GENERATION Z AND THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Chory Angela Wijayanti
Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: chory@petra.ac.id, Tel: 62-87852433522

ABSTRACT

A lot of people in older generations believe Generation Z or Gen Z, collectively, are lazy. They don't go outside and play like kids used to. Instead of going to the gym or riding a bike, they stay inside and play on their video game consoles. Another negative attribute associated with Gen Z is the inability to interact in person. On the other hand, one of the core characteristics of Generation Z is racial diversity. For this reason, intercultural communication competence is really needed. Moreover, when asked what would bring more joy to their lives in future, vacations came out on top for Gen Z, highlighting the importance of travel and adventure for this generation. Thus, the opportunity for Gen Z to meet many people with diverse cultural backgrounds becomes very large. This study was conducted to photograph the extent of intercultural communication competence currently possessed by Gen Z. Research used an interpretive or constructive paradigm with a case study method. Researcher conducted a study on how 10 (ten) Gen Z people interact with people from different cultures with them. The results showed that the ability to develop intercultural awareness is the most important thing that supports success in increasing intercultural communication competence. In addition, languange are becoming interesting thing for Gen Z when visiting other regions or countries. Meanwhile, young people are not too interested in interacting with local communities, if there is no motivation. Doing assignments in the Intercultural Communication course then becomes a motivation that moves them to interact. As a result, Gen Z then gets an increase in the ability to communicate between cultures. Therefore, it is advisable for academics to motivate and mobilize Gen Z to interact more with people from different cultures. So, they do not become a generation that is constantly labeled as a generation that is lazy and difficult to interact with others.

Keywords: generation z, gen z, intercultural, communication, competence.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of people in older generations believe Generation Z or Gen Z, collectively, are lazy. They don't go outside and play like kids used to. Instead of going to the gym or riding a bike, they stay inside and play on their video game consoles. Another negative attribute associated with Gen Z is the inability to interact in person.

Their connectivity to the technologies made the as a tech-savvy generation. Based on these systematic results, it shows that the habit of using one of the social media has an impact on the fear of being left behind in Generation Z. The use of social media cannot be separated from the life of Generation Z. So FoMO is one of the characteristics of Generation Z that distinguishes it from other generations. FOMO is usually used in marketing, industry, and lifestyle, where Generation Z is the main subject (Herawati, 2022, p.96). In more recent times, in the last decade of the twentieth century, you can observe how the convergence of "new technologies" mingled with a host of other cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors. Modes of communication brought about by digital technology and the Internet have produced numerous problems associated with privacy, language, and the use of face-to-face communication (Samovar, 2015, p.60).

The birth of Generation Z or "Strawberry Generation" is influenced by several factors, including parenting in educating and raising their children. Today's parents who raise their children with a more prosperous life tend to be able to spoil their children. Then, parents today often have excessive worries and prohibitions that make their children grow into timid children. Inaccurate parenting has the potential to cause children to grow into individuals with weak personalities, both mentally and physically (Sunggu, 2022, p.168).

This is what often makes Generation Z have difficulty interacting with others. In fact, when asked what would bring more joy to their lives in future, vacations came out on top for Gen Z, highlighting the importance of travel and adventure for this generation. Previous research even has found that pandemics have a significant effect on mental health. The pressure felt due to isolation during the pandemic gave rise to a trend, healing. Healing aims to form positive thoughts about painful events. Researchers found that Gen Z releases stress by visiting natural destinations such as mountains, beaches, and lakes (Agustina, 2022, p.74). Thus, the opportunity for Gen Z to meet many people with diverse cultural backgrounds becomes very large. For this reason, intercultural communication competence is really needed.

On the other hand, one of the core characteristics of Generation Z is racial diversity. There will be even more possibilities and opportunities for Generation Z to meet, communicate and connect with many people with different identities. For this reason, Generation Z needs to be trained to interact more often with different environments and cultures with their own, so that their intercultural communication competence is increasingly honed. In the Intercultural Communication class at Communication Science Departement, Petra Christian University, students are asked to travel to places they have never visited before. Students conduct research before leaving, to determine the right strategy in building interactions with people of different cultures. This learning method is considered effective to be able to assess the extent of intercultural communication competence possessed by students. Generation Z prefers to be involved in outdoor learning. Outdoor learning will make the process of teaching and learning less formal and can be initiated by themselves. This style of learning is the most favourable to Generation Z (Jima'ain, 2020. p.86).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Generation Z (born after 1995) are often seen as lazy employees who aren't interested in any precise activities and physical and mental effort-they don't create any- thing new, don't protest, and don't have any opinion. Mobile and computer are their communication tools, so they feel "blind" without online connection. To sum up, they should be motivated by benefits that influence work-life balance and allow them to achieve goals in diverse teams. The mentality of Z's is different-they don't need contingent pay for teams, because they represent a generation of only children, individuals, who have problems with teamwork. They constitute a group of most individualistic experts. The freedom is a significant value for them, fun at work, willingness to change here and now (Niezurawska, 2023, p.12). The generation Z was more comfortable to communicate using social media, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, rather than face to face interaction (Mutia, 2019, p. 16).

Whereas, globalization has additionally resulted in increasing intercultural relationships. Mounting immigration, urbanization, international employment, study abroad, and ease of foreign travel are facilitating contact between people with different racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. So, this is a big challenge for Generation Z, to be able to relate to people with different cultures. For this reason, it is necessary to increase intercultural communication competence.

According to Spitzberg, intercultural communication competence is "behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context." Kim offers a more detailed definition when she notes that intercultural communication competence is "the overall internal capability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely, cultural differences and unfamiliarity, inter-group posture, and the accompanying experience of stress." These two definitions, one general and one specific, suggest that being an interculturally competent communicator means analyzing the situation and selecting the correct mode of behavior. Most of the research in the area of intercultural communication competence includes (1) being motivated, (2) having a fund of knowledge to draw on, and (3) possessing certain communication skills (Samovar, 2015, p.61).

This study was conducted to photograph the extent of intercultural communication competence currently possessed by Gen Z. Research used an interpretive or constructive paradigm with a case study method. Case studies provide a real-life context to ask the how and why questions of the world (Richardson, 2018, p.1842). This method is widely known and has been applied and validated in numerous areas including education, sociology and psychology. It is viewed as a stand-alone contribution as the study provides insights, understanding and investigation into workplace practices in this instance and educational institution i.e.: university. Researcher conducted a study on how 10 (ten) Gen Z people interact with people from different cultures with them. The aim is to capture the quality of intercultural communication competence of this Generation Z.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Developing Intercultural Awareness for Increasing Intercultural Communication Competence

The results showed that the ability to develop intercultural awareness is the most important thing that supports success in increasing intercultural communication competence. This element is often

referred to as cognitive flexibility, as it refers to the ability to augment and expand knowledge about people from cultures different from your own. According to Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge, you need two kinds of knowledge to be competent—content knowledge and procedural knowledge. "Content knowledge is an understanding of topics, words, meanings, and so forth required for the situation. Procedural knowledge tells us how to assemble, plan, and perform content knowledge in a particular situation." (Samovar, 2015, p.62).

The aim is to capture the quality of intercultural communication competence of this Generation Z.

Engaging in intercultural communication is a complex activity. You need to be aware of (1) the uniqueness of each individual, (2) the hazards of over generalizing, (3) the need to be objective, (4) the necessity for compromise, and (5) the myth of believing that communication is a cure-all.

As conveyed by Darren and Torrence when interacting with the "Osing" tribe in Banyuwangi. They found the uniqueness of this tribe in preserving its culture, including how this tribe relates to other cultures.

> *They have a uniqueness and various cultural attributes, so they also have the collective consciousness to carry on and preserve ingrainedly. Although they are open to accepting other cultures, culturally contextualized, they have a high degree of preservation of their various cultural attributes. They can adapt, but without losing the basic essence of their various cultures. In fact, for them, their culture that is preserved has values that are close to human life, even philosophically, so that their culture becomes part of their lives, which moves them in carrying out the culture of the Osing Tribe.*

> *In fact, even in urban areas, there is high heterogeneity (there are Chinese Settlements, Arab Settlements, Javanese Settlements), but the Osing Tribe can still accept them and can still establish close relations, and minimize intercultural conflicts with different tribes, religions, and races. They can enjoy culture together and establish a warm, friendly intercultural communication (Darren & Torrence, 2023).*

The cognitive aspect of intercultural communication competence is represented by intercultural awareness, which refers to the ability to understand cultural conventions that affect how people interact with each other (Samovar, 2015, p.62). Through interaction, Valerie also discovered the difference between reincarnation known by the culture in Bali, and the concept of reincarnation that she had always believed in Buddhism.

> *In my tradition, I also know offerings. The difference is, in my family tradition (Chinese) offerings are given in honor of the deceased. Then, my religion believed in reincarnation. Because I am Buddhist, the concept of reincarnation is familiar but the reincarnation taught in my religion is different. Both will be reborn after death, the difference is that in my religion, people can be born into a higher realm than humans (becoming gods for example) depending on the karma done in their lives. Meanwhile, Ibu Kadek, Ibu Putu, and Kak Dewi both agree that reincarnation is between descending into a lower realm (becoming an animal for example) or still being born into a human (Valerie, 2023).*

The culture-specific method assumes that the most effective way to improve intercultural communication is to study one culture at a time and learn all the distinct and specific communication features of that culture. This approach assumes that the person is preparing to visit or work alongside members of another culture; hence, it necessitates an in-depth culture-specific orientation (Samovar, 2015, p.63). This method, by visiting and interacting with people from different cultures improving their intercultural competency. By using this technique, they learn about other's life experiences and communication traits.

In addition, languange are becoming interesting thing for Gen Z when visiting other regions or countries. Language is yet another feature common to all people and cultures. We may arrive in this world with all of the biological and anatomical tools necessary to survive, but we must learn language in order to share our ideas, feelings, and thoughts with other people. Language is an element found in all cultures, as the words a young child learns and what those words mean are directly related to culture. Language and culture are connected in a number of ways. Bailey and Peoples further develop the important role language plays in the existence of a culture when they write, "Language underlies every other aspect of a people's way of life—their relationship with the natural environment, family life, political organizations, worldview, and so forth. Most socialization of children depends on language, which means language is the main vehicle of cultural transmission from one generation to the next (Samovar, 2015, p.59). In this case, Generation Z learn new language that different from their original language, like Anastasia who learn "Tengger"'s language that she and his family did not understand and Monica, which sees the difference between Surabaya's language and Sasak's language.

> *Although speaking Javanese is still understandable to us, there are still differences between Tengger Javanese and Javanese in general. As immigrants who also understand Javanese, we still ask them if there are any vocabulary words that we do not understand. This is where the intercultural awareness that I learned can be applied and also taught to my family. Because, sometimes my family has assumed in advance the meaning of their language. In my opinion, understanding alone is not enough if it is not balanced with (Anastasia, 2023).*

> *Surabaya has a more formal greeting culture compared to Lombok. Surabaya is famous for its residents who speak in a firm, straightforward, and outspoken style. Surabaya is also known for its distinctive humor that is often inserted in conversations. On the other hand, Lombok residents tend to be more relaxed and friendly in communicating. Their speaking style is more gentle, polite, and respectful. Body cues and facial expressions can also have differences in communication between Surabaya and Lombok. Surabaya has a more energetic and expressive style in using body cues such as raising eyebrows, waving hands, or moving the body actively while talking. Lombok, on the other hand, has a more calm and controlled style in using body cues and facial expressions.* (Monica, 2023).

The same was discovered by Cornelia, who focused on the use of dialects in everyday speech.

> *The author also found new things during the oral communication process with the local community, namely the use of local languages and dialects used in daily communication. Some residents of Jengglong Village use the local language or the language of a certain tribe. When visiting Jengglong Village, visitors can hear and see*

the use of Javanese language in social and cultural interactions in the village, where this dialect is considered distinctive and still quite thick. (Cornelia, 2023)

The generation Z was more comfortable to communicate using social media, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, rather than face to face interaction. Verbally, they often used informal language, slang, and had difficulties in face to face interaction (Mutia, 2019, p. 16). This assignment provides a new experience for students to interact face to face, for the first time with someone from a different background and culture. As Bella experienced, where she finally found the right communication pattern for this interaction.

> *Maintaining speech and attitude is very important to produce good communication. My father always reminded me to apply "where the earth stands, where the sky is upheld". According to papa by applying this proverb, we can create a good relationship with the local people. As newcomers we must be able to adapt well, as simple as giving a smile, saying hello, saying "let's" when passing by as a sign of excuse, we already appreciate the host (Bella, 2023).*

B.   Motivation for Increasing Intercultural Communication Competence

Meanwhile, young people are not too interested in interacting with local communities, if there is no motivation. Doing assignments in the Intercultural Communication course then becomes a motivation that moves them to interact. As a result, Gen Z then gets an increase in the ability to communicate between cultures. Therefore, it is advisable for academics to motivate and mobilize Gen Z to interact more with people from different cultures. So, they do not become a generation that is constantly labeled as a generation that is lazy and difficult to interact with others.

As Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge point out, "Goals are particularly relevant to communication competence because they are a way of assessing your effectiveness. A communicator who achieves his or her goals is effective, therefore, more competent." Yet for you to be a competent intercultural communicator, you must learn to go beyond personal boundaries and try to find reasons to be motivated. Make that your goal, and improvement will follow (Samovar, 2015, p.62). As did Graciella, who went to visit her hometown in Mojokerto. Although she often visited this city, she felt unfamiliar with the city.

> *But after thinking about it, all this time when I visited Mojokerto, I just came and stayed at my Emak and Engkong house. Never once have I walked around to explore the city. If you think about it again, actually the city that I have often visited is arguably not a familiar city for me. That was the reason that prompted me to finally choose Mojokerto City as an observation place to do the final project of this course. (Graciella, 2023).*

The assignment of the Intercultural Communication course is intended as a means for students to interact with people with different cultures. The goal is to improve intercultural communication competence. Evidently, for Sally, this task made her more proficient in using Indonesian and Javanese, as well as starting to learn to use Tengger language, to be able to communicate better with the residents of Podokoyo village, Bromo. As for Nathasya and Elsye, the competencies they improve are how to be more open-minded, and not to give negative labels or stereotyping with people whose backgrounds are very different.

So, through my visit to Podokoyo Tourism Village, my intercultural communication skills improved. Through this visit, I learned to use my Indonesian, which is usually not good and formal, through this I also practiced using a good, polite, and correct Indonesian. I also learned to use Javanese Krama. I also gained new knowledge of culture and learned to understand the Tengger language. Moreover, here I communicated a lot with the villagers for 2 days, making me finally able to get used to it or start to be able to apply to their culture. I also try to be more open-minded because here I realize that they have various uniqueness, because they have a different cultural background from mine. That way, I will be easier to see and understand other points of view. I also learned here to accept and appreciate the differences that exist by upholding the culture in the village. (Sally, 2023)

From the various communications that exist between us and the villagers, there are many intercultural communication competencies that we use to communicate and develop unconsciously. One of them is to be open-minded and not stereotyping. Maybe at first, we had the view that we would have difficulty connecting with the residents in this village because the culture is very thick with the palace. But it turned out to be just the opposite, the people there were very friendly and even welcomed us openly. Even if they see our very different cultural backgrounds, they still respect those differences without committing acts of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, etc. discrimination (Nathasya &; Elsye, 2023).

For Anastasia, this task motivates her to make the most of the interaction. At the end of the activity, she learned the importance of respecting the different beliefs, symbols, and languages shared by others.

Starting from interacting with residents around Edelweiss Park, staying at Mr. Marno's inn, to visiting Mr. Mistono's house and being treated to Aron is an unforgettable experience. I used to only think of Bromo as a tourist area, it turns out that there are a variety of unique cultures around it. Through the Tengger community, I learned the importance of tolerance for one another. Because every morning (dawn) there will be heard the prayer song of the Hindu community who sahutan with the sound of the mosque. Minority Christian communities are recognized and freely practice their worship. During major Hindu ceremonies such as Kasada, the entire Tengger tribe community participates in helping the ceremony be carried out regardless of religious differences. This is a form of appreciation of the Tengger tribe for the relics of the ancestors (Rara Anteng and Jaka Seger). The area full of peace and tolerance is a suitable name for Wonokitri Village and other villages around Bromo. Through the Intercultural Communication course, I was also able to learn the importance of respecting differences in beliefs, symbols, and language shared by others (Anastasia, 2023).

Our next suggestion asks you to be flexible when deciding how to present yourself to another person—particularly if that person is of a culture different from your own. Flexibility means that you have a large range of behaviors you can call on. This will enable you to regulate, change, and adapt your communication behavior to be appropriate to the setting and the other person. A

competent intercultural communicator possesses a repertoire of interpersonal skills that can be applied to specific situations (Samovar, 2015, p.65).

CONCLUSION

The ability to develop intercultural awareness is the most important thing that supports success in increasing intercultural communication competence. In addition, languange are becoming interesting thing for Gen Z when visiting other regions or countries. Meanwhile, young people are not too interested in interacting with local communities, if there is no motivation. Doing assignments in the Intercultural Communication course then becomes a motivation that moves them to interact. As a result, Gen Z then gets an increase in the ability to communicate between cultures. Therefore, it is advisable for academics to motivate and mobilize Gen Z to interact more with people from different cultures. So, they do not become a generation that is constantly labeled as a generation that is lazy and difficult to interact with others.

REFERENCES

Agustina, N.K.W. & Astari, M.D.Y. (2022). *Generation Z Travel Behaviour and Changes in Travel Micro Trends.* ASEAN Journal on Hospitality and Tourism, Vol. 20, No. 3, December 2022, pp.65-76.

Herawati, I., Rizal, I., Amita, Nindy. (2022). *Impact of Social Media on Fear of Missing Out Among Z Generation: A Systematic Literature Review.* Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Psychology (JICOP), Vol. 2, No.2, pp.92-98.

Jima'ain, M.T.A., Fik, W.A., Alias, M.I., Mohamad, A.M. (2020). *Impacts and Effective Communication on Generation Z in Industrial Revolution 4.0 Era.* JETAL: Journal of English Teaching & Applied Linguistics, Vol. 01, No. 02, pp.82-87.

Muhtadi, A., Ismaniati, C., Haryanto., Miyarso, E., Dwi J, D. (2022). *Gender Perspective: Independent Learning of Generation Z in Online Learning.* Journal of Education Technology, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.191-198.

Mutia, Tika. (2019). *Phenomenology of Communication of Generation Z in Pekanbaru.* Komunikator, Vol. 11., No. 1, pp.09-17.

Richardson, L. P., Mcgowan, C., & Styger, L. (2018). *A Quality Approach to Masters Education Using an Australian Case Study A Reflection.* Journal of Educational Research, Vol.6, pp.1837–1847.

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R.E., McDaniel, E.R., Roy, C.S. (2015). *Communication Between Cultures (9th edition).* USA: Cengage Learning.

Sunggu, Febri Ompu. (2022). *Kemanusiaan Generasi Z yang Terdistraksi oleh* Artificial Intelligence. Retorik, Vo.10, No.2, pp.168-183.

Yunus, Riza M. (2021). *Increasing Human Literacy for Generation Z Through Learning to Use Technology in Indonesia.* International Journal of Science and Society, Vol. 3, Issue 4, 2021.