

Teachers' Understanding on Cultural Aspects in Teaching English (A Case Study on the English Teachers at Junior High Schools in Bulukumba)

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Abstract: Teachers of a language are also teachers of culture (Byram, 1989). Culture and teaching language cannot be separated. Thus culture must be recognised as an important area in language learning and teaching. The research questions do the English teachers understand the cultural aspects of teaching English at Junior High School in Bulukumba? And do the teachers aware of communication style as the aspect of culture in teaching English? The objectives of the research are aimed to investigate English teachers' understanding about culture, their understanding on the role of the target culture in teaching English at Junior High School in Bulukumba and to investigate English teachers' awareness on communication style as the aspect of culture in teaching English. This research is under applied sociolinguistics. The researchers investigate the understanding of the teachers on the communication style as the cultural aspect, which consists addressing people, greeting and farewell, complimenting and showing appreciation, expression emotion, giving feedback, interrupting and asking. The method of the research is qualitative and quantitative. According to Gay (1981), this method is named exploratory mixed-method design. The subjects of the research were the teachers of English at Junior High School in Bulukumba. There were 30 teachers from forty schools. In this study, the researchers used three instruments for collecting the data. They were a test, questionnaire and interviews. The research result that the teachers of junior high school in Bulukumba have varying understanding of cultural aspects of English. Their difference in understanding cultural aspects of English is influenced by how long they learn an English culture, and most of them have the average ability in understanding the culture of English, it because of they have limited time to learn a culture. Therefore, cross-cultural understanding should be taught in each English class and another subject of English.

Keywords: *Cultural Understanding, target culture, teacher, awareness.*

I. Introduction

Culture is control of people behaviour in a community and developed in family life. It also helps people to know what others expect from them and what will happen if they do not live up to their expectation. Furthermore, Brown (1980: 123) states that culture as ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools, which characterise a given group of people to know what they can do as individuals and as a member of a group. Lack of knowledge about the cultural background in English language learning, makes people not only misunderstand in communication and sometimes shocks them because of the difficulty in decoding the message sent, but also was precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing their familiar sign and symbol of social intercourse. It sometimes happens in the

situation of daily life such as when and how to give tips, when to accept and refuse the invitation, when to take statements seriously and when not. These cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms.

Language is the product of culture. One important instrument of cultural expression is language. Language is a part of the culture and plays a very important role in it. On the one hand, without language, culture would not be possible. On the other hand, language is influenced and shaped by culture; it reflects culture. Beishamayum (2010) states that the relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Culture is in language, and language is loaded with culture (Agar, 1994: 28). Brown (1980) puts that culture is a deeply

ingrained part of our being and language is the most visible and available feature of culture.

“Culture and language are so tightly related that may be regarded as parts of the same thing. No case is known of either a language or a culture existing without the other. No language can survive in isolation, and no civilisation can be built up without language. Cultural changes tend to occur along with changes in language; the two proceed to reinforce each other”. (Krishnawamy, 1992). “Knowledge of a language is undeniably part of one’s cultural heritage. A good portion of one’s identity as a member of a cultural group comes from being able to speak the group’s language. Much of our cultural knowledge is expressed to use in that language” (Baker 2001: 201).

Culture and teaching language cannot be separated. Thus culture must be recognised as an important area in language learning and teaching. If languages are taught without their cultures, students are only the strangers who are not familiar with the target languages. It is important to mention that the cultural elements of the target language should be taught carefully.

This way the writer researches the teachers understanding of culture target of English because the writer found that (1) English teachers in Indonesia have more challenging and demanding tasks due to its position as a foreign language, which means that students are not familiar with the way English is used appropriately by the users because students have less chance of exposure to the use of the language is a real situation. Thus they are said to be turning people into a “fluent fool”, or someone who speaks a foreign language well but does not understand the social or philosophical content of the language. (2) Teachers mostly focus on teaching the linguistic aspects only, such as the accuracy of grammar and structure. When students do force to communicate in English, sometimes they use inappropriate expressions. An example of students’ incorrect use of language is when they say “If I’m not wrong...” which is intended to mean, “If I’m not mistaken...” This problem does not result from a lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge because this sentence is grammatically correct. However, the student does not know the correct expression used in the target culture. Teachers should be concerned with this

case because there is a tendency that students transfer the expression used in their home culture into the target language, which is not always appropriate. It based on the statements above the writer is interested in researching teachers’ understanding of cultural aspects in teaching English

A. Problem Statement

The various issues put forward in the background give rise to the research question:

1. Do the English teachers understand the cultural aspects of teaching English at junior high schools in Makassar?
2. Do the teachers aware of communication style as the aspect of culture in teaching English?

B. Objectives

The objectives of the research are aimed to

1. Investigate English teachers’ understanding of culture, their understanding of the role of the target culture in teaching English at Junior High School in Bulukumba.
2. Investigate English teachers’ awareness of communication style as the aspect of culture in teaching English.

C. Significance

The findings of the research are expected to be:

1. For the teacher,

a) Is expected to be useful information for the teaching of language, it can enrich the teachers' theoretical concept of culture in English language teaching

b) it can give contributions to enriching the teacher’s strategy in teaching culture to the students.

2. For the learners, be a meaningful input for the learner in understanding language as well as understanding culture

3. Furthermore, the writer hopes that the result of the research will be valuable and useful information for English teachers in research to explore and investigate some other phenomena of culture in English language learning.

D. Scope

The scope of the research is viewed from three aspects, namely discipline, content and activity. By discipline, this research is under applied sociolinguistics. The content is restricted to perceive the teacher understanding of cultural aspects that is a communication style in teaching English while looking at the role of culture in language learning. Here, the writer investigates understanding of the teachers on the communication style as the culture aspect, which consist of addressing people, greeting and farewells (the way to shake hands, kind of eye contact, distance between people, amount of touching), complimenting and showing appreciation, expression emotion, giving feedback, interrupting, and asking for focus repetition in teaching English at Junior High School in Bulukumba.

II. Literature Review

This chapter presents the literature review, which deals with previous related research findings, some pertinent ideas, and conceptual framework.

A. Previous Related Research Findings

Many researchers have chosen culture as a subject to be researched, but there is some researches study about teachers' understanding of culture target. Some researchers have researched cultural aspects of English and its contribution to the teaching-learning process and social. Rodliyah, et al. (2010) showed that most teachers view culture as something comprises of sociological facets, something separable from language. However, when they were asked about the role of the target culture in ELT, most of them believed that the target culture has a positive role to make ELT more effective. Unfortunately, only a few of them incorporated the target culture in ELT due to lack of knowledge and fear of instilling inappropriate values to the students.

Genc et al. (2005) found that a significant similarity between the students' views and the theoretical benefits of a culture class, as argued by some experts in the field was observed. Regarding the benefits of learning about the culture, attending the culture class has raised cultural awareness in ELT students concerning both native

and target societies. This study illustrates how arguments of language teaching experts in favour of a culture class in language learning and teaching are justified by some sound evidence provided by the participants of this study. Cakir (2006) showed that in developing cultural awareness in the classroom, it is important that we help our students distinguish between the cultural norms, beliefs, or habits of the majority within the speech community and the individual or group deviations from some of these norms. Students should be enabled to discuss their native culture with their foreign-speaking friends at the same time that they are provided with real experiential content.

Hoa (2007) found that intercultural communication is significantly important in English language teaching in Vietnam as English has increasingly become an international language and Vietnamese learners have more and more chances to be involved in intercultural communication. In response to the call for reform in the field of language teaching and learning in Vietnam, attention to intercultural awareness can be considered as an alternative. Lessard (1997) argued that current L2 and FL teaching is indeed culture teaching. We need not be wary of culture in the L2 and FL context, even though it is also evident that there are still aspects of culture in L2 and FL education that does need further research and understanding. Beishamayum (2010) argued that culture and language are an inseparable part, and therefore, culture is relevant to the teaching and learning of a second language. Language and culture are intertwined to such an extent that one cannot survive without the other. One cannot teach language without teaching culture.

Halvorsen (2003) the results indicate that there seems to exist a relationship between the teachers' understanding of culture and their practice in school. In spite of these differences, the results have something in common. Primarily the terms culture and cultural heritage seem to be concentrated to humanistic areas and not to all school subjects. Secondly, each teacher group seems to have the same concept of culture both to life world experiences, experiences of school teaching and as general concepts. Thirdly, the results confirm a lack of correspondence between the content of the curriculum and the teachers' views and practice, especially in the last

investigation. The most explicit difference is between a normative concept of culture held by teachers in the first investigation and a more descriptive one in the last one.

B. Some Pertinent Ideas

1. Understanding is the ability to comprehend, analysing, distinguishing, and judging (Webster's Third International Dictionary). Thus, Teachers' understanding is the ability of the teachers English of Junior High School in Bulukumba to comprehend, analyse, and distinguish target culture.

2. Culture is knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour shared by a group of people. When people shared a culture, this generally means that they have shared language and communication style as well as shared customs, beliefs, attitudes and values.

3. Target Culture, this is English culture. In this case, the write, focus on a communication style that is the way people communicate and talk to each other, which consist of :

a. Addressing people is the use of titles or special words that go along with people names.

b. Greeting and farewells are expressing "Hello" and "Goodbye":

- 1) The way to shake hands
- 2) Eye contact is looking at someone in eyes
- 3) Distance between people
- 4) Amount of touching

c. Complimenting, say something to show another person that you like, or approve of someone praising.

d. Showing appreciation, showing people that you like them or like something that they did for you.

e. Expressing emotion is expressing a feeling, such as sadness, happiness, anger.

f. Showing that you understand:

- 1) Giving feedback is an answer, response; show the speaker that you are listening.
- 2) Interrupting is say something while or right after the person speaks to understand what a speaker is saying.
- 3) Asking for you focus repetition, is get the speaker to repeat word or phrase that you did not understand
- 4) Case Study, a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole.

C. Conceptual Framework

The objective of this research is to find out whether the teachers understand the target culture in teaching English. Target culture in this research is English culture aspects, which has some aspects, namely addressing people, greeting and farewells, complimenting, showing appreciation, expressing emotion, and showing that you understand. Teachers' understanding refers to the ability of the teachers to answer the test. Teachers' awareness will be shown through the questionnaire.

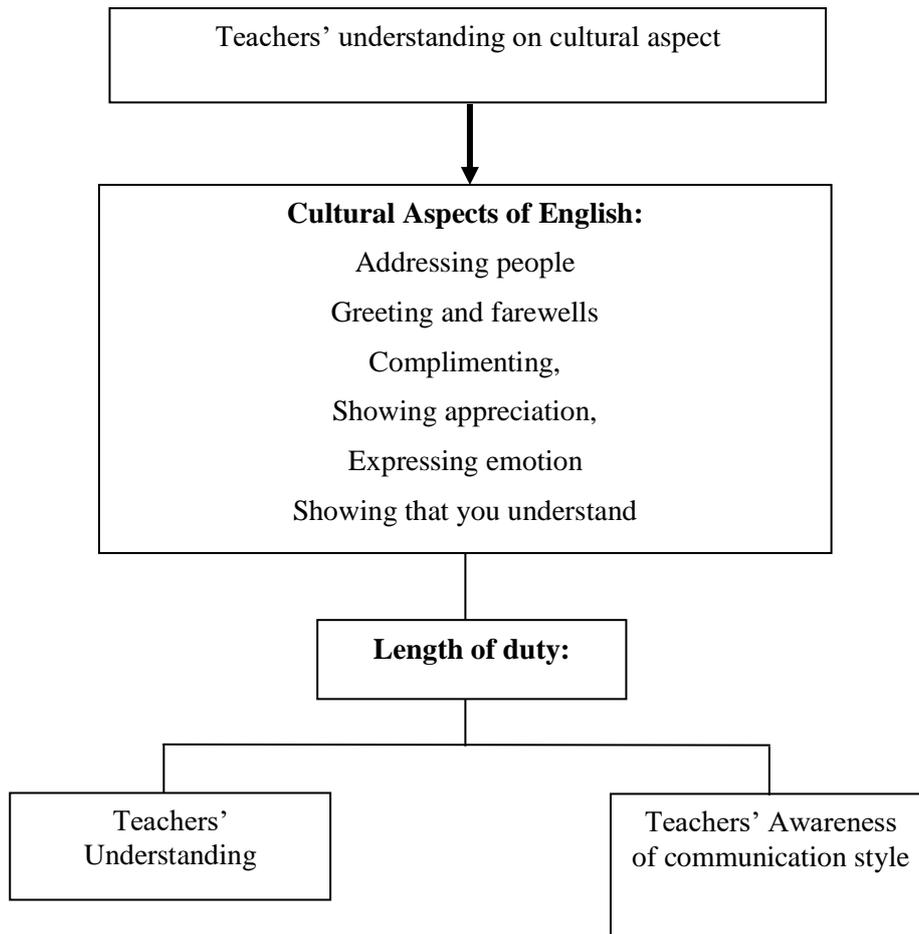


Figure 1. The figure of the conceptual framework

III. Method

This part covers the research design, subject, instrument, variable, operational definition of a variable, procedure of collecting data, and technique of data analysis

A. Research Design

The method of the research is qualitative and quantitative. According to Gay (1981), this method is named exploratory mixed-method design, the qualitative data are collected first, and the result derived from qualitative analysis is further supported by quantitative analysis. It is used to explore, identify, and describe understanding and awareness of English teacher on culture target in teaching English.

B. Subject

The Subject of the research will be the teachers of English at junior high school in Makassar. There will be 30 teachers, which categorised into three groups based on their length of duty, such as:

- a. Group one: 0 – 10 years
- b. Group two: 11 – 20 years
- c. Group three: 21 – up to

C. Research Instrument

In this study, the writer will use three instruments for collecting the data. They are as follows :

1. Test

The tests will be used in this research is multiple choice test which consisted of 15 items, to know whether or not the teachers understand the cultural aspect of teaching English at junior high school in Bulukumba.

2. Questionnaire

In this research, a questionnaire which consists of twenty items. It aims at describing teachers' attitude on cultural aspects of English

D. Research Variable

The research has some kinds of variables. The variables are the teachers' understanding of cultural aspects of English, cultural aspects, differences, awareness of communication style

E. Operational Definition of Variable

1. *Understanding* is the ability to comprehend, analysing, distinguishing, and judging (Webster's Third International Dictionary). Thus Teachers' understanding is the ability of the teachers English of Junior High School in Makassar to comprehend, analyse, and distinguish target culture.

2. *Culture* is knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour shared by a group of people. When people shared a culture, this generally means that they have shared language and communication style as well as shared customs, beliefs, attitudes and values.

3. *Cultural aspects of English*, this is the aspects of English culture. In this case, the write, focus on a communication style that is the way people communicate and talk to each other, which consist of:

- a. Addressing people is the use of titles or special words that go along with people names.
- b. Greeting and farewells are expressing "Hello" and "Goodbye" :
 - 1) The way to shake hands
 - 2) Eye contact is looking at someone in eyes
 - 3) Distance between people
 - 4) Amount of touching
- c. Complimenting, say something to show another person that you like, or approve of someone praising.
- d. Showing appreciation, showing people that you like them or like something that they did for you.
- e. Expressing emotion is expressing a feeling, such as sadness, happiness, anger.
- f. Showing that you understand:
 - 1) Giving feedback, is an answer, response; show the speaker that you are listening.
 - 2) Interrupting is say something while or right after the person speaks to understand what a speaker is saying.
 - 3) Asking for you focus repetition, is get the speaker to repeat word or phrase that you did not understand
 4. A descriptive study, a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole.

F. The technique of Data Analysis

As mention previously, this is a descriptive research which uses. Questionnaire and multiple-choice tests to obtain data. First, the data collected through the questionnaire were analysed descriptively in percentage and mean score. The data analysed based on the Likert Scale. The

researcher used the Likert Scale, which is divided into; positive statement and negative statement, such as follows:

Table 1. Likert Scale

Positive statement scores	Category	Negative statement score
4	strong agree	1
3	agree	2
2	disagree	3
1	strongly disagree	4

The questionnaire of this research will employ ten positive and ten negative statements. Hence, if a respondent answers all positive statement with strongly agree along with all ten negative ones with strongly disagree, he will get 80 scores, and the one who answers all the positive statement

with strongly disagree along with all ten negative ones with strongly agree will get 20 scores. The percentage interval of the Teachers' responses to the questionnaire was classified into fives levels as follows :

Table 2. Rating Interval

Score	Category
90% - 100%	Excellent
70% - 89%	Good
55% - 69%	Average
40% - 54%	Poor
10% - 39%	Very Poor

www.wikipedia.org/wiki/core_parameters/classification-table

The formula will use in analyzing the data is:

$$P = \frac{Fq}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = Percentage from test and questionnaire

F q = Number of Frequency

N = Total Samples

(Sudjana, 1996)

Second, the data which collected trough multiple-choice test will also be analysed by using descriptive analysis. The writer, firstly, will find out the existence of each group level of the teachers. Secondly, tabulate the score and

analysed it into percentages. Thirdly, the writer will find out the mean score. To find out the teachers mean score, the following formula is applied:

ΣX

X: -----

N

Notation :

X: mean score
 ΣX : the sum of all the scores
 N: Number of teachers

To analyse the data, the writer uses scale 1-10 as the scoring rate for each level of all items. The lowest score is one and the highest one is 10. For the whole level, the lowest score was one and the highest score was 10 — this score found by calculating the three levels of teachers.

Third, the data from a questionnaire and multiple-choice test will also be analysed descriptively by using analysis of variance (ANOVA). It aims to know whether the difference understanding among levels is significant or not after that analysed into Scheffe' test to find out which class performed significantly better.

IV. Findings

This chapter deals with the findings of the research and the discussion of the findings. The findings of the research are presented as data

description based on the result of the data analysis of data obtained through questionnaires and multiple-choice tests. The discussion deals with the interpretation and further information about the findings.

In this part, the data are presented to show the understanding of teachers of Junior High School on the cultural aspects in teaching English which focus on communication style and the awareness of the teachers on communication style as the aspect of culture in teaching English

A. Teachers understanding of cultural aspects of English

To know the understanding of the teachers on the cultural aspects of English, the score was classified, tabulated, and analyzed into percentage and more score.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution and Score Percentage of Group One (first level) Teachers

No.	Qualification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9-10	-	0%
2.	Good	7-8	2	20%
3.	Average	5-6	6	60%
4.	Poor	3-4	2	20%
5.	Very Poor	1-2	-	0%
Total			10	100%

Table 3 above shows that the majority (60%) of the teachers got "Average" qualification, some of them (20%) were "good", 20% of the teachers got "poor" qualification, none of them got "Excellent" and "very poor".

The mean score of the group one (first level) teachers in understanding cultural aspects of English was 5,79, which indicates average.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution and Score Percentage of Group Two (second level) Teachers

No.	Qualification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
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1.	Excellent	9-10	-	0%
2.	Good	7-8	5	50%
3.	Average	5-6	2	20%
4.	Poor	3-4	3	30%
5.	Very Poor	1-2	-	0%
Total			20	100%

Table 4 above shows that most of the teachers (50%) got “good” qualification, 20% of the teachers were “average”, some of them (30%) got “poor”, and none of them got “excellent” and

“very poor” qualification. The mean score of the second level teachers was 6.07 classified as “average”.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution and Score Percentage of Group Three (third level) Teachers

No.	Qualification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9-10	1	10%
2.	Good	7-8	5	50%
3.	Average	5-6	2	20%
4.	Poor	3-4	1	10%
5.	Very Poor	1-2	1	10%
Total			20	100%

Table above shows that 10% of the teachers got “excellent”, the majority of the teachers (50%) got “good” qualification, 20% of the teachers who were “Average” few of them (10%) got “poor”, and 10% got “very poor” qualification.

The mean score of the third level teachers in understanding the cultural aspects of English was 6.57 indicates average.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution and Score Percentage of All Levels (Group one, two, three) Teachers

No.	Qualification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9-10	1	3.3%
2.	Good	7-8	12	40%
3.	Average	5-6	10	33.3%
4.	Poor	3-4	6	20%
5.	Very Poor	1-2	1	3.3%
Total			30	100%

Table 6 shows that 3.3% of the teachers got “excellent”, 40% of them got “good”, 33.3 % of the teachers classified as “Average” and 20% as “poor” qualification. The teachers who were got “very poor” qualifications were 3.3%.

The total score of the teachers which obtained through multiple-choice test is 184. It means that

the mean score of the students is 6.14 which indicates that the teachers understood of cultural aspects of English fall into “Average” Qualification.

B. Teachers awareness cultural aspects of English

To know the teachers' awareness of the cultural aspect of English, the collected data tabulated into frequency distribution and analysed into percentage and mean score.

It was found that group one of the teachers has "average" attitude on the cultural aspect of English. It was proved by the aggregate percentage of the teachers who agree plus strongly agree was 61% and 39% disagreed plus strongly disagree for positive statements, and for negative statements 25% of the teachers agreed plus strongly agree and 75% disagreed plus strongly disagree. And the mean score was 54.90, which also classified "average".

Group two teachers have "average" attitude on the cultural aspect of English. It was proved 64% of the teachers who agreed plus strongly agree and 36% disagreed plus strongly disagree for the positive statement. And 28% who agreed plus strongly agree and 72% disagree and strongly disagree with negative statements. The means

score of the semester for the student was 56,20, which considered "Average".

There were 69% of group three teachers agreed plus strongly agree and 31% disagreed plus strongly disagree for positive statements and for negative statements it was found 29% of the teachers agreed plus strongly agree and 71% disagreed plus strongly disagree. The mean score was 57.8 which indicates "Average".

The aggregate percentage of all levels (group) teachers who agreed plus strongly agree was 65%, 35% of the teachers have disagreed plus strongly agree for the positive statement. And for the negative statement, it was 27% of them were agree plus strongly agree, 73% disagreed plus strongly disagree. The mean score was 52.2 which indicate average.

After finding the raw score of the respondents from the attitude scale, the writer tabulated and found out the mean score (x) and standard deviation (Sd) (See Appendix E). it was found :

Table 7. Mean score and standard deviation of each group of English teachers

Group One		Group Two		Group Three	
X ₁	Sd	X ₂	sd	X ₃	Sd
7.13	0.17	7.16	0.28	7.24	2.35

To know whether the difference data above is significance or no significance, the writer used the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 8. The ANOVA Summary Table for Teachers' Attitude Toward Cultural Aspects of English

Source	Sum square	df	Mean square	F-Value	F-Table
Between	0.07	2	0.03	0.13	3.35
Within	6.78	27	0.25		
Total	6.85	29			

From the table above, we find that for attitude scale the different attitude between group one, two, and three English teachers toward cultural aspects of English which focus on communicative style is not significant because F-Value is smaller than F-Table (0.13 < 3.35).

Based on the presentation of the finding in the previous part, the writer presents the interpretation of the findings to explain in detail.

The presentation of the discussion consist of three parts. The first one is the discussion of data analysis obtained through multiple choice test which intends to describe the teachers' understanding of cultural aspects of English. The second one is the discussion of the difference between group one, two, and three English teachers on the cultural aspects of English which focus on communication style. The third data analysis obtained through a questionnaire, which

intends to know the teachers' attitude toward of cultural aspects of English

C. The Teachers Understanding of Cultural Aspects of English

The result of data analysis shows that the English teachers of junior high school in Makassar were an average understanding of the cultural aspects of English. It was proved by the aggregate percentage and mean score the students got from multiple-choice tests. It was found that the majority of the students (40%) got "good" qualification, some of them (33.3%) got "average" and the rest of them (20%) got "poor". "Excellent" and "very poor" qualification each got 3.3%. The total mean score of the students is 5.88 which indicates that the teachers were understanding of cultural aspects of English fall into "Average" qualification.

D. Teachers awareness toward cultural aspects of English

The result of data analysis shows that the English teachers of junior high school in Bulukumba were an average understanding of the cultural aspects of English. It was proved by the aggregate percentage the students got from the questionnaire. It was 64% of the students were agree plus strongly agree and 36% disagreed plus disagree for positive statements. And for negative statements, it was found 42% of the students were agree plus strongly agree, and 58% disagreed plus strongly disagree. The mean score is 58.71.

Based on the presentation in the previous part, the analysed data from attitude scale shows that there is no significant difference between semester 2, 4, and 6 students in understanding cultural aspects of English, it was found that the F-Value is smaller than F-Table, it may be caused of the students are from the same background culture and they are difficult to agree with English culture, they are influenced much by their own culture. They need time to get inside English culture, but it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for them ever fully to get inside a culture that is not their own. Levine (1987) says that understanding another culture does not mean that agree with it.

V. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the analysis and discussion put forward in the previous chapter, the writer

concludes that the English teachers at Junior High School in Bulukumba have very understanding of cultural aspects of English. Their difference in understanding cultural aspects of English is influenced by how long they learn an English culture, and most of them have the average ability in the understanding culture of English, it caused of they have limited time to learn a culture. Therefore, cross-cultural understanding should be taught in each semester like other subjects of English.

Considering the conclusion above the writer further suggests the following points:

Since the culture is acknowledged as one important part in learning the language, all students, particularly those who are majoring English, are expected to be able to understand the culture of English.

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