discussed above (Celce-Murcia 2007; Castillo 2009; Kecskes 2014) and (2) regression. In the meantime, the qualitative data-words and language in the form of extended text obtained from the students’ reflections, interviews, and observations were analyzed qualitatively with three concurrent flows of activity as inspired by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The three data analysis encompassed: (1) data condensation consisting of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data. The data condensing/transforming process continues after the fieldwork is over, until a final report is completed. In this stage, data then be transformed in two ways: summary or paraphrase and through being subsumed in a larger pattern. (2) Data display aims to understand what is happening and analyzing based on our understanding of IPC, AC, and EK. In this phase, we interpreted all the data then present them in the form of patterns, explanations, causal flows, and propositions. (3) Drawing and verifying conclusions attempted to verify by crossing a short excursion back to the field notes. We clarified the meanings emerging from the data display for their plausibility and their confirmability with the so-called validity.

# 3. Findings

## 3.1. The Action Research

### 3.1.1. Planning

The practice of teaching AC and EK to improve students’ IPC in ESP settings was conducted in the following sequences: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, we initially identified the students’ preference on learning activities. We questioned their learning preference for the later learning activities to be adjusted to their existing conditions. The queries addressed were merely on whether they preferred practicing their English with native speakers, watching movies, and collaborative learning as these activities were meant to enable students to be well engaged in learning actions in the target language cultural background, as well as acquiring ethical values in their communication. Table 1 shows the result of students’ preference on learning activities in the context of improving their AC.

**Table 1:** Students’ Preferences on Learning Activities

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Activities** | **Responses** | **Number of Students** | **% Num of Students** |
| 1 | Outdoor activities/ Practice with Native Speakers | A. At Need | 80 | 66.67 |
| B. Need | 32 | 26.67 |
| C. Uncertain | 1 | 0.83 |
| D. Ignore | 1 | 0.83 |
| E. Strongly Ignore | 0 | 0.00 |
| 2 | Watching Films | A. At Need | 23 | 19.17 |
| B. Need | 75 | 62.50 |
| C. Uncertain | 14 | 11.67 |
| D. Ignore | 2 | 1.67 |
| E. Strongly Ignore | 1 | 0.83 |
| 3 | Collaborative Learning | A. At Need | 80 | 66.67 |
| B. Need | 32 | 26.67 |
| C. Uncertain | 1 | 0.83 |
| D. Ignore | 1 | 0.83 |
| E. Strongly Ignore | 0 | 0.00 |

Table 1 suggests that they preferred to practice their English with native speakers as a part of their English program and this was preferably conducted in a collaborative setting. 85% of the students felt these activities very necessary. It should be done in group rather than individual activities. This is likely because their prior learning was merely focused on grammar or structure, making them to be easily bored and passive. IPC in the English learning was not well integrated and taught in the actual teaching learning process.

In addition to identifying their needs for activities that may improve their AC, we also asked them to what extent they required Speech Acts and Politeness understanding in terms of improving their EK. Table 2 suggests their needs for learning activities in the context of improving their EK. 80% of the students agreed for the importance of Speech Acts to be emphasized in their English learning, while 75% strongly agreed that politeness was more important for their EK rather than the Speech Acts.

**Table 2**. Students’ Needs to Learn Ethical Knowledge

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Item** | **Responses** | **Number of Students** | **%**  **Response** |
| 1 | Speech Acts | A. Strongly Agree | 32 | 26.67 |
| B. Agree | 80 | 66.67 |
| C. Uncertain | 1 | 0.83 |
| D. Disagree | 1 | 0.83 |
| E. Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.00 |
| 2 | Politeness | A. Strongly Agree | 70 | 58.33 |
| B. Agree | 42 | 35.00 |
| C. Uncertain | 1 | 0.83 |
| D. Disagree | 1 | 0.83 |
| E. Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.00 |

### 3.1.2. Acting

In the Acting phase, the learning activities were initiated by explaining the nature and the notion of global communication followed by activating their existing knowledge, as well as engaging them into the global world for them to become more informative. This phase was also assisting them to be aware of intercultural, pragmatic, politeness in communication, as well as some language expressions used during the learning activities.

#### 3.1.2.1. Indoor activities

After finishing the engagement phase, we provided students with language expressions commonly used in improving IPC, we divided students into groups for the following activities. **First**, we gave several models on how native speakers use expressions for actions in the real context. To help students achieve the learning goals, films relating to hospital management issues were chosen. **Second**, we conducted a group discussion on IPC and cross-cultural knowledge, e.g., one student explained to his/her group about proper expressions and attitudes when communicating with native speakers. **Third**, students independently explored IPC expressions and learned linguistic aspects underlying the used expressions such as on how to pronounce difficult words. During the activities, we observed, recorded, and took notes on the students’ interaction during the teaching and learning activities.

#### 3.1.2.2. Outdoor activities

We also asked the students to have some outdoor activities practicing the knowledge they had learned in indoor activities (the classroom). Students had to go out with the assigned group to practice their English with native speakers they selected. Their conversations were uploaded the Google Classroom, and then discussed their videos in the following meeting. We assessed their projects using instruments as explained in the earlier part. Based on the final result of their video projects, we scored and classified their performance into the following groups: (1) no single students gained poor scores, 11 % of them were fair, 88 % were good, and the rest, only 1 % of them were very good.

### 3.1.3. Observing

Based on our observation during the teaching and learning processes, students’ speaking ability changed as well as their attitudes. Psychologically, the task of practicing speaking English with native speakers brought them to the self-awareness about the importance of being polite to other people as well as paying attention to the other cultures. In addition, they also tried hard to speak clearly in the hope that those native speakers would understand their talks. During the learning experience, they found real challenges of communicating in the real context, supporting them to use English more in a more real situation. Most students felt that it was initially hard to speak native speakers. Gradually, we observed that they had good efforts in using English in the IPC context. Communicating with people from different culture can build their confidence to communicate in English Even though, their score of AC was still under average, they showed a very progress in their improving communicative competence.

### 3.1.4. Reflecting

As for the reflection step, we interviewed the students about what they had experienced during the learning activities and how much they understood about IPC. The majority of the students believed that their learning experiences have enhanced their understanding about IPC. Students felt that they acquired meaningful experiences on learning English more naturally and had brought them into a condition that challenges them to be better. However, they at the same time also admitted that their AC was not well developed as they expected. Although they prepared well prior to communicating with some native speakers, most of them still felt nervous and even could not communicate with native speakers.

## 3.2. The Pre-and Post-test

We administered the pre- and post-test to see how far students had improved on the use of IPC. The difference in treatment was analyzed by using paired sample t-test on the gained score to find out the significant difference of the students' learning before and after the action research. In addition, we also observed students’ EK during the ESP teaching in the classroom in the sessions after they had practiced communication with the native speakers. The result of statistical calculation on the pre-and post-test is presented in Table 3-6. After the learning process, the students’ achievement in IPC was assessed based on Kreskas’s (2012) and Byram’s (2008) framework. Table 4 shows their score between pre-test and post-test. Whereas table 5 shows the result of one sample t-test with gain score. The table suggests that there is a significant difference of the students speaking score on pre- and post-test (Significant at p value < .05).

**Table 3**. Descriptive Statistics of English Pre-test and Post-test

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Descriptive Statistics** | | | | | | |
|  | N | Min | Max | Mean | SD | SE |
| Pre-test | 120 | 48.00 | 100 | 79.72 | 9.9 | .90 |
| Post-test | 120 | 64.00 | 100 | 85.15 | 8.27 | .75 |
| Gain |  | 16.00 |  | 5.43 | 1.63 | .15 |

**Table 4***. One-Sample Test*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **One-Sample Test** | | | | | | |
|  | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval | |
| Lower | Upper |
| Pre-test | 88. | 119 | .000 | 79.71 | 77.9305 | 81.50 |
| Post-test | 112 | 119 | .000 | 85.15 | 83.6558 | 86.64 |
| Gain Score | 71 | 119 | .000 | 5.43 | 3.9254 | 6.94 |

# 4. Discussion

## 4.1. The Need for Improving IPC

A classroom action research is commonly conducted to find solutions to learning problems. We conducted a need analysis and had a discussion with the students about what their problems and what they need to learn, usually termed as a learning contract. Through the need analysis stage, we intended to gain information about students' needs in terms of learning activities, material, and some pedagogical aspects. Whereas a learning contract was used to probe for the students’ intention in joining the class as well as their attitude toward the class. Based on the result of the need analysis, the students majoring in Hospital Management believed that in order to perform well in their future career, they need not only a good command of English as an international language, but they also need to have a better IPC as they will socialize across cultures (Ruiz & Spínola 2019). In addition, based on the result of the learning contract discussion, they need to improve their AC as well as their EK. Having learned AC and EK, their IPC could be improved. This was strengthened by the result of the T Test as discussed in the earlier section in that the students had gained better scores and thus their IPC improved. In addition to this, they were observed to have better learning experience, and felt more enthusiastic to join the class.

Learning AC and EK in ESP settings, for the students majoring in Hospital Management, is believed to be able to assist them to understand IPC better. IPC itself is contextually perceived as the understanding of other cultures and reflecting their understanding into their behaviors without disregarding their own culture and identity. It also means the ability to use language in proper social contexts (Barreto, 2019). IPC was not only indicated as learning other people’ language and cultures, but also strengthening their own culture. This means that students need to reinforce their existing knowledge about their own culture and identity and to reflect them in their attitude and manner. Pedagogically speaking, independent activities such as speaking practice with some native speakers gave positive contributions. Taking part in dialectical experiences as well as outdoor learning activities can support better communication with interlocutors from diverse cultural backgrounds. Meeting and conversing with native speakers even can support students to be more confident and realize their level competence either in using English and their sensibility in responding to cultural differences.

IPC is a relatively new issue in the field of sociolinguistic studies. Compared with pragmatic and multicultural, IP tends to focus on its inquiries on how to use language in the social context of language users having different first languages (L1) and representing different cultures (Kecskes 2012). He argues that the most critical point issued is how to construct interaction under diverse cultural backgrounds. This leads to the four fundamental notions: (1) interaction between native speakers and non-native speakers; (2) lingua franca communication of interlocutors having different of first language; (3) multilingual discourse; and (4) language use and development of individuals speaking more than one language. As IPC is associated with competence, pragmatic, and intercultural, both culture-related and communication skills have to be concurrently acquired by the students (Castillo 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for the students to understand language, context, and how to use them in their real life as it relates to who, where, when, what purpose, norms, relation, and language choice (Pangaribuan 2009: 68).

Learning IPC through English classes should be set based on real-life contexts. This has been widely accepted that bringing students in real-life context will lead them to be autonomous learners. At a later point, students can learn and communicate better across cultures. However, meaningful, and real-life experiences are still infrequent in many Hospital Management classes. Learning and mastering IPC through ESP for Hospital Management students were less dynamic as activities and interactions in the classroom were mostly still monotonous where they only focused on understanding less practical concept. They were not able to learn other essential aspects such as EK when communicating in English while this aspect is important for the success of their communication ability improvement. Students majoring in Hospital Management found IPC, AC, as well as EK still difficult to learn. They needed to go beyond the conceptual level in their learning and be more practical. Innovation in teaching IPC is therefore needed, such as by integrating it in the ESP teaching for the students majoring in Hospital Management. The need to improve students' IPC was indeed reflected in the first stage of the English program as shown in Table 5. We asked the students about their understanding about IPC. That information was for designing the activities in ESP context to improve IPC through students’ AC and EK.

Table 5. The Students’ Understanding on Intercultural Pragmatic Competence

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Students' Responses** | **Number of Students** | **% Number of Students** |
| Very Good | 1 | 0.83 |
| Good | 19 | 15.00 |
| Moderate | 80 | 66.67 |
| Poor | 18 | 15.00 |
| Very Poor | 3 | 2.50 |

As the majority of the students wanted to have a real experience in communicating with native speakers, they were given the opportunity to do the task independently. Their experience of meeting with and interviewing the native speaker made them feel more motivated and enthusiastic in learning English. They confessed that they could actualize their IPC. Some independent outdoor class activities brought them to the new experience of learning ESP. In the discussion session with other colleagues in the classroom, most of the students stated that AC was not a difficult lesson to study, but it was difficult to practice. EK was more abstract to learn but easy to practice. Realizing that they were in diverse culture mode or situation, students could spontaneously adjust their behaviors. As they communicated with new people, they tried to be more polite and avoided asking about sensitive issues.

## 4.2. The “Why” for Improving IPC: Resolving Disagreements

The discussion above is clear in a position that IPC is important for university students learning English as a lingua franca. Kecskes’s (2012) contends that IPC is regarded as a situationally emergent phenomenon for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. However, not many teachers as well as learners realize its necessity in English learning context, particularly in Hospital Management major. The importance of IPC is still mostly neglected. However, in given circumstances, students can naturally reconstruct the communication context with the native speakers from diverse cultures and backgrounds. When intercultural interaction occurs when students are engaged in communication in a more real and natural context, learning English will become more flexible. Kecskes (2012: 70) named such a circumstance as a come and go with unstable and non-permanent conditions built by the cultural background differences.

Learning English in Hospital Management major must be more than just understanding the language, yet the students have to also develop their IPC that will be useful for their future work Joyce & Weil (2003). Even if not for their future work, IPC will still be useful for their life when communicating with people worldwide. When students understand and internalize IPC, they would be able to comprehend, to construct, and to convey meanings that are more accurate and appropriate for their contact across diverse social and cultural background Castillo (2009: 11).

Furthermore, Kaschula & Maseko (2012: 316) views IPC as a condition for the process of building and exchanging the symbols among the speakers from different cultures. This condition supports the negotiation and meaning sharing in an interactive situation. In addition, this situation will also support the cultural, social norms and values associated with specific interactional situations (Godley (2012: 453) Fleming (2009), Byram (2012: 87). Students’ pragmatic competence (PC) is the ability to use language in the real social context, the ability to comprehend, to construct more accurate and appropriate utterances in communication across culture. Therefore, IPC should be a leading goal for teaching English either as a second or foreign language closing together between culture and communication Deda (2017).

What has been done in the classroom was an attempt to bring and reflect IPC into practice. IPC was believed to help students to meet their needs for communicating globally, and to help them overcome problems of ethical knowledge that may arise during communication across cultures. Even though the initial aim of IPC was to meet the English syllabus, institutional learning outcome target, as well as the national higher education curriculum standard, IPC would ultimately help students learn and experience real-life interaction using English ([Harish, (2014) and So & Brush (2008)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/lUzn+lF8R). Moreover, IPC will also help students be involved in the more global world [(Kelly, 2001; Murdock, 2018; Sahlén & Nettelbladt, 1993; Tufte, 2012)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/oWFh+hmnW+jrAU+JTT2).

Based on the gathered data, students obviously acknowledged that they wanted to improve their English to interact people from different countries. Therefore, learning English in ESP context, like in YKP School of Economics Yogyakarta majoring in Hospital Management, has to be designed based on their needs for communicating and integrating with people from different culture, regions, as well as societal background [Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin’s (2010)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/Q6d3). As only mastering English actional competence was not enough, they also realized that they should comprehend intercultural pragmatic competence. The students believed that they could perform well in their work requiring global competencies if they master intercultural pragmatic well [(Ruben, 2015; Shtapura-Ifrah & Benish-Weisman, 2019)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/1FDg+3bsu).

## 4.3. AC, EK, and IPC in ESP Classrooms

When communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, many students confess that they are nervous, and it is difficult for them to speak English well. At least, this was what the students majoring in Hospital Management experienced. They overcame this by working collaboratively in groups, therefore communication was better as they helped each other. This can be one of the many conditions that could be considered in improving students’ IPC. The learning experiences will foster them to work together, raise their confidence, and mind their attitude, and thus improve intercultural curiosity and awareness.

In improving IPC through AC and EK, we found three important findings of their improvements: intercultural understanding, actional English competence (AC), and understanding on ethical knowledge (EK). We observed that ESP and intercultural pragmatic competence (IPC) were interconnected. The students internalized values of IPC through their AC on English. The students believed that the teaching intervention in the action research stimulated the students to actualize intercultural pragmatism in their life and their ethical knowledge. This was found during the reflection process where they were reflecting on the journey learning English at the same time improving their AC and EK.In connection with the earlier finding, another important thing from this study is that most of the students recognized how English is used in the real context. This finding supports previous studies conducted by [AlShoaibi & Shukri, (2017); Deardorff, (2006); Ho, Hsieh, Sun, & Chen, (2017); Montero, (2015); and Yan (2013](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/L5j2+71Zw+bwdC+gqj1+QaZd)).

One activity that can be considered to support IPC is preparing the language used in the communication: *skill getting* and *skill using*. Skill getting phase is a communicative competence component and it is required for the success of IPC. It should be trained to the students Celce-Murcia (2007). Since the success of IPC relies on the students’ communicative skills, they need to be taught phrases and expressions related to the target culture. Skill using is how much is the skill used or the experience of practice English in the communication. During the learning activities, students were both taught in activities of skill getting and skill using. When they have acquired the language concepts, relevant vocabularies, how to pronounce and use them in a context, they could be involved in the real communication with the native speaker.

One alternative activity that may improve their IPC is watching English movies program. This way will lead students to be exposed cultural situations reflected in the film. After watching, they are given opportunity to practice their speaking such as expressing their experience or ideas from the films, questioning, and answering some problems, and dealing with cultural gap found in the films, etc. This sort of artificial settings inside the classroom can be used as one of the alternatives to bring in the classroom into the culture target situations. Watching film program used in the learning process supports intercultural pragmatism, however, films that have tangible cultural values with their own culture are better for their IPC improvement. Not all films can be brought into the classroom, e.g., the ones whose principles and components are close to the students’ cultural contexts.

To sum up, English for Hospital Management could help students in improving their communicative competence as expressed by [Chernyak (2017); House, (2003); Lee, (2016)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/m6wz+M7Aq+1585) who found that learning English as a foreign language and as a specific purpose can be used to transform pragmatic values. The instructional materials used in the teaching process should be based on students’ need analysis to meet their needs and the demanded curricular targets. By integrating IPC in ESP classrooms, students are engaged in various learning experiences, are more enthusiastic in learning, can collaborate with others, can practice in real communication context with native speakers. In addition, they can also internalize intercultural values that can make them more soft, flexible and pragmatic in communicating with people across cultures.

Such learning sequences have been proven to be effective to support intercultural pragmatic understanding (IPC), their actional competence on English (AC), as well as their ethical knowledge (EK). Even though, the term EK in language teaching education is not familiar yet as voiced by Kupperman (1970), it turned out to be real in our classrooms. The real practice of communicating with native speakers as a part of the classroom projects and followed personal reflection activities make them more integrated in the learned language and culture. The students admit that they have learned a lot from such activities, especially when they have to deal with people from other countries. Even though AC and EK improve students’ intercultural pragmatic competence, we believe that they are not that simple to practice. Teachers need to be able to tackle several confusions and problems encountered by the students during the learning process. Scholars being curious about actional competence and ethical knowledge in ESP contexts are still scarce. What is certain, however, is that knowledge on ethics and ethical knowledge across cultures is not unaddressed ([Block](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/uGp4+z1To+WvmB), et al., [2019; Chang, 2019, Sethy, 2018)](https://paperpile.com/c/ACuICd/uGp4+z1To+WvmB)

# 5. Conclusion

It is undoubted that learning English should bring students to be a part and take part in global communication, either in real or artificial settings. However, many teachings are still imprisoned in just making students fluent in speaking without considering pragmatic and ethical competences. This results in graduates’ inability to communicate smoothly, pragmatically, and ethically. We understand that to what extent actional, ethical knowledge, as well as intercultural pragmatic competences are necessarily taught in ESP classes is still debatable. Even its contributions are still questioned. We found integrating actional competences and ethical knowledge in teaching ESP help students improve their intercultural pragmatic competence, and this competence will then lead to improved communicative competence. In the meantime, their English proficiency is also easier to improve, attitudes and motivation towards learning English will also be better as students are more enthusiastic in learning, and their internalization of intercultural pragmatic competences reflected in their actional competence and ethical knowledge can also be improved. We share understandings that being active and being ethical in communication are subject to learners’ cultures and values. However, as long as the world is becoming more globalized and borderless where movement across cultures and geographic locations is indeed inevitable, the terms interculturally pragmatic and ethical in communication will never lose their entity.

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### Appendix 1

THE QUESTIONNAIRES TO ASSESST

STUDENTS’ RESPONSES TOWARD ACTIONAL

COMPETENCE AND ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE IN ESP SETTINGS

TO IMPROVE THEIR INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE THROUGH

1. **Participant’s Identity**

Name : ……………………………

Class : ……………………………

Student’s Number : ……………………………

1. **Instructions**

This questionnaire aims to obtain information about the response toward implementation of Actional Competence and Ethical Knowledge to improve Intercultural Pragmatic Competence of in ESP settings. We need your honest and truthful responses whether the designed learning that has been conducted during these meetings in this semester have achieved your needs. You are supposed to be willing to fill out this questionnaire hence in the future we can improve the learning process and your communication competence quality.

1. **Scale Descriptions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SA | : | Strongly agree | DA | : | Disagree |
| A | : | agree | SD | : | Strongly Disagree |
| D | : | Doubtful |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NUM.** | **STATEMENTS** | **STUDENT’S RESPONSES** | | | | |
| **SA** | **A** | **D** | **DA** | **SD** |
| 1. | I am curious to learn intercultural pragmatic competence. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | I am well motivated to learn actional competence and ethical knowledge. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | I want to improve my global communication through English. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. | I must learn intercultural pragmatic competence because I need it for my future career. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. | Ethical knowledge values such as courtesy (polite behavior) in speaking during communication are important for me to apply in real communication. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. | Learning strategies such as working in a small group can help me in improving my actional competence. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. | My interest in learning English is increasing when the English lecturer brings film in the classroom. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. | This actional competence and ethical knowledge provide a number of information on how to communicate in English and how to make acceptable communication with people having cultural background. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. | The practice of speaking with native speakers has added my knowledge on how to make global communication. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10. | Courtesy such as polite behavior is important in our life and I find it is helpful to be studied in ESP. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11. | Individual learning strategies can train me to be an autonomous learner. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12. | I can do English task independently without getting a help from my friends. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13. | Learning ESP with actional competence and ethical knowledge can improve internalization and actualization of intercultural pragmatic competence. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14. | After learning English through collaborative learning and discussing about actional competence and ethical knowledge, I began realizing about my English level. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15. | Learning English with by the emphasizing on actional competence and ethical knowledge gives insight of a global interaction and minimize misunderstandings, foster mutual respect, and improve the quality of human relations. |  |  |  |  |  |

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