





# Conceptualizing and integrating intercultural communicative competence in the English Language Teaching

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**Abstract:** Numerous higher education institutions prepare students English skills for life and jobs in a globalized world in light of current developments in international education. For many universities, they entails expanding educational exchange opportunities for domestic and international students, internationalizing the curriculum and campus, and helping students achieve intercultural competency. This research explored the concept of intercultural communicative competence in the teaching of the English language. It articulated the Byram's framework. This research was a literature study with descriptive qualitative research and the latest literature review to illustrate the importance of integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) to the instructor in English learning and teaching. Some collection and review of references through scientific literature sources related to ICC and the integration in English language teaching keywords were addressed. As for the author's reference sources, they were determined from 2015 to 2023. The results of the study showed that the promoting and conceptualizing ICC in English classroom practice to the teacher has an important role in helping students achieve and develop learning activities that can be practiced directly by students in everyday life. Moreover, it was also mentioned that integrating the framework of the proposed concept into English Language Teaching (ELT) could help students develop their linguistic, intercultural competence, and sociocultural skills to communicating in proper English in appropriate real-life situations, and raised the teachers' awareness.

**Keywords:** *intercultural, English language communicative competence, integration, pedagogical*



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## ARTICLE HISTORY

- Submitted 5 May 2023
- Accepted 21 March 2024
- Published 23 March 2024

## CITATION (APA STYLE)

Abidin, M.Z., Faresta, R.A., Malisa, M., Narayana, I.G.P.P., Fitriani, L.U., Andika, J.D., & Waly, M.M. (2024). Conceptualizing and integrating intercultural communicative competence in the English Language Teaching. *Diksi*, 32(1), 33-46 <https://doi.org/10.21831/diksi.v32i1.60441>.

## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication skills are essential to consider in the current era of globalization when dealing with individuals from various backgrounds and cultures. In addition, Mostafaei Alaei and Nosrati (2018); Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) mention that the goals of teaching second and foreign languages have been severely challenged by the phenomenon of globalization, the development of new communication technologies, and the consequent disappearance of national borders, which has transformed human society into a globally connected network in which people must learn how to communicate competently in intercultural contexts. This gap has challenged the aims of second and foreign language teaching drastically. Consequently, more universities are following the trend by including the English language in their academic curricula to meet the expanding demand for English courses and

keep on track with its development as the primary language of educational institutions. Samia (2019) indicates that in this globalization phase, the emergence of English as a lingua franca is one of the main reasons why English language learners at the moment ought to be interculturally competent. Thus, mastering the English language and gaining knowledge of other cultures is essential for developing lifelong skills and effective intercultural instruction despite being a requirement in the foreign language learning process. In addition, Rao (2019) mentions that it is apparent that English is the only language widely utilized to connect with people from various countries worldwide.

English is one of the languages that is most often spoken. Additionally, almost everyone learns, speaks, or uses English as a second, foreign, or other language for communication and interaction. Numerous scholars have attempted to define a term by considering various facets of English consumption in different contexts. For example, Ahulu (1977) coins it “General English,” McArthur (1987) says it “World Standard (Spoken) English, whereas Crystal (2005) invents the phrase “English as a global language,” and House (1997) and Jenkins (2007) name it “English as a Lingua Franca.” Furthermore, Widdowson (1997), (Modiano, 1999), and Jenkins (2000) coined another phrase, “English as an International Language,” and Brutt-Griffler (2006) invented a new word, “World English.” Most of them claimed that an English language function had the same meaning as another language, showing that English is the language that is spoken and utilized the most across the board in major industries around the world. However, in this research context, taking into consideration the situation, Indonesian teachers have been using the ICC since 2006. Nevertheless, the fact that even after graduating from the upper secondary level, most students in our nation still struggle to communicate in English. As a result, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach suggests new roles for teachers and students in the classroom that have been put into practice, but the result is still low.

Consequently, to master the students’ abilities, English teachers’ understanding of and attitudes toward the integration of ICC are essential in their English practice. As ICC is closely related to students’ communication skills, it is essential to understand it and encourage teachers to do so. Therefore, the integration of intercultural language learning (ICLL) in English language teaching practice is a mind-blowing topic in education mainly in this research context where English is the primary language usage in most universities in Indonesia. Correspondingly, the diversity and ongoing evolution of contemporary society should be emphasized. People from different linguistic cultures, religious backgrounds, and ethnic and racial groups must be integrated into societies. This integration is predicated on the notion that education can lead some principles like tolerance, freedom, openness, acceptance of differences, understanding diversity, pluralism, and collaborating (Chiriac & Panciuc, 2015).

Many scholars have contended that only attaining communication competence is insufficient, and that the concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) must also be considered (Byram, 1997; G.-M. Chen, 2010; G.-M. Chen & Starosta, 1997; A. E. Fantini, 2020; Larzén-Östermark, 2008; A. Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997). According to them, the goal of teaching foreign languages should be to help students become more proficient in both language and culture so they can interact with others from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds despite the fact that several nations have applied the ICC development in their foreign language education policies (Britain, Europe, United States, etc.). In this way, based on (Byram, 1997) approach, the intercultural communicative (ACTFL, 1996), (Council of Europe, 2001), and British Quality Assurance give foreign language teachers a framework for creating and accessing ICC and motivate them to use it in their teaching environments. Furthermore, several scholars have offered strategies for using ICC in classes teaching foreign languages (Byram, 1997; A. J. Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

In education, intercultural language learning (ICLL) refers to the use of language to develop and shape better intercultural understanding. In the ICLL context, constructivism theory can help understand how students learn to integrate and apply their cultural knowledge in speaking and writing contexts (Eun, 2010). Several studies have shown that integrating intercultural language learning can significantly benefit students. Chen and Yang (2016) explain that students who were involved in an intercultural language learning integration program improved language skills, cultural knowledge, and attitudes toward other cultures. As Promwatcharanon (2017) asserts that the integration of ICC; a case study of English language instructors in higher education discovered that instructors had a high level of ICC integration in their classes.

In comparison, Harmer (2008) “English was already well on its way to becoming a genuine lingua franca”. He continued by saying that English has developed into a genuine lingua franca for use in scholarly conversation, travelling, culture in general, economics, etc.

The term “intercultural communicative competence” refers to this idea. Bennett (2013) described ICC as “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts”. The skill to be effectively interact across cultural borders is described as intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). Similarly Spitzberg and Chagnon in (Minoia, 2019), stated that intercultural competence is concerned with managing interactions between people who, to varying degrees, represent various or divergent affective, cognitive-affective, and behavioral worldviews.

However, studies examining EFL teachers’ ICC level are limited, despite the critical role that teachers’ ICC plays in their ICC instruction for instance like (Kadriye & Unaldi, 2014; Saricoban & Oz, 2014; Zhou, 2011).

A research from Zhou (2011) examined Chinese university EFL teachers' ICC level by using a self-report questionnaire. The findings showed that the instructors' perceived level of intercultural competency was somewhat higher than average. Out of the four aspects of intercultural competency, the individuals showed the greatest degree of attitudes and the lowest level of knowledge.

Thus, the ICC takes language teaching into account and concentrates on people's abilities to interact with people from another country and culture using a foreign language. Byram et al. (2002) mentioned when persons speak to one another, they do more than just exchange information; they also see one another as unique individuals and members of particular social groups, such as "workers" and "employers" or "instructors and "pupils," for instance. This has an impact on what they say, how they say it, how they anticipate being reacted to, and how they interpret it. Saricoban and Oz (2014) affirm that English teachers should have a high level of ICC themselves in order to support the ICC of their students (Byram, 1997; Garrido et al., 2006; Zhou, 2011). Meaning that teachers tend to be more eager to encourage ICC in their students the more familiar they are with the culture of the foreign language they teach (Sercu, 2004). In addition, Kadriye and Unaldi (2014) define teachers' ICC as their "professionalism" and assert that educators should cultivate ICC to fulfill the demands of the intercultural world and facilitate easier cross-cultural communication for future generations of learners. Therefore, the objective of this study tried to conceptualize, articulate, and gained insights into the previously published article in which discuss in terms of ICC concept, strategies, and the importance of integrating ICC into ELT practice among teachers who teach English as a second or foreign language.

## **METHOD**

This study used a qualitative design approach based on previously published scientific research findings. A literature study is a collection of tasks involving procedures for managing research resources, reading and taking notes, and gathering library data. Finding theoretical references pertinent to the cases or problems discovered is another way to understand the literature study. Books, journals, research report articles, and websites on the internet can all be searched for these references (Pilendia, 2020). To choose which research studies to include in their review, the authors employed selection criteria. These standards provide direction for the evaluation procedure, guaranteeing uniformity and openness. Finally, researchers explored the literature in journals related to keyword integration and ICC, as well as ELT. The gathered data were then analyzed using the content analysis technique, which is a scientific analysis of message or literature contents (Januariawan et al., 2020). To sum up, after conducting the data collection and analysis, the authors divided the article into 36 that had been adjusted



to the keywords and criteria related to integration and intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Byram's theory is an important theory in English language education that focuses on developing intercultural competence through language learning. The theory has strong relevance in English pedagogy settings as it emphasizes the importance of understanding culture and its underlying values to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts. In Byram framework comprises five components such as attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Byram framework comprises five components attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

In English pedagogic content, fostering positive attitudes towards learning the language and understanding its associated cultures is crucial. Teachers can incorporate diverse cultural materials and activities to encourage students to develop open-mindedness, curiosity, and respect for other cultures. Besides attitude, English pedagogic content should include not only language skills but also cultural knowledge related to English-speaking countries. This includes teaching about history, literature, social norms, and values to provide a comprehensive understanding of the language and its context. In relation to skills of interpretation and relating, English pedagogic content can enhance these skills by including authentic cultural materials such as songs, movies, and literature. Students can practice interpreting these materials and relating them to their own cultural backgrounds, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural differences and similarities. Meanwhile, English pedagogic content can promote the skills of discovery and interaction by incorporating activities that require students to interact with native speakers or access authentic cultural resources. This could include virtual exchanges, cultural immersion experiences, or research projects that involve engaging with English-speaking communities. Moreover, English pedagogic content can develop critical cultural awareness by encouraging students to critically analyze cultural stereotypes, biases, and assumptions present in media and society. Teachers can guide students to question and reflect on their own cultural perspectives and biases, fostering a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity.

The table below presented some beneficial implementation of intercultural communicative competence based on Byram' Framework (1997).

Table 1. Byram's framework on intercultural communicative competence

Aspects	Description	Skills
Attitudes	curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The readiness of students to interact with persons from different cultural backgrounds.</li> <li>2. The desire of students to learn about different viewpoints on cultural or personal practices.</li> <li>3. Students' readiness to experience various adaptation stages to interact with other cultures.</li> </ol>
Knowledge	Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge about numerous approaches for contacting other people from other countries.</li> <li>2. Knowledge about multiple factors that lead to miscommunication between speakers from different cultural backgrounds.</li> </ol>
Skill of Interpreting and Relating	Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and connect it to one's own documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The capacity to identify and describe the roots of ethnocentric ideas in a text or event.</li> <li>2. The capacity to identify communication breakdowns and dysfunction and to explain how each cultural system contributes to those problems.</li> <li>3. The ability to mediate between competing theories on a phenomenon.</li> </ol>
Skills of discovery and interaction	The capacity to learn new things about a culture and its customs as well as the ability to use existing knowledge, attitudes, and abilities within the limitations of in-the-moment engagement and communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proficiency to recognize important cultural and linguistic allusions and to deduce their implications.</li> <li>2. The capacity to recognize consistent and inconsistent verbal and nonverbal interaction patterns and negotiate a use that is acceptable for the situation.</li> <li>3. The ability to elicit from a speaker the concepts and values of documents or events and to create an explanatory framework that may be used to explain other phenomena.</li> </ol>
critical cultural awareness	The capacity to assess viewpoints, customs, and goods in one's own and other cultures and nations critically and according to clear criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity to interact with and moderate cross-cultural interactions in accordance with stated criteria, negotiating a level of acceptability when appropriate by utilizing one's own knowledge, abilities, and attitudes.</li> <li>2. The capacity to recognize and comprehend explicit or implicit values in personal and other cultures' documents and occurrences.</li> <li>3. The capacity to formulate an evaluation of the documents and events that makes clear reference to a perspective and standards.</li> </ol>

Teachers play a crucial role in modeling intercultural communicative competence. They should demonstrate openness, respect, and curiosity towards different cultures, serving as role models for students. Integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) into an English pedagogical setting involves incorporating activities, materials, and approaches that promote the development of intercultural understanding and communication skills. According to Barna in (Jandt, 2007) thought that, to have effective and peaceful intercultural communication, people needed to learn about and respect differences and similarities. They also needed to avoid negative stereotypes, prejudice, and misunderstandings. Therefore, having ICC knowledge is essential.

## **Discussion**

### ***Intercultural communicative competence***

Research studies from Jandt (2007) indicates that understanding what culture means is essential before discussing the ICC. A specific social group's members all share a particular set of symbols, values, beliefs, rituals, conventions, attitudes, and social practices. According to Jandt, these cultural beliefs, practices, and traditions are actively and continuously passed down through families, communities, and people beginning at birth. Intercultural communication competency (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, the researchers note that a student's ICC skills are essential in this situation due to entail having a thorough understanding of cultural differences, being aware of different cultural norms and values, and having the ability to adapt to and overcome these differences in communication situations, especially with people from diverse backgrounds. It is in line with a study from Dewey, (2007) asserts that English has become the universal language due to globalization, and continual migration, all of which have resulted in cultural diversity and hybridity. English is becoming a communication tool for non-native speakers above all else, even among native speakers (Marczak, 2010, 13). Therefore, the idea of a native speaker serving as a role model is rejected by the intercultural communicative competency approach. Rather, the paradigm proposes that in a foreign language classroom, language and culture meanings should be negotiated.

That is, in the context of English language teaching where the subject learned by the students, and intercultural communicative competence, first introduced by (Byram, 1997) is an attempt to bring together two aspects, namely communicative ability and intercultural ability. In Byram's (1997) view of intercultural communicative ability is an expanded version of Communicative Language Teaching. Furthermore, in his views, Byram (1997) classified communication skills into six categories: language skills, sociolinguistic skills, discourse skills, strategic skills, socio-cultural skills, and social skills. The capacity to generate meaningful utterances that follow

the rules of the target language is referred to as linguistic competence. The phrase “sociolinguistic competence” refers to a type of knowledge of factors that influence the choice of language structures, such as the context of the conversation, the relationship between interlocutors, or the aim of what is being said. Using suitable procedures to produce and interpret texts is a necessary component of discourse competency. The ability of learners to resolve misunderstandings resulting from inadequate language proficiency is known as strategic competence. This includes techniques such as asking for clarification, repeating sentences, and rephrasing them. Lastly, it has to do with socio-cultural competence, which is the knowledge and capacity of competence linked to elements like drive, attitude, confidence, and empathy (Byram, 1997). As a result, ICC places a strong emphasis on students’ capacity to understand the cultures and thought processes of others in addition to their language proficiency. As more people interact with one another, the ICC is crucial in the current context of globalization. The ICC is becoming increasingly significant in the current climate of globalization as more and more individuals contact others from different cultural origins in their daily lives and at work.

Castro et al., (2004) claimed that as teachers’ educational experiences as students might have a lasting influence on their professional lives, their goals for including intercultural elements into language instruction may be impacted by their past language learning experiences. In a rare instance of an empirical study, Peiser and Jones (2014) examined how English language teachers perceived the value of intercultural knowledge in the context of the country’s modern foreign language curriculum. They discovered that the intercultural teaching ideas of the teachers were significantly shaped by their unique personalities, interests, and cross-cultural experiences in English-speaking nations. Moreover, they indicated that, despite the lack of empirical support to date, teacher personal factors appeared to have considerably greater influence than contextual ones. Contextual elements were also found to have a substantial impact on language teachers’ cognition when teaching intercultural communicative skills, in comparison to the individual factors previously discussed. As explained by Sercu (2004) Foreign language instructors’ decisions about how to teach intercultural communicative skills were greatly influenced by real-world educational situations, instructional resources, or teacher preparation.

Larzén-Östermark (2008) stated that non-native English teachers’ opinions on teaching intercultural communicative competence were constrained by a number of factors, including a lack of time to teach intercultural content, a lack of appropriate teaching materials, pressure to follow traditional teaching methods, a lack of interest from students in intercultural learning, and heterogeneous student groups.

ICC emphasizes the ability to interact directly with individuals from various cultural contexts. This can include the capacity to comprehend how



cultural differences in language and body language can express themselves, as well as knowledge of various cultures' social mores and conventions. One needs to keep becoming more conscious of cultural differences and educate them on working around them when communicating to improve ICC. It could entail speaking with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, learning a new language, or reading literature or articles about cultures. To further aid students in understanding how something is utilized in different contexts or daily life, other items may also be used in the classroom. As a result, ICC can improve a person's capacity to work in a multicultural setting and effectively communicate with people from various cultural backgrounds. Based on Hymes (1972) an investigation of the interactions between native speakers is known as communicative competence. However, a foreign language can be used as a communication tool with a native speaker or another foreign speaker, as in lingua franca situations. It should concern what happens when people move to and live in a nation with a different language, customs, beliefs, and common worldviews, such as a distinct culture. Put forward, it is important to adapt and create a communicative competence theory. Language acquisition should precisely regard the importance of cultural factors in cross-cultural communication from multiple angles. For instance, workers believe that learning a foreign language is one of the prerequisites for doing business internationally. On the other hand, parents see learning English as a critical investment in their kids and a method to pass on social and cultural capital to future generations.

### ***The implementation of intercultural communication skills into the teaching and learning of the English language***

The goal of integrating intercultural learning and language teaching in education, according to popular belief, is to help students learn about and comprehend the diverse cultures that are present to them, to understand the similarities and differences among the diverse cultures, and to view the diverse cultures from a variety of perspectives as they acquire knowledge of the target language and culture (Corbett et al., 2002). In the current era of globalization, the capacity to interact successfully with people from varied cultural origins is becoming increasingly important. English is one of the international languages utilized the most for communication. Intercultural communication skills must, therefore, be incorporated into English teaching and learning. It is also reinforced by the research done by Samia (2019), who stated that promoting the integration of culture into the study of foreign languages should be a continuing academic goal because it has numerous advantages for language learners. Hoa and Vien (2019) articulated teachers' graduate education rather than their international teaching experience or use of textbooks had a beneficial influence on how they taught across cultures. Although they rarely participated in intercultural activities

in their practices, teachers understood intercultural integration well. Therefore, the implementation of cultural communicative competence is needed in the pedagogy competence of the teacher. They also recommended that educational management coordinate all curricular components toward intercultural education to comply with progressive reform. Teachers should have intercultural teaching pedagogy training to undertake the suitable activities to develop students' intercultural communication skills. To sum up, enhancing their enjoyment of language learning helps them develop skills that will last a lifetime, broaden their awareness of cultural diversity, and deepen their understanding of the world. By developing intercultural competence, learners gain insights into cultural practices, values, and perspectives, enhancing their communication effectiveness and cultural sensitivity (Knowles & Kramsch, 1995).

### ***Three Phases for Instructors in integrating culture in the language classroom***

*Observing differences between the target culture or language (TC/TL) and native culture or native language (NC/NL)*

The first stage, essentially an introduction, draws learners' attention to the cultural component that may be unfamiliar or dissimilar to their own. The instructor may start the class discussion at this point using texts, images, videos, movies, audio, dialogues, and songs. It enables him or her to stimulate students' conceptual understanding of the subject and to increase their awareness of the relevant cultural issue. For instance, watching a video about a British wedding ceremony helps students identify aspects of their own culture that are foreign. The cultural dimension is brought into focus by noticing, and learners are prone to adopt indulgent viewpoints.

*Comparing differences between TC/TL and NC/NL*

The following step calls for the FL instructor to have some understanding of the target culture, especially if they are not native speakers (as is frequently the case in Algerian EFL classrooms). He or she is not required to be an expert but, at the very least, should be well-versed enough to decipher the meanings of the chosen cultural input. On the other hand, students are expected to use independent discovery methods. To determine parallels and discrepancies between their NC and TC, for instance, one might ask one's peers or the teacher or even search online (if one is available).

*Interpreting and reflecting on the differences*

The instructor may help learners to understand more cultural knowledge, values, and behaviours after identifying a specific number of cultural similarities and differences. By doing this, students are more likely to understand concepts at a deeper level and develop critical cross-cultural skills.

This, based on Samia (2019), claimed that these steps are the most fruitful learning stage of the “acculturation” process because it involves deliberate exploitation of the cultural components while keeping in mind the linguistic ones. It should involve an active exchange in which the instructor guides a more in-depth conversation with the students and, to the best of his or her ability, interprets the cultural input. Additionally, it aims to produce a critical mindset that results from the examination and assessment of both one’s own culture and that of other cultures.

Thus, English teachers can improve their intercultural communication skills and find ways to apply them to their classroom instruction. Understanding the value of intercultural communication abilities will be expected to help effectively integrate these abilities into English teaching and learning. According to prior research, intercultural communicative ability should be incorporated into the instruction of the English language. Hasanah and Gunawan (2020) asserted that combining ICC in ELT is important for helping students solve cultural shocks and misunderstandings. They both agreed that language and culture are interconnected and always changing. Again, Sugianto and Ulfah, (2020) asserted that teachers have favorable views of the integration of ICC into teaching and learning English and that the integration can aid and engage students in learning the target language. Sugianto thought that the integration, particularly the curriculum, infrastructure, and teacher development dealing with the target culture, had not progressed adequately. To use intercultural materials and activities to teach students to become competent in both intercultural and language abilities. Hoa and Vien (2019) proposed that teachers require thorough guidance and training in intercultural teaching. They made the same assumption as Sugianto: that intercultural integration is not well implemented in the teaching of English. In addition, some professionals, such as (Byram & Feng, 2004; Sun, 2013), think that pupils need to study the cultures of the language’s other speakers to grasp a foreign language, like English. According to Corbett et al., (2002) pupils can learn the grammatical conventions and cultural aspects of the target language through English.

## **CONCLUSION**

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) can be defined as understanding cultural differences in a learning context. To achieve the goal of a more inclusive and effective learning environment where students can communicate effectively and respect cultural differences, applying this integration is important, especially for instructors who will enhance cross-cultural collaboration globally and foster a more peaceful environment. The integration between ICC and pedagogy involving responsive learning for the needs of students from various cultural backgrounds is essential to maintaining their cultural identity and building a higher awareness of

cultural diversity. Consequently, there is a need for those teachers and or instructors to have the knowledge and skills to integrate ICC into their teaching and learning practice in order to facilitate effective intercultural communication and promote a better understanding of cultural differences. To sum up, integrating ICC and pedagogy is quite important in building a responsive educational environment to strengthen intercultural communication and increase understanding of cultural differences. This integration leads students to better understand, appreciate, and participate in future cross-cultural collaborations.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors thank LPDP (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan) for giving financial support to publish this article.

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