



CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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**CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

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PREFACE

As educators in the vibrant, culturally rich tapestry of Indonesia, we have long felt a tension. We teach a global language, but our students live in a local world, filled with unique traditions, values, and ways of seeing. For too long, these two realities have existed in separate classrooms. This book is our attempt to weave them together.

"Cross Cultural Understanding in English Language Education" is not just a title; it's our mission statement. We believe that true communication happens when our students can not only order a coffee in London but also explain the philosophy of *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) to a friend from abroad. It's about empowering them to share the story of a Javanese *wayang* performance or the intricate patterns of *tenun* with the same confidence they discuss global pop culture.

Within these chapters, you will not find dry, theoretical jargon. Instead, you will meet passionate educators who are on the ground, experimenting and learning. You will explore how digital communication reshapes intercultural encounters, how Indonesian arts can be a powerful medium for language learning, and what it truly means to be a cultural mediator in a rural classroom. We delve into the worlds of entrepreneurship, literature, and even social media, asking one central question: how can English become a tool for genuine connection, rather than just a subject to be graded?

This book is a conversation starter, a patchwork of experiences, failures, and triumphs. It is for the teacher in a bustling city school, the lecturer at a quiet university, the curriculum designer, and anyone who believes that language education should build character, foster empathy, and celebrate our shared humanity.

We are deeply grateful to all the contributors who have poured their insights and souls into this project. Their dedication is a testament to the evolving spirit of English education in Indonesia.

So, turn the page. Join us on this journey. Let's learn to speak not just in English, but with understanding. Let's equip our students to be not just fluent speakers, but compassionate global citizens.

Purwokerto, November 2025

Editor

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Introduction

Globalization has opened borders to facilitate the flow of knowledge, culture, ideas, technology, and resources across the globe, thereby promoting limitless worldwide interconnectivity (Steger, 2017). With the increasing global interconnectedness, language becomes crucial as a medium of communication. However, the number of world languages is significantly large, around 7,000, while only a few hold status as international languages (UNESCO, 2024). UNESCO used to recognize a limited number of world languages by declaring six official languages, including English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish. Later, UNESCO recognizes other world languages for their contributions to global education, culture, and communication. The other four official UNESCO international languages currently recognized are Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, and Indonesian (Hariyadi, 2023).

Recognizing only 10 languages still falls short of representing the vast number of world native languages. Nevertheless, UNESCO is concerned with the global preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage, as the organization claims that around 40% of the world's languages are endangered (UNESCO, 2024). Thus, to support flourishing and safeguarding linguistic diversity

around the globe and promote the use of mother tongues, UNESCO has celebrated International Mother Language Day since 2000. This year, 2025, marks its 25th anniversary (UNESCO, 2025). In Indonesia, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education marks the 2025 International Mother Language Day by emphasizing that “local languages support quality education for all” (Kemdikdasmen, 2025). Like UNESCO, the Indonesian government has been consciously aware of protecting Indonesian linguistic diversity, including its national language, from any threat, particularly from the proliferation of English (*Administrator, 2025*).

In addition to being a medium for communication, language expresses one's identity, whether in terms of personal, cultural, social, or national aspects (Deardoff, 2009). Through language, people share their culture, habits, and what their countries have, among many other things worth sharing. Through language, people see what they are and who they belong to. Hence, language and culture are not separable, as language allows people to communicate with cultural awareness, attitudes, and knowledge to others, thereby promoting cross-cultural understanding (Byram, 2020; Deardoff et al., 2012). Cross-cultural understanding is critical in any language education, particularly when learning a foreign language, such as English. Scholars (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020) argue that learning a foreign language should not be limited to merely learning the grammatical rules of a target language, but also the cultural understanding of the language, thereby achieving intercultural communicative competence (ICC). To discuss ICC further, this chapter explores the concept of ICC in language education and how ICC is observed in international education and in classes that adopt the current advanced technology, such as Generative Artificial Intelligent (GenAI).

ICC in Language Education

Language means ‘a systematic combination of smaller units into larger units to create meaning’ (Wei, 2000, p.

6). However, language is owned by people and cannot be defined without referring to the people who speak the language and the context where the language is used. Therefore, language does not mean as a sound system, words, or sentences alone, but as 'a means of communication and as a way of identifying social groups' (Wei, 2000, p. 10). Hence, language education can be defined as the process of teaching and learning a language, where students aim to acquire the ability to communicate effectively with speakers of that language. However, learning a language, particularly a foreign language, is not unproblematic. For example, non-native English-speaking students often find it significantly challenging to learn English due to linguistic differences from their mother tongue. Nevertheless, more students remain interested in learning English, and an increasing number of people use it as a communication tool. Moreover, the number of English speakers worldwide has increased significantly to more than 1.5 billion in 2025 (Galan, 2025), despite criticism of linguistic imperialism, where inner-circle countries, the UK, Canada, the USA, and New Zealand, continue to maintain dominance over the periphery (Al-mutairi, 2020).

People embrace English as a communication tool because they have experienced numerous advantages of becoming multilingual, such as increasing their understanding of their own culture, gaining insight into their value system through the eyes of others, enjoying the pleasure of traveling to learn about other cultures with prestige, and the ability to perceive things from different perspectives. For example, multilingual people can attach different meanings to words via their multiple languages. Thus, they may develop the ability to think more flexibly not only about words but about everything. People no longer desire to learn English to be a native-like speaker but to gain the benefits from it and for localized norms. Nevertheless, learning a language is inseparable from learning the cultures embedded in the language (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020). Culture is 'the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it

encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (UNESCO, 2001, para.5). Given the deep connection between language and culture, which facilitates meaningful interaction and communication, understanding the culture of the language is crucial for developing ICC.

ICC may be defined slightly differently based on people's discipline, language, and culture. However, Byram (2020) recommends that the ICC framework in language education involves cognitive, pragmatic, social, and intercultural sub-competencies, hence not merely focusing on linguistic abilities. Byram (2020) suggests that ICC comprises three main components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The latter serves as the foundation for ICC and is supplemented by intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills in interpreting and relating, discovery and interactions, and critical cultural awareness. Deardoff (2009) shares similar views that attitudes are key to developing ICC. Positive attitudes help an individual to respect and value other people's cultures, withhold judgment by being open-minded, and tolerate ambiguity by showing curiosity and discovery of different cultures. Hence, Deardoff (2020, p. 5) defines ICC as "improving human interactions across differences, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders". Deardorff suggests that ICC can be developed in formal and informal methods. In formal methods, ICC materials are purposely included in the curriculum of an educational program and implemented through different teaching strategies, such as group activities and role play, or facilitated through exchange programs for job training. However, the informal method is more about self-exploration and exposure by an individual to society, such as joining reading groups or attending social events, such as cultural festivals, community gatherings, or traditional celebrations.

Having ICC means having the ability to establish effective interaction and communication with people of different languages and cultures by showing understanding, empathy, and tolerance towards people's different backgrounds in a sociocultural context (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020). Considering how ICC supports someone to be flexible, adaptable, culturally sensitive, while having sufficient language skills, ICC has become a mandatory skill for the 21st century, either in education, business, or employment domains (Sarwari et al., 2024). Scholars (Hua & Le, 2025; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020) suggest that ICC materials must be explicitly integrated into the curriculum to foster meaningful development of students' ICC, as the absence of explicit instruction can result in inadequate outcomes. In contrast, deliberate integration can result in desired development. For example, In Vietnam, Hua and Le (2025) found that Vietnam EFL teachers have been using integrating cultural content materials by balancing materials for linguistic skills, such as grammar, and cultural contents, such as traditions and norms embedded in the target language by collaborative and interactive activities where students role play situations set in diverse cultural contexts. The results show that such efforts foster cultural sensitivity among students. Nevertheless, to achieve the desired outcome, language teachers may still need support, as some teachers may still lack knowledge of what ICC entails and how to teach it, lack personal experience and exposure to a culturally rich academic or non-academic environment, and lack relevant resources for incorporating them into their classes (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020).

ICC In International Education

An international classroom is one of the most relevant examples where ICC can be observed. An internationalized higher education setting usually hosts staff and students of different countries, aiming to prepare international students to become global citizens who are capable of working effectively and seamlessly between different nations, languages, and cultures. An

international education setting allows students of different cultures and languages to work together and encounter differences along the way. Through such collaboration, students may find circumstances that raise their awareness of cultural differences and similarities, fostering them to revisit their preconceptions of other cultures and grow cultural understanding and tolerance (Salih & Omar, 2021). Only when students embrace differences can they engage with other cultures to develop their ICC and international collaboration (Guillén-yparrea & Ramírez-montoya, 2023). Meanwhile, linguistic differences, behavioral differences, and cultural misunderstanding may impede students' ICC development (Voevoda, 2020).

The extant literature recommends that students can improve their ICC in several different ways. The most common strategy involves participating in an overseas study experience, which exposes them to a multicultural learning environment and community (Sercu, 2023; Xiaoyan et al., 2024). In such multicultural settings, students encounter differences firsthand that train them to be adaptive, be able to negotiate meaning, and become tolerant of their differences (Xiaoyan et al., 2024). However, Xiaoyan et al. (2024) recommend that students' ICC improves more significantly when they are intrinsically motivated to improve their communication skills and actively engage with their peers and communities. In addition, students who possess the ability to listen and adapt, show empathy, and can suggest a resolution to conflicts are more able to improve their ICC (Aririguzoh, 2022).

Nevertheless, having good proficiency in a target language also improves students' ICC as they have better linguistic skills to interact with others, compared to those having limited proficiency in the target language, which impedes them from socializing and experiencing differences through socialization. Nevertheless, ICC can also be improved without crossing borders if an institution practices internationalization at home strategies, such as through involving students in intercultural clubs, virtual

exchange programs, or virtual guest lectures programs (Knight, 2008). Sercu (2023) study found that students who are actively engaged in cocurricular activities in a university that integrates internationalization at home practices are more likely to improve their ICC. Moreover, when students actively practice their foreign language skills and develop open-minded, tolerant, and respectful personality traits, they may improve their ICC.

While students may be automatically immersed in diverse and multicultural experiences in an international education program, an explicit integration of ICC contents and materials into the educational program's curriculum may accelerate students' ICC development. Salih and Omar (2021) found that students given such ICC materials become more open-minded to differences and can improve their ICC. In such educational settings, teachers' role is critical to guide students through intercultural learning experiences and facilitate discussions and reflections on cultural differences (Salih & Omar, 2021). However, teachers need support, such as through teacher training that enables them to give students explicit and appropriate materials about ICC that promote mutual and cross-cultural understanding (Sevimel-sahin, 2020).

ICC Development Through GenAI Adoption

Hoff (2020) criticized Byram's ICC model for not addressing digital literacy inclusion. Meanwhile, 21st-century teaching and learning have been significantly influenced by the integration of advanced digital technologies into education. The increasing availability of worldwide internet access and global pressure to innovate, among other factors, have contributed to the invention of advanced digital technology applications. The most recent advanced technology adopted across various sectors is Artificial Intelligence (AI), with the use of GenAI rapidly expanding in the education sector.

GenAI applications, such as ChatGPT, can support students in improving their academic communication skills, including writing, vocabulary, grammar, and

reading, which are essential for developing any cultural dialogue (Liu et al., 2024). Moreover, such GenAI tools provide immediate responses, personalized learning materials and feedback, and allow students to simulate real-life communication (Tafazoli, 2024; Weng & Fu, 2025). Thus, GenAI is currently perceived as a convenient dialogic partner for students in language education, with whom they can interact and communicate (Rahimi, 2025). When given appropriate prompts, GenAI can provide personalized content based on students' cultural background, generate cultural explanations, and provide space for students to practice communication across cultures (Lee, 2025). Sellami (2025) found that Google's Gemini can support students to become more open-minded and develop understanding, changing from being ethnocentric; showing denial and defense, to becoming ethnorelative; showing acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

Similarly, teachers may use GenAI to improve students' ICC by integrating diverse cultural contexts and examples into learning materials (Weng & Fu, 2025). GenAI can help teachers by simulating a wide range of scenarios, including culturally diverse conversations such as navigating conflict and expressing politeness. GenAI can help students learn different languages and cultures through interaction with the tool (Couto, 2024). In addition to providing culturally relevant teaching materials, GenAI can connect teachers and students to global pedagogical trends, international communities, and current best practices in language education (Tafazoli, 2024). However, GenAI can be a double-edged sword in language education as it can promote autonomy and dependency at the same time. Students may become more independent in their learning and learn more with GenAI responses at their convenience and in their own time and space (Tafazoli, 2024). However, lacking criticality and AI literacy skills may risk students' overdependence on the GenAI responses. Scholars (Couto, 2024; Lee, 2025) recommend that GenAI responses not be taken for granted because they may be culturally biased depending on the data fed into the

system, such as towards dominant cultural norms. Therefore, teachers play a critical role in supporting students' adoption of GenAI.

In a language education adopting GenAI, teachers may guide students in using dialogic strategies that foster critical thinking and effective communication, which can help them obtain credible responses from GenAI (Rahimi, 2025). Nevertheless, such teachers require proper training to perform the tasks effectively and help students mitigate GenAI's limitations (Weng & Fu, 2025). Scholars (Couto, 2024; Lee, 2025) recommend that teachers adopt blended learning to integrate GenAI, including real-world intercultural interaction activities such as role play and peer discussion, especially when retrieving cultural materials from GenAI. Overall, GenAI has enormous potential to develop students' ICC. However, equipping students with critical and AI literacy skills is mandatory to enable them to assess the credibility of GenAI's responses, thereby avoiding misconceptions and biases that may hinder cross-cultural understanding.

Conclusion

Language learning has gone beyond grammar and vocabulary to nurture interculturally communicative and competent students. To effectively use any language to communicate appropriately with people, language learning should include materials beyond linguistic knowledge, i.e., cultural knowledge inherent in the language, to develop intercultural awareness and competence. The outcome of such a language learning program may foster intercultural sensitivity, tolerance, and respectful personality traits. Incorporating cultural content into language education is not straightforward and requires preparation and institutional support. To ensure that both language teachers and students are fully aware of the learning outcome of becoming interculturally competent, a well-structured program should be deliberately embedded into the curriculum. As learning facilitators, language teachers should receive

appropriate training, as well as sufficient resources and funding. To the greatest extent possible, teachers should be exposed to intercultural academic environments to model effective intercultural engagement for their students.

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**Integrating
CROSS CULTURE**

in English Language
Education

Introduction

17

Integrating cross-cultural learning into English language education is essential because language and culture are deeply interconnected. English is now a global language used by people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Teaching English only as a set of grammar rules and vocabulary limits students' ability to use it effectively in real-life contexts. By embedding cultural elements, both teachers and students benefit in meaningful ways.

For teachers, incorporating cross-cultural perspectives provides richer teaching materials and more engaging lessons. Culture-based activities, such as exploring customs, idioms, or communication styles from English-speaking countries and beyond, make lessons more dynamic and practical. It also encourages teachers to move beyond traditional textbooks and incorporate authentic materials, such as films, songs, articles, and online interactions. This variety not only enhances professional growth but also equips teachers to prepare students for intercultural communication in academic, professional, and social settings (Mathew, 2017).

For students, cross-cultural integration improves both linguistic and social competence. Learning about cultural norms, values, and communication styles helps them avoid misunderstandings and use English more appropriately across different contexts (Zhang, 2008).

It also fosters open-mindedness, tolerance, and curiosity about other cultures, which are vital skills in today's interconnected world. Students gain confidence in speaking with people from diverse backgrounds, knowing not just "how" to say something in English but also "when" and "why" to say it (Yang-ping, 2006). Therefore, this deeper understanding increases motivation and makes language learning more meaningful (Wen & Wang, 2019).

Understanding Culture is Essential to Effective Communication.



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Culture and communication are inseparable-culture shapes how we communicate, and communication is the tool by which culture is shared. Without cultural understanding, effective communication is impossible.

Culture and communication are inextricably linked because communication is both shaped by culture and serves as the primary channel through which culture is expressed. Culture provides individuals with a framework of values, beliefs, and norms that influence how they send and interpret messages. For instance, some cultures value direct communication. In contrast, others prefer indirect or high-context styles, which means that much of the message is conveyed through non-verbal cues and shared understanding (Chong, 2020).

Communication also reflects cultural values. Every language, gesture, or even silence can carry different meanings depending on the cultural background. Without cultural awareness, these signals may be misinterpreted, resulting in misunderstandings or conflicts. For example, what is considered polite in one culture may be viewed as rude or distant in another (Croucher, 2020).

At the same time, communication is the means by which culture is taught, transmitted, and preserved. Through storytelling, traditions, rituals, and daily interactions, communities pass on their cultural knowledge from one generation to the next (Klyukanov, 2024). This shows that culture not only shapes communication but also relies on communication for survival.

This is also supported by the condition that in the modern era of globalization, the relationship between culture and communication has become even more significant. People from diverse cultural backgrounds interact frequently in education, business, and international relations. This makes intercultural communication competence—understanding and adapting to different cultural communication styles—an essential skill for success in a multicultural world (Arasaratnam, 2012). Integrating cross-cultural perspectives into English language education allows students to develop this competence while learning the language. It goes beyond memorizing grammar or vocabulary; students learn to understand, respect, and connect with people from different backgrounds. This process nurtures empathy, open-mindedness, and adaptability, qualities that are vital both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can create meaningful lessons that reflect real-world interactions, helping students see language learning as a bridge to human connection rather than just an academic task. Ultimately, by embedding culture into language education, learners become more than proficient English speakers—they become globally aware individuals capable of navigating diverse social and professional contexts with confidence, respect, and understanding. This approach transforms English education into a journey of personal growth, intercultural awareness, and meaningful engagement with the world.

Integrating Cross Culture in English Language Education



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In today's interconnected world, learning a language is inseparable from learning its cultural dimensions. English, as a global lingua franca, serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for fostering cross-cultural understanding. This reality has important implications for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia, a country characterized by vast cultural diversity and increasing engagement with the global community. To prepare learners for meaningful communication, English education in Indonesia must move beyond linguistic competence and embrace intercultural competence as an integral part of its curriculum (Rachmatika & Izzah, 2024).

The integration of cultural elements in English education enables learners not only to master grammar and vocabulary but also to develop sensitivity to cultural norms, values, and communication styles. Studies show that interactions with people from diverse backgrounds through English enrich Indonesians' personal and professional lives, highlighting the need for cross-cultural perspectives in language learning (Willyarto, Yunus, & Wahyuningtyas, 2021).

Moreover, Indonesian students' learning preferences—such as storytelling, music, role-play, and collaborative discussion—provide fertile ground for embedding cultural

contexts into the classroom, making language learning more engaging and authentic (Hornay, 2024). Therefore, several initiatives in Indonesia already attempt to align language and culture, such as integrating local traditions, literature, and performing arts into English classes. These practices not only strengthen students' cultural identity but also broaden their global awareness (Wahyuningtyas, 2022). Importantly, learners themselves acknowledge that cultural content enhances their motivation and supports the development of their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Maximilian, 2021).

Although significant efforts have been made, several challenges persist, particularly the lack of adequate teacher preparation and the limited availability of effective models for incorporating culture into English education. Bridging these gaps is essential to ensure that English teaching in Indonesia remains connected to the cultural contexts in which communication takes place.

Practical Ways to Integrate Cultural Learning



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Practical integration of cultural learning is essential because it transforms English from just a subject of grammar and vocabulary into a tool for real-world communication and global citizenship. In addition, there are many practical ways to integrate cultural learning, they are:

1. Use Authentic Materials

Incorporate songs, films, newspapers, social media posts, and literature from different English-speaking cultures. These materials expose students to real-life language use and cultural values (Zhao, 2024).

2. Cultural Comparisons

Encourage students to compare cultural practices, traditions, or idioms between their own culture and English-speaking cultures. This builds critical thinking and intercultural awareness (Yang, 2011).

3. Role-plays and Simulations

Design classroom activities where students act out real-life scenarios (e.g., ordering food, job interviews, holiday celebrations) from different cultures. This builds both language fluency and cultural sensitivity (Kun, 2022).

4. Integrate Translation and Interpretation Tasks

Students can translate cultural expressions or idioms from English into their native language (and vice versa), highlighting differences in meaning and context (Pengfei, 2023).

5. Digital Cross-Cultural Exchanges

Use online platforms to connect learners with peers abroad for projects, discussions, or cultural exchanges. Digital tools enrich learning through authentic interaction (Li, 2024).

6. Incorporate Festivals and Cultural Events

Organize classroom celebrations of international holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving, Lunar New Year, Diwali) where students research and present cultural practices in English. This strengthens both knowledge and presentation skills (Rafiyeva, 2021).

7. Critical Reflection Activities

After cultural lessons, have students write journals or reflections about how the new cultural knowledge

changes their view of English and global communication. This deepens cultural empathy (Sabirova, 2021).

The Benefits of Integrating Cross-Culture in English Language Education



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Integrating cross-cultural perspectives in English language education is highly beneficial because language and culture are inseparable. For teachers, this approach enriches teaching practices by providing diverse and authentic materials such as films, songs, articles, and online interactions. These resources make lessons more engaging and practical, while also encouraging teachers' professional growth through exposure to different cultural perspectives. Such integration allows teachers to create interactive classrooms where cultural discussions enhance student participation and interest (Mathew, 2017). or students, learning a language through its cultural context leads to deeper understanding and stronger communication skills. They not only acquire grammar and vocabulary but also learn how, when, and why to use English appropriately in different social and cultural settings (Yang-ping, 2006). This fosters intercultural competence, helping students avoid misunderstandings and build respectful interactions across cultures (Zhang, 2008). Moreover, cultural integration enhances motivation and confidence, as

students feel more connected to real-world communication and develop global readiness (Wen & Wang, 2019).

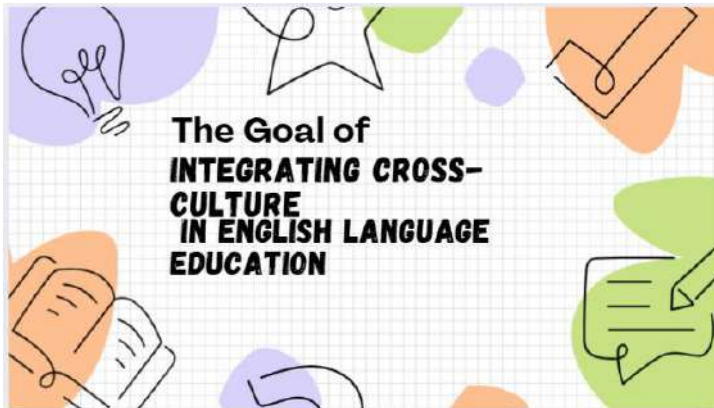
From this insight, integrating cross-cultural education in English education benefits teachers by enhancing their teaching approaches and students by equipping them with both linguistic ability and intercultural competence. Together, these benefits make English learning more meaningful and relevant in a globalized world.

Furthermore, integrating cross-cultural elements into English language education is considered essential because it not only improves language proficiency but also prepares learners to communicate effectively in diverse global contexts. Some research highlights several benefits:

1. **Enhances communication skills:** Cross-cultural learning helps students develop communicative competence beyond grammar and vocabulary, enabling them to use English appropriately in intercultural contexts (Kun, 2022), and (Yang, 2011).
2. **Promotes tolerance and respect:** By exposing learners to diverse values and traditions, English teaching fosters cultural awareness, tolerance, and respect for different perspectives, which are crucial in multicultural societies (Sabirova et al, 2021).
3. **Improves academic and career readiness:** Cross-cultural competence equips students for success in international business, education, and global collaboration, making them more adaptable and competitive in the workforce (Pengfei, 2023) and (Wang, 2024).
4. **Deepens cultural understanding and critical thinking:** Incorporating cultural elements in English lessons broadens students' perspectives, helping them think critically and understand language in its social context (Zhao, 2024) and (Rafiyeva, 2021).

5. **Supports holistic education:** Cross-cultural awareness fosters not just language skills but also global citizenship, empowering students to interact confidently in international environments (Li, 2024) and (Chau & Truong, 2018).

The Goal of Integrating Cross-Culture in English Language Education



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The primary goal of integrating cross-cultural aspects into English language education is to ensure that students not only learn the mechanics of grammar and vocabulary but also acquire the ability to use English effectively in real-world, multicultural contexts. Language and culture are inextricably linked, and without cultural understanding, communication can lead to misunderstandings or barriers. By embedding cultural elements, English education becomes more meaningful and practical.

One key goal is to develop students' intercultural competence, enabling them to understand, respect, and communicate appropriately with people from diverse backgrounds (Zhang, 2008). At the same time, cross-cultural learning makes lessons more relevant by linking language to authentic experiences, which increases motivation and engagement (Mathew, 2017). Another important goal is to enhance students' communicative

competence, teaching them not just what to say, but also when, how, and why to say it in different cultural settings (Yang-ping, 2006).

Ultimately, the integration of culture in English education aims to prepare students for global citizenship. It fosters tolerance, open-mindedness, and adaptability, which are vital qualities for success in international academic, professional, and social environments (Wen & Wang, 2019).

Conclusion

Bringing cross-cultural perspectives into English language education is about more than just teaching grammar or vocabulary; it is about helping students understand and connect with the world around them. When learners explore different cultures through language, they not only improve their communication skills but also develop empathy, open-mindedness, and the ability to see things from perspectives other than their own. For teachers, it is an opportunity to create lessons that feel meaningful and relevant, connecting students' lives to the broader world. Ultimately, integrating culture into English learning helps students become more confident, thoughtful, and adaptable individuals, enabling them to navigate diverse social and professional environments effectively. It turns language learning into a journey of human connection, where students do not just speak English—they learn to listen, understand, and respect the richness of different cultures. In this way, education becomes not only a tool for academic growth but also a bridge to meaningful relationships and a deeper understanding of the world.

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CROSS-CULTURAL DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH

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Chapter 3.1: Introduction

In the twenty-first century, English functions as the primary lingua franca of global digital interaction (Jenkins, 2021). From social media comment threads to collaborative software development, learners and professionals must navigate cultural nuances while communicating online. Traditional classroom approaches focusing solely on face-to-face interaction overlook digital platforms' multimodal and asynchronous characteristics (Kim, 2023). Consequently, higher-education programs are increasingly tasked with preparing students for cross-cultural digital communication (CCDC) — the ability to convey meaning effectively, ethically, and adaptively in English-mediated digital contexts.

1. Cross-Cultural Digital Communication in Higher Education: Preparing Students for Globalized Interaction

Introduction

The global spread of digital technologies and the dominance of English as a lingua franca have reshaped the communicative demands placed on graduates of higher education. In this context, universities are increasingly tasked with preparing students for cross-cultural digital communication

(CCDC), which can be defined as the ability to convey meaning effectively, ethically, and adaptively in English-mediated digital contexts. CCDC represents an intersection of intercultural competence, digital literacy, and ethical communication, all of which are essential in academic, professional, and civic domains in the 21st century. This essay examines the rationale for embedding CCDC in higher education, the pedagogical strategies being applied, theoretical foundations, and supporting data, before concluding with implications for future practice.

The Importance of CCDC in Higher Education

Globalization has intensified intercultural contact in education, business, and civic life. According to EDUCAUSE (2022), digital transformation in higher education must be accompanied by cultural transformation, recognizing that digital tools are inseparable from cultural norms and ethical values. Employers now expect graduates to collaborate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, often in hybrid or online settings where English serves as the main medium of interaction. Despite being termed “digital natives,” research shows that younger generations lack structured competence in critical areas such as evaluating information, ethical online behavior, and navigating intercultural nuances (Lifinsev, 2019). Therefore, universities cannot assume readiness but must intentionally scaffold CCDC skills through curricula and experiential learning.

Pedagogical Strategies to Foster CCDC

a. Virtual Exchange and Telecollaboration

One of the most impactful strategies is the use of virtual exchange programs. The SUNY Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiative and the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange (EVE) are notable examples. These programs pair students from different countries in structured, online collaborative projects.

O'Dowd (2021) found that such exchanges enhance intercultural sensitivity, digital literacy, and confidence in English as a lingua franca. By engaging in authentic intercultural dialogues, students are forced to adapt communicative styles and consider cultural perspectives.

b. Integration into Disciplinary Learning

Embedding CCDC within disciplinary curricula ensures that students see communication as integral to their fields. For instance, in STEM education, Zhou et al. (2024) argue that introducing cultural communication training—such as understanding high- versus low-context norms—prepares students to function effectively in global research teams. Such integration demonstrates that cultural competence is not an “extra” skill but central to professional expertise.

c. Faculty Mentoring and Support

Faculty play a crucial role in guiding students toward effective CCDC. Belz and Thorne (2022) highlight that differentiated mentoring is necessary for synchronous (e.g., live video meetings) and asynchronous (e.g., forums, email) contexts. Without mentoring, students often default to superficial exchanges, limiting the depth of intercultural learning. Faculty support ensures reflection on communicative tone, digital etiquette, and ethical responsibility.

d. Culturally Responsive Assessment

Finally, assessment frameworks in higher education are increasingly incorporating cultural and digital literacies. *Frontiers in Education* (2022) reports that competency-based models now evaluate students' adaptability, cultural awareness, and ethical online communication alongside disciplinary knowledge. This approach signals a systemic shift in valuing CCDC as part of holistic student development.

The importance of CCDC is grounded in several key theoretical frameworks. Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997) emphasizes that linguistic skill alone is insufficient; learners must combine it with cultural knowledge, critical awareness, and the ability to mediate between perspectives. Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2016) provides further insight, demonstrating how communicators adjust their language and style depending on their audience—an essential ability in online intercultural settings. Meanwhile, Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) research shows that virtual environments can reduce prejudice and enhance negotiation skills (Belz & Thorne, 2022). Empirical studies reinforce these theoretical claims. A survey of Millennials and Gen-Z students across non-English speaking countries found that 90.4% agreed cross-cultural communication is essential, 79.2% believed digital platforms simplify communication, and 67.9% reported that language barriers were less problematic online (Lifinsev, 2019). These findings confirm both the perceived importance of CCDC and students' openness to developing such skills.

Case Studies in U.S. Higher Education

The SUNY COIL program exemplifies how structured telecollaboration can foster CCDC. Students report stronger awareness of cultural nuance and greater comfort in adapting to different communicative norms. In STEM courses, collaborative projects with international peers require negotiation of timelines, presentation styles, and expectations, which in turn strengthen both technical and intercultural competencies (Zhou et al., 2024). Moreover, universities investing in faculty development for intercultural mentoring report deeper engagement and fewer misunderstandings in virtual projects (Belz & Thorne, 2022). These case studies illustrate that intentional institutional design produces measurable outcomes in student readiness for globalized digital contexts.

Conclusion

Higher education in the 21st century faces the dual challenge of equipping students with disciplinary

expertise and preparing them to operate as ethical, adaptive communicators in a globalized, digital world. Cross-cultural digital communication (CCDC) is thus emerging as a critical graduate attribute. Through virtual exchanges, curricular integration, faculty mentoring, and culturally responsive assessments, institutions are embedding CCDC into student learning. Grounded in intercultural competence theory and supported by empirical evidence, these initiatives ensure that graduates are not only technically skilled but also globally competent, prepared to engage meaningfully in intercultural digital environments.

Definition of Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication refers to the process of recognizing and navigating the linguistic, social, and cultural differences that exist when people from diverse backgrounds interact. It involves an awareness of varying communication styles, values, non-verbal behaviors, and context-bound expressions that may influence meaning-making between interlocutors. In today's digital world, this form of communication becomes even more complex due to the mediation of technology and the global presence of the English language as a shared medium (Zhu, 2020). Cross-cultural communication describes how people from different cultural backgrounds create, interpret, and negotiate meaning. For decades, scholars explored this phenomenon primarily in face-to-face contexts, drawing on cultural dimensions, high-/low-context communication, and pragmatics to explain why interactions succeed or fail. Today, however, the communicative landscape is decisively hybrid. People connect within multinational firms, open online communities, and transnational classrooms through platforms whose affordances—persistence, publicness, algorithmic curation—transform what counts as “effective” communication. A growing evidence base shows that intercultural communicative competence (ICC) must now be taught and practiced with digital literacies in mind: sensitivity to platform norms,

awareness of recommendation algorithms, and the pragmatics of multimodal expression such as emojis and GIFs. Recent reviews and large-scale surveys confirm both the scale of these interactions and their risks and opportunities for inclusion. Cross-cultural communication is the process of creating and sharing meaning across cultural boundaries. It involves not only spoken and written language but also nonverbal cues, values, and context. In an interconnected world shaped by migration, international education, and digital technologies, this competence has become essential for both professional and personal success (Zhou et al., 2024). A bibliometric review covering 67 years of research in second and foreign language education found that intercultural communication is increasingly central in higher education curricula (Ngo Cong-Lem, 2025). This trend reflects the recognition that students need both linguistic proficiency and cultural competence to thrive in diverse environments. Intercultural competence is not an abstract idea. Research shows that international students' ability to adapt socially and academically is directly linked to their communication skills (Xiaoyan, Zainudin, & Yaakup, 2024). Studies in teacher education further highlight the role of intercultural sensitivity in shaping inclusive classrooms (Romijn et al., 2021).

From a practical perspective, the global workforce requires professionals who can navigate cultural differences in negotiation, teamwork, and leadership. For example, Hall's model of high- and low-context cultures explains why some managers prefer explicit, detailed contracts, while others rely heavily on trust and relationships (Lamino & Diaz, 2025). Cross-cultural digital communication in English is no longer a peripheral skill; it is a core competency for graduates entering a hyper-connected knowledge economy. The convergence of CMC theory, ELF pragmatics, and recent multimodal research underscores the need for higher-education curricula that blend *theory, authentic digital practice, and data-informed reflection*. By embedding intercultural digital literacy, designing multimodal tasks, and leveraging learning-analytics,

universities can cultivate graduates who communicate with cultural agility, ethical awareness, and linguistic flexibility across any digital platform.

1. Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Digital Age: Integrating Digital Literacies for Inclusive Engagement

Introduction

In today's globalized and digitally mediated world, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)—the capacity to understand, interpret, and communicate across cultural boundaries—is indispensable. Yet, as communication increasingly occurs via digital platforms, ICC must be reframed through the lens of digital literacies. This integration offers significant potential to enhance inclusion, but also poses risks in terms of exclusion and power imbalances. This essay examines why and how ICC instruction must account for digital literacies, and analyzes the inclusivity implications from both opportunity and risk perspectives.

Why Digital Literacies Are Essential for ICC

Digital platforms mediate much of today's intercultural interaction, from virtual classrooms to social media. As such, ICC cannot remain a purely face-to-face skill set. Learners must develop digital literacies—the ability to navigate, critically evaluate, and ethically participate in digital spaces—if they are to communicate interculturally with fluency and sensitivity.

Dooly and Darvin (2022) argue that critical digital literacy—the capacity to understand how power and ideology operate online—is essential for fostering equitable intercultural dialogue; their pedagogical model combines inquiry-based learning with digital activism to promote empowerment and inclusion. Guerrero-Quiñonez et al. (2024) and Palacios-Rodríguez et al. (2025) emphasize that digital competencies bolster intercultural communication by enabling students to engage

meaningfully across digital platforms, adapting communication styles in diverse cultural contexts.

Risks: Digital Divides and Miscommunication

a. Digital Inequities

Access to devices, connectivity, and skills remains uneven. The OECD (2023) identifies the digital divide as a persistent barrier to inclusion, where students without sufficient resources cannot fully participate in digital learning and intercultural exchange.

b. Misunderstandings in Digital Contexts

While CSCL offers inclusive potential, it also carries risks. Communication gaps, misinterpretations of asynchronous cues, and reduced trust-building are common pitfalls in digital intercultural contexts. Effective use of such platforms demands careful scaffolded design.

c. Power Imbalances and Exclusionary Design

Without awareness, ICC in digital spaces can reinforce existing power dynamics: voices of dominant cultural groups may dominate; algorithms can marginalize minority perspectives; infrastructure biases may amplify exclusion.

Pedagogical Imperatives: Toward Inclusive ICC Education

a. Integrate Digital Literacy into ICC Curriculum

ICC instruction must explicitly teach learners how to interpret, evaluate, and produce digital content—recognizing ideological influences, algorithmic biases, and platform-specific norms.

b. Ensure Equitable Access and Support

Institutions must strive to close digital inequities by providing access to devices, connectivity, and training, ensuring all learners can participate in intercultural exchanges.

c. Design Structured, Supported Digital Exchanges

Whether through virtual exchange, online simulated interactions, or CSCL platforms, educators must scaffold activities to foster clarity, trust, and reflective communication.

d. Center Critical Reflection

Encourage students to analyze how digital platforms shape discourse, and empower them to resist exclusion through strategies such as digital activism and inclusive design awareness.

e. Continuously Monitor and Adapt

Regularly assess inclusivity in digital ICC activities—solicit feedback, track participation data, and adapt pedagogy to reach marginalized groups.

Conclusion

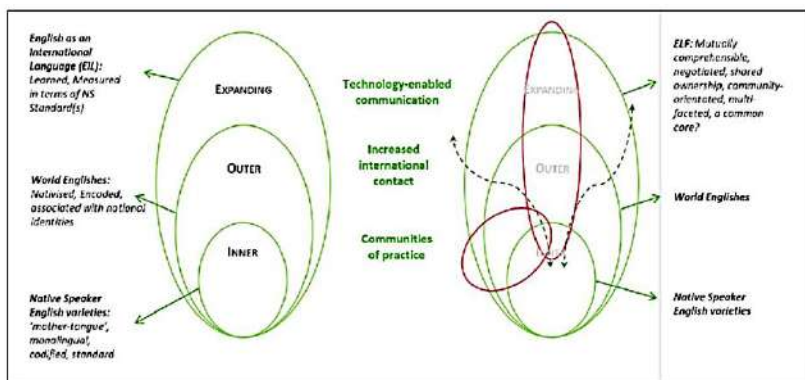
In an era where digital platforms define so much of intercultural interaction, ICC must evolve to incorporate digital literacies—both for effectiveness and equity. This integration offers profound opportunities: expanding access, promoting critical awareness, and enabling cross-cultural collaboration. Yet, these benefits are contingent on addressing significant risks: digital divides, miscommunication, and hidden power structures. By designing ICC education that is intentionally inclusive, critical, and digitally informed, educators can prepare learners not only to communicate across cultures but also to challenge inequities and foster understanding within the global digital landscape.

The Role of English in Global Digital Interaction

English has emerged as the predominant lingua franca in global digital communication, used across diverse professional, academic, and social contexts. As Jenkins (2021) highlights, the spread of English is less about native-speaker norms and more about its adaptability as

a tool for intercultural exchange. In digital settings—email, messaging apps, social media—English serves as a bridge language, enabling collaboration but also requiring mutual accommodation between users with varied cultural assumptions. The contemporary internet is a realm of unparalleled interaction where individuals, platforms, and algorithms engage across linguistic barriers on a large scale. In this context, English has emerged as the primary medium for search, publication, collaboration, and governance. The supremacy of English is neither impartial nor unchallenged. It provides distinct benefits in information availability and engagement, although it also influences platform regulations, AI functionalities, and the prominence of non-English perspectives. This book analyzes the role of English in facilitating global digital connection, the opportunities it creates, the inequities it perpetuates, and the prerequisites for a more linguistically equitable digital future.

Utilizing research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and World Englishes, alongside studies on platform governance, AI/LLM efficacy, and market analytics regarding internet content and developer ecosystems, I contend that English assumes three interrelated functions online: (1) as a high-bandwidth connector that reduces coordination costs internationally, (2) as a structural default ingrained in platform architectures and datasets, and (3) as a gatekeeper whose benefits are enhanced by AI and content moderation frameworks. The discourse integrates descriptive data with analytical viewpoints to formulate pragmatic suggestions for educators, policymakers, and technology developers. Consider, for instance, current syntheses in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and interculturality that emphasize pragmatic, adaptable communication over native-speaker paradigms.



Changes in the conceptualisation of English(es) and English as a lingua franca

Picture 1
Cooke, Sheryl. (2020).

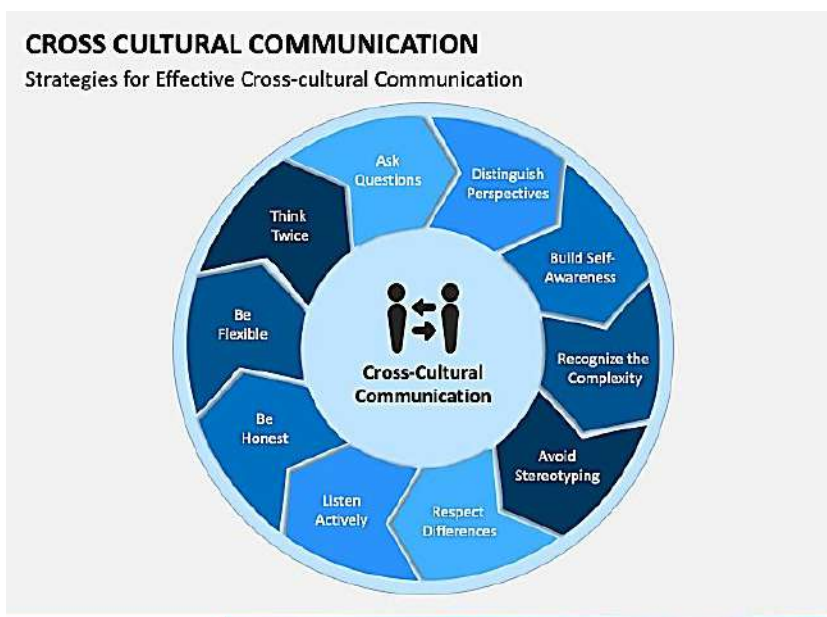
The Impact of Digital Technologies on Communication

Technological advancements have revolutionized the way people communicate. Tools such as video conferencing platforms, collaborative software, and instant messaging have reduced geographical barriers, allowing people to interact across borders more easily. However, these digital platforms also impose new constraints on communication, such as the lack of physical cues, time-zone differences, and media richness limitations (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2022). Understanding how digital environments mediate intercultural communication is therefore essential to fostering effective global discourse. Digital environments now mediate most intercultural communication among university students. Their affordances can expand participation, deepen reflection, and connect classrooms globally; their algorithms and infrastructures can also narrow perspectives or exclude. Purposeful pedagogy—grounded in the CoI framework, attentive to access and bias, and implemented through structured models like VE/COIL—can tilt mediation toward inclusion and genuine intercultural learning. Preparing students for global citizenship today requires not only *using* digital tools but *understanding* how they shape our encounters with difference (Hackett, S. (2024).

The Urgency of Intercultural Competence in the Digital Era

In our interconnected world, intercultural competence has become a critical skill. Beyond language proficiency, individuals must develop the ability to interpret and respond to messages in culturally appropriate ways. Misinterpretations can lead to conflict, especially in text-based media where tone and nuance are often lost. Developing intercultural awareness, empathy, and digital literacy are vital components of 21st-century communication skills (Helm, 2023).

In an era where learning, work, and civic life are mediated by platforms and algorithms, the ability to communicate across difference is no longer optional but foundational. Intercultural competence—understood as the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable appropriate and effective interaction across cultural boundaries—anchors ethical and constructive participation in digital spaces that collapse distance, compress time, and amplify voice. Classic models such as Deardorff's Process Model and Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) remain indispensable; yet the digital turn adds new affordances and risks that require extending these frameworks with digital literacies, platform governance insights, and evidence from virtual collaboration (Deardorff, D. K. (2006).



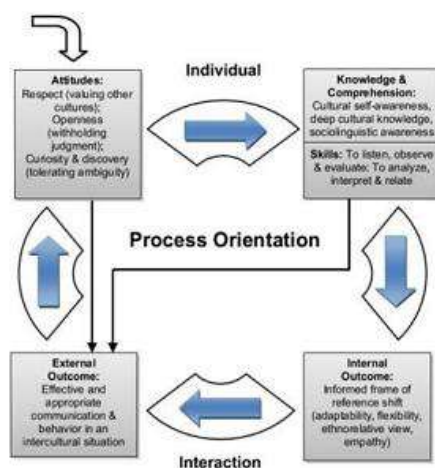
Picture 2

Facilitating successful cross-cultural communication requires cultural competence. Preventing misconceptions and misinterpretations requires an awareness of and respect for cultural differences. Translators and interpreters can close linguistic and cultural gaps and guarantee accurate and culturally relevant communication by understanding and valuing the subtleties of various cultures. Gaining cultural competency enables professionals to modify their tone, language use, and nonverbal clues to conform to the cultural norms and expectations of their audience.

Why intercultural competence is more critical online

Digital environments intensify cross-cultural contact (e.g., global classrooms, remote teams, fandoms, diasporic communities) while simultaneously introducing distortions: algorithmic curation, decontextualized discourse, and scaled visibility. Intercultural competence is thus required not only to decode culturally inflected messages but also to interrogate digital infrastructures (Arcila-Calderón, C., et al. (2024). Media and Information

Literacy (MIL) initiatives underscore this point, positioning critical inquiry, safety, and inclusion as prerequisites for healthy digital ecosystems. Intercultural competence operationalizes MIL's aims by equipping users to evaluate culturally situated claims, resist stereotyping, and engage in dialogue across difference. Moreover, online harms—hate speech, harassment, and biased moderation—pose acute challenges to equitable participation. UNESCO's 2021 global recommendation on the Ethics of AI and subsequent guidance emphasize human rights, transparency, fairness, and cultural diversity throughout AI lifecycles—principles directly relevant to intercultural communication on platformed publics. Empirical and policy analyses likewise document how moderation and recommender systems can differentially affect languages, communities, and contentious topics, heightening the need for users and institutions to cultivate intercultural and ethical literacy.



Picture 3

The process model of intercultural competence (Dearddorff, 2006)

The digital era heightens the stakes of intercultural competence. As communication shifts to platformed environments where algorithms mediate visibility and interaction, how we listen, interpret, and respond across

difference becomes a societal competency touching education, work, and democracy. Classic ICC models still guide the “human” work of curiosity, humility, and relational skill; policy frameworks clarify outcomes and assessment; and growing evidence shows that well-designed virtual exchanges and team practices can reliably cultivate these abilities. The task ahead is to mainstream this synthesis: make intercultural competence teachable and assessable as digital practice, and make digital literacy accountable to intercultural ethics.

Conclusion: Cross-Cultural Digital Communication in English

Cross-cultural digital communication in English represents both a challenge and an opportunity in today’s interconnected world. As English continues to operate as a global lingua franca across online platforms, it facilitates collaboration, information exchange, and intercultural dialogue among diverse communities. However, the digital sphere does not automatically guarantee mutual understanding; it can also reproduce inequalities, misinterpretations, and cultural biases if not approached critically. In educational, professional, and civic contexts, the effectiveness of digital communication in English increasingly depends on the ability to recognize cultural perspectives, negotiate meaning in diverse environments, and respond ethically to the complexities of online interaction. The rise of artificial intelligence, machine translation, and algorithmic mediation further emphasizes the need for reflective and responsible communication practices that value inclusivity and diversity. Ultimately, cross-cultural digital communication in English should be understood as a lifelong skill that combines language proficiency with intercultural sensitivity and digital ethics. Its development is essential for preparing individuals not only to succeed in globalized academic and professional settings but also to contribute constructively to more inclusive and democratic digital societies. By integrating these dimensions, English-mediated digital communication can evolve from a tool of convenience.

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ENGLISH THROUGH INDONESIAN CULTURAL LENS

Wilda Putri Festiyanti, S.S., M.A.
STIKES Ibnu Sina Ajibarang

Introduction

Language learning is never culturally neutral. In the context of English Language Education (ELE), especially in non native settings like Indonesia, the interplay between language and culture becomes even more critical. Cultural dimensions are deeply embedded in the way language is used, understood, and taught. As (Kramsch, 1998) notes, language is a medium through which culture is conveyed, and thus learning a new language inherently involves engaging with cultural perspectives both foreign and local. Traditionally, English instruction has often relied on materials and models derived from inner circle countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom. However, in a multilingual and multicultural country like Indonesia, this approach can inadvertently sideline local cultural identities. (McKay, 2003) emphasizes the need for English to be taught as an international language one that supports local contexts and values, rather than replacing them.

The adoption of *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Kemendikbudristek, 2023) represents a progressive shift in Indonesian education policy. It encourages contextualized learning and cultural relevance across subjects, including English. This policy opens opportunities to reimagine ELE in Indonesia not as a vehicle for Westernization, but

as a tool for empowering learners with global competencies rooted in local culture. This chapter aims to explore how Indonesian culture can be integrated meaningfully into English language education. It examines the current landscape of ELE in Indonesia through the lens of local culture, highlights challenges and potentials, and provides suggestions for culturally responsive pedagogy in line with national curriculum reforms. The chapter begins with a theoretical overview of the relationship between language and culture, followed by an analysis of English education policies and practices in Indonesia. It then explores case examples and strategies for incorporating Indonesian culture into ELE classrooms, concluding with implications for policy and practice.

Theoretical Framework

Language and culture are inseparable in the process of second language acquisition (SLA). Cultural knowledge shapes not only how language is used but also how it is interpreted. Learners bring with them culturally embedded assumptions, or *cultural schemata*, that influence their understanding of a new language. In this context, teaching language must go beyond grammar and vocabulary to include the development of intercultural competence (Byram, 2020) the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural boundaries. *Cultural Schema Theory* explains how individuals use prior cultural knowledge to process and interpret information. For Indonesian learners of English, cultural values such as *collectivism* and *respect for authority* influence classroom interactions and perceptions of language use. (Hofstede, 2011) dimensions particularly *collectivism vs. individualism*, *power distance*, and *high context vs. low context communication* are useful for understanding how Indonesian cultural norms intersect with English language learning.

In parallel, the concept of *World Englishes* (Kachru, 2006) challenges the idea of a single “correct” form of English. Instead, it acknowledges multiple legitimate varieties

shaped by local cultures and needs. This perspective is particularly relevant for Indonesia, where English is used as a foreign language but increasingly functions in global, regional, and local communication. Kachru's framework of Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles highlights Indonesia's position as part of the Expanding Circle, where English is learned for international intelligibility rather than native speaker imitation. Recognizing the legitimacy of localized English varieties allows Indonesian learners to express their identities without the pressure to conform to native speaker norms. It also opens space for integrating Indonesian cultural content stories, values, norms into English language education. A culturally responsive ELE framework not only supports language acquisition but also affirms learners' cultural identities, contributing to both linguistic and intercultural competence.

Historical and Educational Context in Indonesia

The development of English education in Indonesia has gone through several distinct phases. During the colonial period, English was not widely taught, as Dutch was the dominant language of administration and education. After independence, English was introduced as a foreign language (EFL) to support international communication and national development. Since then, its role has continued to grow in importance, especially in urban and academic contexts (Lauder, 2008). In the national education system, English is positioned as a foreign language rather than a second language. It is typically introduced in the later years of primary school or at the junior secondary level, depending on regional policies. Its primary function is instrumental preparing students for global engagement, higher education, and employment rather than for daily communication (Renandya, W. A., & Widodo, H. P., 2016)

Over time, there have been efforts to localize English instruction through the inclusion of *muatan lokal* (local content). These initiatives encourage schools to incorporate elements of local language, culture, and

values alongside national curricula. The recent *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Kemendikbudristek, 2023) strengthens this approach by promoting *contextualized learning* a model that aligns academic content with students' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds. Under this new curriculum, teachers are encouraged to develop materials that reflect the local context while meeting national standards. This opens new opportunities for English language education to be more culturally responsive, supporting not only language acquisition but also the preservation and appreciation of Indonesian identity.

Manifestations of Indonesian Culture in English Language Classrooms

Indonesian classrooms increasingly reflect cultural sensitivity in English language teaching (ELT), particularly through the incorporation of local idioms, traditions, and values. Teachers and materials developers have begun embedding Indonesian cultural references into ELT content to make learning more relatable and meaningful for students. This approach helps bridge the cultural gap that often exists when English is taught with purely Western contexts. One common strategy is the use of localized themes in dialogues, reading passages, or writing prompts. Instead of foreign contexts like "Thanksgiving" or "snowball fights," students may encounter lessons centered around *Lebaran*, traditional markets, *gotong royong* (communal work), or Indonesian food. This type of contextualization supports both comprehension and cultural identity (Widodo, 2015). Cultural adaptation is also visible in classroom discourse.

Indonesian learners often value politeness, indirectness, and hierarchical respect factors that influence how English is spoken and taught in class. For example, teachers may encourage indirect speech or softer expressions in line with *bahasa halus*, and students may be hesitant to speak up directly due to ingrained respect for authority. Textbook analysis has shown varying degrees of cultural localization. While some national ELT

textbooks incorporate stories from Indonesian folklore or local heroes, others still rely heavily on Western settings and names. According to Prihantoro (2020), teachers often feel the need to supplement textbooks with additional materials that reflect their students' cultural realities. Lesson plans and classroom observations also reveal efforts to integrate local narratives such as using *batik* as a topic for descriptive writing, or discussing Indonesian festivals in speaking activities. These practices demonstrate that culture based pedagogy in ELT is not only possible, but increasingly recognized as pedagogically sound and culturally respectful.

Challenges and Opportunities

Integrating Indonesian culture into English language education presents both promising opportunities and notable challenges. One of the main tensions lies in the cultural mismatch between the communicative styles of English often direct and individualistic and the indirect, high context communication valued in Indonesian society. This can lead to confusion or discomfort, especially when students are encouraged to adopt unfamiliar discourse patterns that clash with local norms. Another challenge is the persistence of "native speakerism" the belief that British or American English represents the ideal model. Many teachers and students still perceive these native varieties as superior, which can undermine confidence in localized English usage and limit the development of culturally relevant teaching approaches. As (Kirkpatrick, 2007) argues, this mindset hinders the acceptance of *World Englishes* and the legitimacy of English as used in Expanding Circle countries like Indonesia.

Teacher readiness is also a concern. While some educators embrace culturally responsive practices, many feel underprepared to implement intercultural pedagogy. There is a growing need for professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills to design and deliver lessons that integrate local values while fostering intercultural awareness (Yaqin & Widodo,

2022). Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities. Integrating Indonesian perspectives into ELE can serve as a gateway to *global citizenship education*. When students explore international issues through the lens of local culture such as environmentalism through traditional farming or human rights through community values they develop critical thinking and intercultural sensitivity. This approach not only enhances language learning but also prepares students to participate in global dialogues while staying rooted in their cultural identities.

Practical Strategies for Educators

To make English language education more inclusive and meaningful in the Indonesian context, teachers can apply a variety of culturally responsive strategies.

These approaches not only enhance student engagement, but also affirm learners' cultural identities within the language learning process. One foundational approach is designing culturally responsive lessons that reflect students' backgrounds and local values. According to (Gay, 2018), this involves selecting themes, texts, and activities that align with students' cultural knowledge and lived experiences. For example, reading materials can include stories rooted in local folklore, or writing tasks can encourage students to describe cultural traditions in English. Code switching and multilingual awareness can also be powerful tools in the classroom.

Allowing strategic use of Bahasa Indonesia or regional languages supports comprehension and validates students' linguistic repertoires. Rather than seeing code switching as a deficiency, it can be reframed as a bridge toward mastering English, especially in early or mixed proficiency classes. Task based learning (TBLT) offers further opportunities to connect language with culture. When students are asked to complete tasks that relate to their community such as planning a local event, describing a traditional ceremony, or interviewing elders they engage in authentic language use while drawing from their cultural knowledge. Candra and Sari (2023)

found that such tasks in rural Indonesian classrooms increased both motivation and learning outcomes. Assessment practices should also be culturally sensitive, taking into account local communication styles and values. Instead of relying solely on standardized tests, teachers can use portfolios, project work, or group presentations that allow students to demonstrate their skills in ways that are contextually appropriate. This ensures fairness and encourages a more holistic view of language proficiency. By adopting these strategies, educators can transform English classrooms into inclusive spaces that respect cultural diversity while promoting global competence.

Case Studies and Best Practices

Across Indonesia, various schools and communities have begun implementing culturally grounded English teaching practices that serve as valuable models for others. These case studies reveal how contextualized and intercultural approaches can be successfully adapted to diverse local realities. In Java, several urban and semi urban schools have piloted project based learning (PBL) modules that blend English instruction with local culture. For instance, students created digital storytelling projects about traditional Javanese ceremonies, using English narration while drawing on community knowledge. (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020) report that such activities not only improved language skills but also fostered intercultural awareness and student pride in local identity.

In Sumatra, particularly in rural areas, community based language learning programs have emerged, involving collaboration between schools and local stakeholders. Teachers design lessons around topics relevant to village life such as farming, folklore, and local festivals making English learning more meaningful. In some pilot schools supported by the local Ministry of Education (2022–2024), students participated in group interviews with village elders and then presented their findings in English as part of oral assessments. In Eastern Indonesia, where

linguistic and cultural diversity is particularly rich, educators have used intercultural projects to bridge English learning with local identity. One school in Flores implemented a cross grade cultural exhibition in English, where students showcased regional dances, crafts, and food. These events provided real life contexts for language use and encouraged learners to see English as a tool for sharing their culture globally, not just as a school subject. These cases highlight that localized, project based, and community engaged approaches are not only feasible but highly effective. They demonstrate that English language education in Indonesia can thrive when rooted in learners' cultural environments and supported by innovative teaching practices.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how English language education (ELE) in Indonesia intersects with local culture and identity. Beginning with the theoretical grounding in the relationship between language and culture, it has highlighted how intercultural competence, cultural schema theory, and World Englishes provide frameworks for understanding culturally responsive pedagogy in Indonesian contexts. Historical and policy developments, from post independence language education to the current *Kurikulum Merdeka*, reveal a growing emphasis on contextualized and localized learning. Indonesian classrooms show increasing manifestations of cultural integration through localized content, culturally adapted discourse practices, and lesson plans that reflect social realities. However, challenges such as the persistence of native speaker norms, lack of teacher training in intercultural pedagogy, and curriculum standardization still limit broader implementation. At the same time, there are clear opportunities to foster global citizenship through local lenses, and to reframe English as a tool for expressing, rather than erasing, cultural identity.

For policy makers, these insights suggest the importance of supporting flexible curricula that accommodate local content and promote intercultural learning outcomes.

Teacher education programs should include training in culturally responsive methods, multilingual awareness, and project based approaches rooted in community knowledge. In terms of curriculum development, there is a need to design materials that reflect Indonesia's rich cultural diversity while meeting global communication goals. Future research can build on existing case studies to investigate the long term effects of culturally contextualized ELE on student motivation, identity, and intercultural competence. Practically, collaborations between educators, communities, and policymakers can ensure that English education in Indonesia remains both globally relevant and culturally grounded.

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CROSS-CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ENGLISH: LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND INNOVATION ACROSS BORDERS

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Introduction

The English language has become a dominant global language, which has fundamentally transformed the way entrepreneurs communicate and conduct cross-cultural business interactions and expand their reach in international relationships (Riel, 2025). This means English is not just about grammar or native fluency, but about effective communication across cultures. In 2025, the estimation indicates around 1.5 million English speakers worldwide, including both native and non-native speakers. This number is slightly more than Mandarin, which has approximately 1.18 million speakers (Galan, 2025). This number situates English as the main medium for intercultural business communication. English as a lingua franca (ELF) is defined functionally by its use in intercultural communication rather than its status as a native language (Seidlhofer, 2011), which allows entrepreneurs from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate in meaningful business dialogue without the constraints of language barriers adhering to native-speaker standards.

Numbers of research have revealed that higher English proficiency is correlated with business outcomes such as increased profitability and market expansion. Meanwhile, cross-cultural issues often complicate international business relationships, leading to misunderstandings and reduced effectiveness in collaboration. It highlights the importance of English competency in facilitating successful cross-cultural business interactions and collaborations.

Research has confirmed that linguistic and cultural difficulties can hinder international cooperation. A study by Griffith (2002) highlights how ineffective communication skills due to cultural misunderstandings can result in impaired relationship development in global business contexts. The importance of English proficiency in overcoming these barriers is widely recognized. As Agustina et al. point out (2024), English acts as a *lingua franca* in international business, and its mastery significantly enhances the clarity and effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. Atasheva (2024) argues that English proficiency not only facilitates business transactions but also builds trust, reduces cultural stereotyping, and supports the formation of stronger international relationships. In essence, overcoming cross-cultural communication issues in international business requires fostering both cultural awareness and strong English language competencies to promote effective collaboration and minimize misunderstandings.

Cross-cultural understanding of entrepreneurship in English education refers to innovative ventures that integrate cultural awareness. This approach aims to prepare educational programs that are linguistically effective and culturally responsive (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015). This concept combines entrepreneurial principles, such as innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), with an understanding of cultural dynamics, as informed by frameworks like Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence and De Mooij's (2019) cross-cultural marketing strategies.

Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence highlights the importance of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in navigating cultural differences, which can be applied to entrepreneurial ventures in language education. Additionally, Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions theory provides insights into how cultural values influence learning preferences, informing the design of culturally responsive English programs. From a marketing perspective, De Mooij (2019) argues that cross-cultural marketing strategies must account for cultural nuances to effectively engage diverse audiences, a principle applicable to educational entrepreneurship. These frameworks suggest that successful cross-cultural entrepreneurship in English education requires an understanding of both linguistic and cultural dynamics.

Cross-cultural entrepreneurship in education extends beyond the creation of language schools and programs; it represents a broader set of innovative businesses that integrate cultural awareness, intercultural dialogue, and entrepreneurial problem-solving to meet the needs of diverse learners. Such businesses often adopt hybrid models, combining education, technology, and community engagement to enhance both linguistic and intercultural competencies. For example, entrepreneurial businesses have developed blended learning platforms that merge English instruction with cultural immersion activities, thereby enabling learners to not only acquire language skills but also develop cross-cultural awareness essential for global communication (Stefanic et al., 2019). In sum, cross-cultural entrepreneurship in education involves innovative, inclusive, and adaptive ventures that fuse language learning with cultural competence, contributing not only to individual learner development but also to broader global intercultural collaboration.

Cross-Cultural Entrepreneurship in Practice

Cross-cultural entrepreneurship in English language education manifests through innovative businesses that combine linguistic instruction with cultural integration. It helps learners to get both language proficiency and

intercultural competence. Digital platforms such as Duolingo and Babbel exemplify this trend by offering culturally relevant narratives in their content and marketing strategies. Duolingo, a global ed-tech leader, employs localized campaigns tailored to specific cultural sensitivities by avoiding humor that may be misinterpreted in Japan while empowering local community managers to create culturally resonant content for regional audiences. Such strategies not only enhance learner engagement but also demonstrate how ed-tech businesses leverage cultural diversity as a marketing and pedagogical resource (Goel, 2025).

Similarly, community-based initiatives like Kampung Inggris (English Village) in Indonesia provide immersive environments where learners live, study, and receive social scaffolding and peer support to foster not only linguistic proficiency but also social confidence, particularly for learners from marginalized backgrounds (Pratiwi, 2023; Yusuf & Kaeni, 2025). These examples underscore how entrepreneurial businesses can adapt to diverse learner needs by weaving cultural narratives into language education.

Together, both digital innovations and community-based models reveal that cross-cultural entrepreneurship in practice is not simply about teaching English but about designing learning ecosystems that respect diversity, foster engagement, and build bridges across cultural divides. By incorporating elements of cultural relevance and community connection into language learning, educators can create a more inclusive and empowering environment for all students. This approach not only enhances language acquisition but also promotes mutual understanding and appreciation among learners from different backgrounds.

To implement cross-cultural entrepreneurship initiatives effectively, several interrelated strategies are essential. First, curriculum design must include cultural narratives and local knowledge, such as folktales, traditions, or pressing global issues, to contextualize language learning and make it meaningful for learners across diverse

backgrounds. Richard (2017) emphasizes that embedding cultural content within curricula fosters deeper engagement and intercultural competence, a view reinforced by Kazakeviciute et al. (2016), who argue that curriculum development must adopt a cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural perspective to remain effective in globalized contexts.

Second, teacher training in cross-cultural competence is crucial to ensure culturally sensitive and inclusive instruction. Without such preparation, educators may unintentionally reinforce cultural stereotypes rather than bridge them. Studies have shown that resources designed to foster cultural intelligence among educators and learners significantly improve intercultural understanding and learning outcomes (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Similarly, Jie and Harms (2017) highlight that entrepreneurship education programs that integrate cross-cultural competence training strengthen international entrepreneurial intentions and learner adaptability.

Third, digital technologies and blended learning approaches provide powerful tools for delivering interactive, culturally relevant content. Research on cross-cultural entrepreneurial blended learning models demonstrates that active learning strategies, when combined with digital tools, not only increase learner engagement but also help adapt instruction to diverse cultural contexts (Stefanic et al., 2019). Digital platforms further allow for localized adaptations of global content, thereby reinforcing inclusivity. Overall, integrating digital technologies into cross-cultural entrepreneurial education can enhance the effectiveness of learning experiences and foster a more inclusive learning environment. By leveraging these tools, educators can better cater to the diverse needs and preferences of learners from different cultural backgrounds.

Finally, community partnerships are essential for co-creating programs that reflect and respect local values, ensuring both learner motivation and long-term sustainability. Liu (2023) underscores that activities like

cultural exchanges and simulated international business projects effectively link communities with learning environments, fostering cooperation and trust.

Collectively, these strategies, curriculum contextualization, culturally competent teacher training, technology-enhanced learning, and community partnerships ensure that cross-cultural entrepreneurship in English education remains inclusive, adaptable, and impactful, equipping learners with the cultural and linguistic tools needed for effective communication in globalized contexts.

Challenges and Considerations of Cross-Cultural Entrepreneurship Education

Cross-cultural entrepreneurship in English education faces several persistent challenges that demand careful consideration to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability. *First*, cultural misunderstandings remain one of the most significant risks. If programs fail to align with learners' cultural backgrounds, they risk disengagement or even resistance. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory illustrates how differences in values, such as individualism versus collectivism, can shape classroom expectations and interactions, which make sensitivity to cultural context indispensable (Hofstede et al., 2010). Similarly, case studies of Chinese entrepreneurial ventures in English education highlight how unorthodox approaches may succeed locally but face cross-cultural misinterpretation when transplanted to different contexts (Tung et al., 2007).

Second, the tension between profitability and accessibility is particularly evident in low-resource contexts. Rural initiatives, such as those in Indonesia, often grapple with limited infrastructure, socioeconomic disparities, and affordability issues, raising questions about how to sustain programs while maintaining inclusivity. Walsh and Cooney (2022) emphasize that cross-cultural entrepreneurs, especially immigrant or grassroots actors, face unique financial and adaptation challenges in balancing business viability with

accessibility for marginalized learners. This challenge is mirrored in findings from Olszewska (2015), which show that students in developing contexts often perceive entrepreneurship initiatives as elitist unless affordability and equity are prioritized.

Third, ensuring the authenticity of cultural content requires careful collaboration with cultural insiders to prevent stereotyping and misrepresentation. De Mooji (2019) stresses that superficial cultural adaptations in global marketing and education can reinforce biases rather than foster genuine intercultural understanding. It is essential to engage with local communities and experts to ensure authentic and respectful representation. This approach will ultimately lead to more effective and meaningful cross-cultural communication.

In addition, developing cross-cultural competence among educators and learners is an ongoing challenge. Without sufficient cultural intelligence, both teachers and students may struggle to adapt to unfamiliar practices. Jie and Harms (2017) argue that a lack of cross-cultural competence weakens entrepreneurial intentions and program outcomes, while Bandera et al. (2018) highlight the necessity of localizing entrepreneurial curricula within global frameworks to prevent cultural dissonance. They emphasize the importance of integrating cultural awareness and sensitivity into entrepreneurial education.

In sum, the challenges of cross-cultural entrepreneurship in English education include navigating cultural misunderstanding, balancing profitability with inclusivity, ensuring authenticity of cultural content, and building cross-cultural competence. Addressing these concerns requires careful planning, collaboration with cultural stakeholders, and continuous evaluation to ensure that initiatives remain both impactful and sustainable across diverse cultural contexts.

Implications for English Language Education

The integration of cross-cultural entrepreneurship into English education represents a paradigm shift with far-

reaching implications for language pedagogy, learner outcomes, and educational sustainability. The following discussion explores critical dimensions of the integration. First, fostering treating inclusivity through diverse learner needs. The incorporation of cross-cultural entrepreneurship into English education fundamentally transforms the pedagogical landscape by addressing diverse learner needs through culturally responsive teaching practices. Research demonstrates that intercultural engagement, business English proficiency, global mindset, cultural knowledge, adaptability, and entrepreneurial motivation are key factors that influence cross-cultural competence development (Song & Sahid, 2025). This aligns with the principle of inclusive English teaching by recognizing that learners bring diverse cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and entrepreneurial perspectives to the classroom.

The concept of culturally responsive teaching, as established in educational research, emphasizes the importance of validating students' cultural identities while building bridges to academic success (Gay, 2010). When applied to cross-cultural entrepreneurship education, this approach acknowledges that intercultural perspectives in the English language classroom, by integrating an intercultural language teaching approach, can enhance learning outcomes for diverse student populations. This pedagogical shift moves beyond traditional one-size-fits-all approaches to embrace methodologies that honor cultural diversity while building entrepreneurial competencies.

Furthermore, inclusive English teaching through entrepreneurship education addresses the needs of learners who may have been marginalized by conventional educational approaches. By incorporating real-world entrepreneurial scenarios from various cultural contexts, educators can create learning environments that resonate with students lived experiences and cultural worldviews. This approach not only improves language acquisition but also empowers learners to see themselves as capable agents of economic and social changes within their own cultural frameworks.

The second major implication concerns the preparation of learners for increasingly interconnected global workplaces. Modern professional environments demand

more than linguistic competence; they require sophisticated intercultural communication skills that enable effective collaboration across cultural boundaries. Cross-cultural communication is facilitated by the use of English, making English language education a critical vehicle for developing these competencies.

Research in cross-cultural communicative competence reveals that the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures has become essential for professional success (Zhou et al., 2024). This competence extends beyond surface-level cultural awareness to encompass a deep understanding of how cultural values, communication styles, and business practices intersect in entrepreneurial contexts. English teachers, therefore, assume the role of cultural mediators who facilitate not only language learning but also the development of cultural intelligence necessary for global entrepreneurship.

The entrepreneurial dimension adds particular relevance to this preparation. Unlike traditional cultural competency training, entrepreneurship-focused intercultural education emphasizes practical application of cultural knowledge in business contexts. Students learn to navigate cultural differences not merely as academic exercises but as real-world challenges they will encounter when launching ventures, collaborating with international partners, or marketing products across cultural boundaries. This practical orientation makes language learning more meaningful and directly applicable to career success.

Moreover, the integration of entrepreneurial thinking into English education helps learners develop what researchers call a "global mindset," the cognitive ability to understand and respond to diverse market opportunities and cultural contexts. This mindset becomes particularly crucial as digital technologies continue to flatten traditional geographical and cultural barriers to business interaction.

The third implication involves the transformative potential of entrepreneurial approaches to drive innovation in language education itself. Cross-cultural entrepreneurship, when integrated into language education, presents significant implications that enhance learning outcomes, develop crucial skills, and broaden global perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach leverages the dynamics of entrepreneurial thinking and cross-cultural understanding to create a more effective, engaging, and relevant language learning environment.

1. The integration of cross-cultural entrepreneurship introduces novel pedagogical approaches into language education. One key piece of information is the adoption of project-based learning (PBL) with an entrepreneurial focus (Ahmad & Yusof Khan, 2023). For example, students might work on developing a language learning application for a specific cultural market. This shifts language acquisition from rote memorization to practical application, which makes the learning process more authentic and motivating. Co-creation and collaborative learning across borders are fundamental building blocks for these innovative projects, encouraging students to apply their linguistic skills in real-world scenarios (Bakhtiyarovich, 2025). This type of experiential learning fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation for different perspectives and ways of life.
2. A primary transformative potential lies in the cultivation of cross-cultural competence, which is an essential element for effective communication in a globalized world (Yan & Guzman, Jr., 2024). Language education, through an entrepreneurial lens, moves beyond mere linguistic proficiency to emphasize cultural understanding, awareness of cultural norms, values, and communication style. This is achieved through explicit instruction in cross-cultural communication analysis and by designing curricula that promote intercultural education activities (Münchow, 2012). Furthermore, students

are encouraged to engage in immersive experiences such as study abroad programs to enhance their cultural competence.

While the transformative potential is significant, several limitations and areas for future research exist. One challenge is the complexity of effectively integrating cultural elements into language curricula without oversimplifying or stereotyping cultures. There is a need for robust frameworks that can facilitate the nuanced incorporation of cultural teaching in international language education. This will ensure that students receive a comprehensive and accurate understanding of different cultures. Future research could explore the long-term impact of such integrated programs on students' career paths and their actual entrepreneurial success.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural entrepreneurship in English language education offers a promising method for fostering linguistic proficiency and cultural competence. By drawing on theoretical frameworks from applied linguistics and cross-cultural marketing, educators and entrepreneurs can design programs that bridge cultural divides while meeting diverse learner needs. Despite challenges such as cultural misunderstandings and resource constraints, the potential for innovation and inclusivity makes this approach vital to the future of English education. This chapter contributes to the book's exploration of cross-cultural understanding by highlighting the role of entrepreneurship in creating culturally responsive, globally aware language programs.

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WORLD LITERATURE AS CROSS-CULTURAL BRIDGE IN ENGLISH: THE ART OF GIVING IN “THE GIFT OF THE MAGI”: INTEGRATION OF WORLD LITERATURE INTO EFL TEACHING FOR CULTIVATING CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

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Introduction

English has emerged as the dominant global lingua franca, with approximately 1.5 billion non-native speakers significantly outnumbering the 370 million native speakers (American TESOL Institute, 2025). This evolution has made English essential for international communication across business, education, science, technology, and diplomacy, making both English language education and cross-cultural understanding crucial for global interaction.

Braj Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles model, as referenced by Al-Mutairi (2020), systematically classifies English's global diffusion. The Inner Circle encompasses nations where English is the primary language (Britain,

USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand). The Outer Circle includes former British colonies where English serves official or institutional functions as a second language (India, Malaysia, Singapore, Ghana, Kenya), developing unique "World Englishes" with local features. The Expanding Circle comprises countries where English is taught as a foreign language without official status or colonial history (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Japan, China, Indonesia), primarily for international communication.

In Expanding Circle countries, English curricula typically cover grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary but often neglect cross-cultural issues, resulting in limited cultural understanding. This makes instruction overly mechanical and structure-focused. As Savvidou (2004) notes, even students with strong grammar and vocabulary may lack communicative competence due to poor cross-cultural understanding. This gap stems from narrow focus on language's referential function, neglecting its creative and interpretive uses (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012). Therefore, incorporating literature into EFL teaching is essential to address this gap and develop students' overall communicative competence.

Why Literature is Essential

Traditional ELT materials often fail to provide opportunities for imaginative involvement, which limits students' ability to interpret, evaluate, and give personal responses to language (Lazar, 1993). Literature, however, offers a rich context for students to engage with language more creatively, fostering a deeper awareness of the language they are learning (Brumfit & Carter, 1986). It provides a platform for students to encounter diverse situations and perspectives, which enhances their cross-cultural understanding and prepares them to function effectively in a variety of communicative contexts (Ghosn, 2002).

The Benefits of Using Literature

By integrating literary texts, educators can move beyond rote learning to promote a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment (Ghosn, 2002). Literature allows students to experience language in its most authentic and creative forms, helping them to develop skills in:

1. Interpretation and evaluation: Analyzing character motivations, themes, and literary devices (Brumfit & Carter, 1986).
2. Personal response: Expressing their own thoughts and feelings about a text (Lazar, 1993).
3. Creative use of language: Experimenting with different styles and registers (Carter & Long, 1991).

Ultimately, incorporating literature addresses the shortcomings of a purely functional approach by providing students with the tools to navigate the complex, culturally rich, and creative dimensions of language.

Defining Literature

Literature definition varies. Robson (1984) defined literature as a written text in literary language. Literary works use specific language that differs from daily language and scientific language. Literary works may use poetic diction and a certain style.

Further, Lindberg-Wada (2011) defines literature as *“something that is in a specific style of writing skillfully expresses human ideas, feelings, and imagination, which has a dual purpose of utility and pleasure, and which conveys general knowledge to the majority of people”* (p.122).

Literature is a distinct style of writing that skillfully expresses human ideas, feelings, and imagination. It serves a dual purpose: utility and pleasure. Its utility lies in its ability to convey profound knowledge to a wide audience. Through stories, poems, and plays, literature portrays social, political, and cultural phenomena, offering a powerful lens for understanding human

experience across different eras and societies. This function makes literature an invaluable source of cultural and historical knowledge.

At the same time, literature offers a unique form of pleasure, making it an enjoyable and engaging form of reading. It uses an artistic touch, with nuanced language and creative structures, to craft a message that is not only powerful but also deeply resonant. Whether in oral or written form, this artistic quality makes literature a compelling and memorable medium. Ultimately, literature's dual nature allows it to serve as both a tool to inform and a source of entertainment.

The Importance of Integrating Literature Into ELT

In language teaching, literature plays a crucial role by providing motivating materials and various communicative activities. One of the main reasons for integrating literature into the language classroom is that it offers a rich context for language learning. This helps learners acquire and use an extensive and subtle range of vocabulary, as well as a variety of syntactic structures (Pokhrel, 2008).

Integrating literature into English Language Teaching (ELT) is highly advantageous, as supported by scholarly research. The pedagogical advantage of this approach can be categorized into several key areas:

1. Linguistic Advantages

Literature provides authentic and diverse language models. Students are exposed to a rich vocabulary, varied sentence structures, and different registers and styles of writing that go beyond typical textbook content. This exposure helps them improve their reading, writing, and speaking skills within a meaningful and contextualized framework (Duff and Maley, 1990 as cited in Savvidou, 2004).

2. Methodological Advantages

Literature serves as a versatile tool for various teaching methodologies. It can be used for task-based

learning, project work, and group discussions. For instance, a short story can be the basis for a debate, a role-play, or a creative writing assignment. This allows educators to move beyond traditional grammar exercises and engage students in more interactive and communicative activities (Savvidou, 2004).

3. Motivational Advantages

Engaging with literary texts can be a powerful motivator for students. Stories, poems, and plays often deal with universal human themes, emotions, and experiences, which can captivate students' interest and make the learning process more enjoyable and personal (Vural, 2013). This increased engagement can lead to a deeper commitment to language learning.

4. Cultural Advantages

Literature offers a window into other cultures and societies. By reading texts from different parts of the world, students gain insight into diverse traditions, values, beliefs, and historical contexts (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012). This cultural exposure fosters empathy and cross-cultural understanding, which are essential skills in today's globalized world.

These benefits, as cited by scholars such as Vural (2013), Daskalovska & Dimova (2012), and Duff and Maley (1990 as cited in Savvidou, 2004), underscore the importance of moving beyond a purely linguistic approach to ELT and embracing the rich educational potential of literature.

Comprehending Literary Works and Pedagogical Strategies

Literary versus Non-Fiction Comprehension

Comprehending literary texts is a distinct process from reading non-fiction. Unlike non-fiction, where the goal is to extract objective facts, literary comprehension is an active, multifaceted process where meaning is not passively received but actively constructed by the reader

(Rosenblatt, 1978). This perspective challenges the traditional view of a single, fixed meaning and is supported by key approaches to teaching and learning literature.

The Interpretive Nature of Literary Comprehension

Literary comprehension requires a more interpretive and subjective approach from the reader. Readers must engage with figurative language, symbolism, and a deeper layer of meaning to understand the author's perspective and the text's broader context (Lazar, 1993). The reader's personal experiences, emotions, and cultural background are central to this process, shaping their unique interpretation (Lazar, 1993). As a result, a literary text can have multiple valid meanings depending on the reader's "transaction" with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978).

The Objective Nature of Non-Fiction Comprehension

In contrast, non-fiction comprehension is primarily an analytical and objective process. The reader's goal is to identify the main idea, locate key facts, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and synthesize information from different parts of the text (Hillocks, 1999). While background knowledge is still important, the ultimate aim is to grasp the factual information presented by the author, not to construct a unique, personal meaning. This process is more about analyzing the author's argument and supporting evidence than about personal interpretation (Hillocks, 1999).

Theories of Literary Meaning

Comprehending a literary text in metamodern times requires more than just understanding the literal meaning of words; it demands a deeper engagement with the text's figurative language, context, and authorial perspective. Modern literary theory argues that meaning is not a fixed entity within the text, but is actively constructed by the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). This dynamic process is influenced by the reader's unique schematic knowledge and life experiences, which act as a lens for interpretation. As readers engage with a text, they

continuously build and revise a mental model of the fictional world, a process known as envisionment building (Langer, 2011). This cognitive effort has been linked to the development of social cognition, as understanding complex fictional characters can improve a person's ability to grasp others' thoughts and feelings (Mar & Oatley, 2006). Therefore, literary texts often have multiple valid interpretations, as the final meaning is a collaborative effort between the text and the reader.

Effective Pedagogical Approaches

To facilitate the active construction of meaning in the classroom, effective teaching methods move beyond traditional approaches. A constructivist approach encourages students to actively build knowledge through inquiry-based discussions rather than passively receiving information (Hillocks, 1999). Similarly, strategies like Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), which involve predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, explicitly teach students to be active and strategic readers. Ultimately, effective literary comprehension depends on a reader's ability to both analyze the text and use their cognitive skills and experiences to construct meaning.

Why is “The Gift of The Magi” A Perfect Choice for EFL

O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" is pedagogically ideal for several reasons.

First, accessible language and clear narrative. The story offers manageable linguistic features aligning with Widdowson's (1978) advocacy for authentic yet comprehensible texts. The well-defined plot exemplifies Short's (1988) effective narrative arc that helps students follow easily.

Second, universal themes. Themes of love, sacrifice, and giving transcend cultural boundaries. Lazar's (1993) "personal growth model" shows such themes allow students to connect personally, increasing motivation. Kramsch (1993) emphasizes literary texts with universal experiences provide safe spaces for intercultural communication.

Lastly, versatility. The story supports multiple activities: pre-reading predictions, discussions, vocabulary work, writing tasks, and drama/role-playing—communicative activities Stern (1991) advocates. Maley and Moulding (2015) confirm effective literary texts enable such exploitation.

The Story Summary

Setting: A modest furnished apartment in New York City, early 20th century, Christmas Eve. The shabby flat contrasts sharply with Della and Jim's immense love.

Background: O. Henry (William Sydney Porter) wrote this in 1905, published in *The Four Million* (1906)—a response declaring ordinary New Yorkers also have meaningful stories. The story exemplifies situational irony: both gifts become useless, yet highlight that love transcends material possessions.

Plot: Impoverished couple Della and Jim desperately want meaningful Christmas gifts for each other. Della has \$1.87 and beautiful long hair; Jim has a gold family watch. Della sells her hair for \$20 to buy Jim a platinum fob chain. Jim sells his watch to buy ornate combs for Della's hair. Their gifts are materially useless but represent selfless love and sacrifice. O. Henry compares them to the Magi—the wisest gift-givers because their presents were motivated by true love (Henry, 2010; Cummings, 2006).

The Key Ideas To Help Comprehend The Story “The Gift Of The Magi”

The title, **“The Gift of the Magi,”** is the key to understanding the story's deepest meaning. To fully comprehend this classic tale, it's essential to analyze several key ideas:

The Identity and Gifts of the Magi

The Magi were the “wise men” from the Bible who brought valuable and symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the newborn Jesus. O. Henry presents them as

the original givers of Christmas gifts, celebrated for their wisdom. Their gifts were considered wise not just for their material value but because they were given selflessly and with pure devotion to someone they considered most worthy, with no expectation of anything in return (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012 ; Gelfant, 1968).).

The Irony of Della and Jim's Gifts

The story centers on Della and Jim, a poor couple who, like the Magi, sacrifice for love. In a moment of supreme irony, their gifts for each other are rendered useless: Della sells her beautiful hair to buy a platinum chain for Jim's watch, while Jim sells his prized watch to buy a set of expensive combs for Della's hair. From a practical standpoint, their actions seem "unwise" because they gave up their most valuable possessions for items that could no longer be used (Kendjaeva & Ubaydullayeva, 2023)

The Wisdom of Their Sacrifice

Despite the material foolishness of their actions, O. Henry declares that Della and Jim are "the wisest of all who give gifts." This is because the true "gift" was not the physical object but the immense love and selfless sacrifice that motivated their actions. Their willingness to give up what was most precious to them for the other's happiness embodies the true spirit of the Magi (Henry, 2010).

The Deeper Meaning of the Title

Ultimately, the title elevates their humble story to a profound lesson. "The Gift of the Magi" means that the true value of a gift is not measured by its cost or usefulness but by the love and sacrifice behind it. Della and Jim, in their selfless acts, embody the wisdom of the original Magi, showing that the greatest gift of all is love. The title elevates their humble, almost comical story to a timeless and profound lesson about the true meaning of generosity and love (Gelfant, 1968; Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012; Rakhmonova, 2024))

The Lessons Learned From The Gift Of The Magi

The story of "The Gift of the Magi" offers several valuable lessons, primarily revolving around the themes of love, sacrifice, and true wealth.

The Profound Expression of Love

The short story "The Gift of the Magi" teaches a few valuable lessons, with the primary one being that gift-giving is a profound expression of love. This theme is universal, demonstrating that genuine love transcends boundaries of race, social status, or background.

This is immediately established in the story's opening paragraph:

ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned . . . Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas (Henry, 2010, p. 1).

This passage powerfully demonstrates Della's financial constraints, highlighting her small budget for a Christmas gift for her husband, Jim. Despite her poverty, the quotation underscores her immense determination and self-sacrifice. The image of her "bulldozing" merchants until her "cheeks burned" reveals the lengths to which she has gone to save every penny. Her effort shows that the value of the gift is not in its monetary value, but in the love and sacrifice that motivates the act of giving (Kendjaeva & Ubaydullayeva, 2023).

The Value of Sacrifice and The Meaning of Giving

The most prominent lesson is that genuine love is demonstrated through selfless sacrifice (Gelfant, 1968). Both Della and Jim give up their most prized possessions to buy a gift for the other, proving that their love is far more valuable than any material item. This theme argues that the true worth of a present is not in its monetary value but in the love and sacrifice behind it (Devi & Devi,

2023). Their willingness to part with what they cherish most highlights the depth of their devotion and redefines the act of giving (Rakhmonova, 2024).

The True Wealth.

The story "The Gift of the Magi" challenges the conventional idea of wealth, suggesting that true wealth is not measured by material possessions but by the strength of one's relationships and the love shared between people (Oktaviani & Yuliasri, 2020). Despite their poverty, Della and Jim are portrayed as being incredibly rich because they possess an abundance of love and commitment (Kendjaeva & Ubaydullayeva, 2023). The story teaches that their emotional and relational wealth far surpasses any financial lack.

Exploring Gift-Giving Traditions Across Cultures And Societies

Gift-giving is a universal practice that has evolved through industrialization and civilization. While it has become global, each culture applies different principles based on community values.

The Social Functions of Gift-Giving

Fundamentally, gift-giving establishes and maintains social bonds. Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (1925) describes it as a "total social phenomenon" creating threefold obligations: to give, receive, and reciprocate. This reciprocal exchange strengthens relationships through social debt and counter-gifts, perpetuating connections (Mauss, 1925).

Sherry (1983) notes gifts act as non-verbal communication, carrying "encoded information about the giver, the recipient, and the gift situation itself." The gift type, value, and presentation convey relationship messages.

Gift-Giving Culture in America

American gift-giving is deeply ingrained, expressing affection and reinforcing social bonds (Carrier, 1990;

Waits, 1994). Gifts are exchanged during personal milestones (birthdays, graduations, weddings) and holidays, with Christmas being the most significant.

The tradition has evolved from handmade personal items to consumer-driven practices (Waits, 1994). However, gift value remains measured by thoughtfulness rather than monetary cost (Carrier, 1990), maintaining social order and community even in individualized society

The Evolution of Gift-Giving in America

In early 20th-century America, gift-giving was significant even for those with limited means (Waits, 1994; Carrier, 1990). Industrialization transformed this practice dramatically.

From Handmade to Market-Driven Gifts

Gift-giving was historically personal, involving handmade items. However, after the 1880s, mass-produced store-bought goods dominated, commercializing the tradition (Waits, 1994). This shift was seen as "cheapening" the practice, replacing heartfelt effort with monetary value. New social etiquette emerged: Christmas cards for acquaintances, manufactured gifts for close family—a rationalization mirroring organized charity trends.

Waits also identified the "feminization of Christmas," where women bore disproportionate burdens as primary holiday shopping managers and consumers.

British Gift-Giving: From Tradition to Modern Consumerism

British gift-giving evolved from reinforcing social bonds and demonstrating status to consumer-driven yet personal acts (Carrier, 1990; Waits, 1994).

Early practices involved practical exchanges (food, wool, animals) strengthening community ties, particularly during New Year celebrations (Heal, 2014). The Victorian Era, influenced by Prince Albert, cemented Christmas as the primary gift-giving holiday, shifting toward sentimental handcrafted gifts. Department stores made manufactured gifts accessible to the middle class (Heal, 2014).

The 20th century accelerated commercialization, though recent trends favor mindful, experience-based gifts (spa days, cooking classes) creating memories over material possessions (Waits, 1994).

Key Traditions

Common occasions include Christmas, birthdays, weddings, and Boxing Day (gifts to servants/tradespeople). Host gifts (flowers, wine, chocolates) are customary. Modern trends include gift cards and experience-based gifts (concert tickets, spa vouchers, weekend getaways), plus growing charitable donations on behalf of recipients.

Australian Gift-Giving Tradition: A Blend of Culture and Values.

Gift-giving practices in Australia are a blend of multicultural influences, reflecting the nation's diverse heritage. The tradition has evolved from its indigenous roots and early European customs to a modern, consumer-driven culture that still values thoughtfulness over monetary value (Commisceo Global, n.d.).

Australian Gift-Giving

Australian gift-giving is casual and modest, reflecting egalitarian values. Extravagant gifts may cause discomfort; sentiment matters more than price (Commisceo Global, n.d.). Common occasions include Christmas, birthdays, weddings, and dinner parties (wine, chocolates, flowers) (Canvas Champ, 2021). Popular gifts feature locally made products and experience-based options. The Indigenous "Dadirri" concept (deep listening/reflection) influences gift selection toward genuine understanding of recipients' interests (Australian Woodwork, 2024). Corporate gifts remain modest to avoid bribery perceptions (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, n.d.).

Japanese Gift-Giving

Japanese gift-giving is a complex system governed by "giri" (social obligation) requiring continuous reciprocity through "okaeshi" (returning gifts) (Befu, 1968). Benedict

(1946) identified "on" (social debt) and "giri" (repayment imperative) as central concepts. This ritualistic practice maintains social stability and hierarchy (Befu, 1968; Rupp, 2003). Modern practice includes seasonal gifts ("ochugen," "oseibo") and travel souvenirs ("omiyage") (Japan Guide, n.d.). Symbolic value and presentation remain crucial—the giving act often outweighs material worth (WABI-SABI STORE, n.d.).

Korean Gift-Giving

Korean gift-giving reflects respect, hierarchy, and reciprocity (Commisceo Global, n.d.). Gifts mark life events (birthdays, weddings, graduations) and reflect giver's social status (Honorary Reporters, 2024). Overly expensive gifts burden recipients, so modest gifts are preferred (Trusted Gift Reviews, 2025). Gifts use both hands and traditional wrapping (Mims on the Move, 2017). Avoid sharp objects (symbolize "cutting off" relationships) and sets of four (associated with death) (Commisceo Global, n.d.).

Indonesian Gift-Giving

Gift-giving strengthens bonds through "gotong royong" (mutual cooperation), creating reciprocal generosity cycles (Cahyani & Wulandari, 2020). Common during Eid al-Fitr, weddings, and births, gifts emphasize practicality and sentiment over value (Pramono et al., 2018). In business, modest gifts build relationships while avoiding bribery perceptions (Wulandari & Cahyani, 2020).

Lamaholot Gift-Giving

The Lamaholot people (Flores, Adonara, Solor, Lomblen, Alor) practice gift-giving as social reciprocity strengthening community bonds during weddings and funerals (Kopong, 1995; Selly Tokan, 2020). Gifts include clothes, food, livestock, and increasingly cash. Uniquely, non-material contributions—time and labor for event preparations—are highly valued (Boro Bebe, 2018). This emphasis on presence and service parallels "The Gift of the Magi's" message: the most precious offerings come from the heart, not material value

The Gift Of The Magi As A Lens On Global Gift-Giving Culture

'The Gift of the Magi' illuminates universal gift-giving through its central message: sacrifice and love outweigh material worth.

America, Britain, and Australia: Thoughtfulness The story exemplifies Western personalized gift ideals. In Australia, Della and Jim's extreme sacrifice underscores cultural preference for gifts demonstrating deep consideration of recipients' passions over mere expense.

Japan and Korea: Respect vs. Pure Love Where gift-giving is ritualized through "okaeshi" (return gifts) and reciprocity maintaining social balance, the story offers contrast. Della and Jim's gifts transcend social obligation—their radical love expression requires no reciprocity, showing emotional value surpasses social ritual.

Indonesia and Lamaholot Society: Beyond Material The story's lesson aligns perfectly with Lamaholot practices. While both cultures exchange material gifts, Lamaholot traditions of giving time and labor mirror the Magi's spirit: Della and Jim's materially "useless" gifts' true value lay in sacrifice itself—mirroring the profound value of communal effort over physical objects."

Suggested EFL Activities With The Story "The Gift of The Magi

Pre-Reading: Discuss most valuable gifts given/received and "sacrifice" meaning. Introduce vocabulary (shabby, mendicancy, cascade, fob chain, magi) with images. Predict gifts a poor couple might exchange.

While-Reading: Character journal from Della's perspective. Plot map: money counting hair sale chain purchase Jim's arrival gift exchange Realization.

Post-Reading: Discussion: treasures owned, Della's excitement finding the chain, Jim's strange expression, who was wiser, story's message. Writing: alternative ending, formal letter from Jim, story summary. Speaking: role-play gift exchange scene, debate "true gift is thought, not object."

Cross-Cultural Understanding: Compare gift-giving traditions across cultures. Discuss: What makes a "great" gift—value or thought? How does the story challenge consumerist holiday views? Foster empathy through characters' selfless acts.

Conclusion

Integrating literature into EFL/ELT is pedagogically crucial, moving students beyond grammar memorization toward genuine cross-cultural understanding and communicative competence. Traditional methods often fail developing interpretive and creative skills essential for real-world communication; literature provides emotionally rich, authentic contexts.

'The Gift of the Magi,' with its timeless narrative and accessible language, exemplifies this perfectly. Students analyzing the story reflect on cultural gift-giving traditions, comparing them with Jim and Della's selfless exchange, transforming language into a vehicle for meaningful human connection. This fosters empathy through universal themes while discussing how values manifest across societies.

Effective integration requires selecting texts matching students' proficiency and cultural backgrounds. Literary comprehension demands grasping contextual nuances, inferential meanings, and authorial perspectives. Ultimately, literature bridges linguistic competence with cultural and communicative fluency necessary for our interconnected global world

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ENGLISH THROUGH INDONESIA ARTS

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Introduction

Art is more than just a form of beauty—it is a language of culture, history, and identity. Indonesia, with its diverse ethnic groups and traditions, has a rich artistic heritage that includes batik, wayang, gamelan, sculpture, painting, architecture, and dance. Each form of art reflects not only aesthetic values but also the beliefs, customs, and stories of Indonesian society.

In this chapter, art is used as a meaningful gateway to learn and practice English. By exploring Indonesian artworks, learners are introduced to vocabulary, expressions, and language structures in authentic and engaging contexts. For example, when describing the colors and patterns of batik, students naturally practice adjectives; when explaining the process of making traditional textiles, they practice the passive voice; and when sharing opinions about artistic values, they use functional language for discussion.

This approach aligns with contemporary language pedagogy that emphasizes meaningful learning through authentic cultural materials (Çakıroğlu & Güler, 2021). Research demonstrates that integrating cultural content into language teaching enhances learners' motivation, cultural awareness, and communicative competence, particularly at the tertiary level where

students possess sufficient cognitive maturity to engage with complex cultural concepts (Gómez Rodríguez, 2020).

The chapter highlights three key advantages. First, art creates meaningful learning experiences, as learners associate new vocabulary with familiar cultural artifacts. Second, it promotes creative expression and critical reflection by allowing students to contrast Indonesian art with traditions from other countries. Third, it fosters cultural pride while developing English proficiency (Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020).

By the end of this chapter, students will gain new English skills and a deeper understanding of how Indonesian arts communicate values, stories, and traditions to the world.

Arts-Integrated Language Learning: Theoretical Foundations

Arts-integrated language learning has gained renewed attention in contemporary EFL pedagogy, particularly in higher education where students develop advanced communicative competence alongside critical cultural literacy (Martín-Macho Harrison & Faya Cerqueiro, 2022). This approach embeds language instruction within authentic cultural experiences, moving beyond traditional grammar-translation methods.

Three theoretical pillars support this approach:

Multimodal Literacy Theory: Visual arts activate multiple semiotic resources images, colors, textures—requiring learners to construct meaning across modalities. This aligns with real-world communication where meaning is rarely conveyed through language alone. Studies show multimodal engagement significantly enhances vocabulary retention and discourse competence (Flewitt et al., 2022).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: This approach actively sustains and revitalizes learners' heritage cultures through education. Using local arts as teaching

materials validates students' cultural identities while developing English proficiency—critical for maintaining motivation and reducing linguistic anxiety (Widodo et al., 2023).

Embodied Cognition: Language learning is enhanced when cognitive processes are grounded in sensory and motor experiences. Engaging with visual and tactile aspects of art activates embodied cognition, creating stronger neural pathways for language retention than abstract textbook learning (García-Gámez & Mackey, 2024).

Recent studies provide robust support. Abduh et al. (2023) found Indonesian batik use in teaching vocabulary improved both immediate recall and long-term retention compared to traditional methods. Çakıroğlu & Güler (2021) discovered students showed 34% higher engagement when writing about cultural artifacts versus abstract topics.

Building Descriptive Language: Vocabulary Acquisition

1. Theoretical Framework

Contemporary vocabulary instruction emphasizes contextual learning, depth of processing, and multiple exposures through meaningful tasks (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). Visual-semantic networks demonstrate that vocabulary learned with visual imagery creates stronger memory traces than words learned through verbal definitions alone (Sadoski, 2020). A meta-analysis by Ramezanali & Faez (2023) found visual-semantic vocabulary instruction yielded 42% higher retention rates compared to translation-based methods.

Organizing vocabulary around thematic domains facilitates mental organization and accelerates acquisition (Uchihara & Clenton, 2020). The activities below progress from recognition to controlled production to free production, following evidence-based sequencing (Webb & Nation, 2021).

2. Key Vocabulary

a. Motif /'məʊti:f/ (noun)

Definition: A repeated design, shape, or pattern conveying cultural meaning.

Example: The parang rusak motif represents flowing water and symbolizes wisdom in Javanese philosophy.

Indonesian: *Motif, pola berulang*

b. Pattern /'pætən/ (noun)

Definition: A decorative design regularly repeated across a surface.

Example: Geometric patterns in Indonesian ikat textiles demonstrate mathematical precision.

Indonesian: *Pola, corak*

c. Texture /'tekstʃər/ (noun)

Definition: The surface quality of artwork; how it feels or appears to feel.

Example: The rough texture of wooden carvings contrasts with smooth contemporary sculptures.

Indonesian: *Tekstur, permukaan*

d. Symbol /'sɪmbəl/ (noun)

Definition: An image representing abstract ideas or cultural values.

Example: The lotus flower in temple architecture represents purity and enlightenment.

Indonesian: *Simbol, lambang*

e. Vibrant /'vaɪbrənt/ (adjective)

Definition: Bright, intense, and full of energy.

Example: The vibrant colors of Balinese paintings reflect dynamic spiritual environments.

Indonesian: *Cerah, penuh warna*

- f. Intricate /'ɪntrɪkət/ (adjective)

Definition: Characterized by elaborate detail and complexity.

Example: The intricate silver filigree work can take months to complete.

Indonesian: *Rumit, detail, halus*

- g. Carve /kɑ:v/ (verb)

Definition: To cut and shape solid materials into decorative objects.

Example: Master craftsmen carve elaborate temple gates from volcanic stone.

Indonesian: *Mengukir, memahat*

- h. Weave /wi:v/ (verb)

Definition: To create fabric by interlacing threads in systematic patterns.

Example: Women in Sumba weave complex ikat textiles using backstrap looms.

Indonesian: *Menenun, menganyam*

- i. Abstract /'æbstrækt/ (adjective)

Definition: Art using shapes, colors, and forms rather than recognizable objects.

Example: Contemporary abstract paintings incorporate traditional color palettes.

Indonesian: *Abstrak, tidak realistis*

- j. Traditional /trə'dɪʃənəl/ (adjective)

Definition: Related to customs transmitted across generations.

Example: Traditional textile arts represent centuries of accumulated knowledge.

Indonesian: *Tradisional, turun-temurun*

Vocabulary Practice

Match each word with the correct definition.

No.	Word		Definition
1	Motif	a.	A decorative design regularly repeated
2	Vibrant	b.	Characterized by elaborate detail
3	Carve	c.	To cut and shape solid materials
4	Texture	d.	Related to customs across generations
5	Symbol	e.	An image representing abstract ideas
6	Abstract	f.	Bright, intense, and full of energy
7	Intricate	g.	To create fabric by interlacing threads
8	Pattern	h.	A repeated design conveying meaning
9	Weave	i.	Art using shapes rather than objects
10	Traditional	j.	The surface quality of artwork

Answer Key: 1-h, 2-f, 3-c, 4-j, 5-e, 6-i, 7-b, 8-a, 9-g, 10-d

Reading Cultural Texts: Batik As Pedagogical Resource

1. Why Batik for Language Learning?

In contemporary literacy studies, "text" extends beyond written language to encompass cultural artifacts that convey meaning (Kress, 2021). For Indonesian EFL learners, analyzing batik provides dual benefits: developing English proficiency while deepening cultural understanding.

Batik represents an ideal cultural text for several reasons: UNESCO recognition positions it within international discourse; its semiotic richness requires sophisticated interpretive language; the

technical process involves sequential steps amenable to grammatical structures like passive voice; and batik remains vibrant in contemporary life, providing immediately relevant knowledge (Nurhajarini & Purwanto, 2020).

Recent research demonstrates that integrating visual analysis with linguistic tasks enhances critical literacy and communicative competence (Zhang & Guo, 2024). When students analyze batik, they simultaneously decode visual elements, interpret cultural meanings, and articulate analysis in English—creating what scholars call "translanguaging spaces" where linguistic, visual, and cultural knowledge interact productively (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023).

2. READING: BATIK – The Art of Wax and Dye

Batik is one of Indonesia's most celebrated traditional art forms, recognized globally for its aesthetic beauty and cultural significance. The word "batik" derives from Javanese *ambatik*, meaning "to write" or "to draw," reflecting the meticulous nature of this textile art. Batik employs a resist-dyeing technique where artisans apply hot wax (*malam*) to fabric before immersing it in dye baths.

The technical process demonstrates remarkable precision. Using a specialized copper tool called *canting* for hand-drawn batik (*batik tulis*) or copper stamps (*cap*) for printed batik (*batik cap*), craftspeople apply molten wax to create patterns on cotton or silk fabric. The wax acts as a barrier, preventing dye penetration. After dyeing, the fabric is boiled to remove wax, revealing reserved patterns. This process may be repeated with different wax applications and dye colors, yielding complex, multi-hued designs. Fine batik *tulis* can require weeks or months to complete.

Beyond technical sophistication, batik functions as cultural text encoding regional identity, social meaning, and spiritual symbolism. Each Indonesian region has developed distinctive styles. Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik features earthy tones—deep browns, indigos, creams—with geometric patterns historically reserved for aristocracy. Coastal batik from Pekalongan and Cirebon exhibits vibrant colors—reds, greens, pinks—incorporating Chinese, European, and Arabic influences, reflecting port cities' cosmopolitan trading histories.

The symbolic vocabulary communicates cultural values. The parang rusak motif, featuring diagonal rows resembling ocean waves, symbolizes power and continuity, traditionally worn by royalty. The kawung pattern, comprising overlapping circles, represents authority and self-control. The truntum motif, showing small stars or flowers, symbolizes everlasting love, traditionally worn by parents at children's weddings. These patterns function as visual language, conveying messages about identity, status, and values.

In contemporary Indonesia, batik bridges tradition and modernity. While maintaining ceremonial importance—worn at weddings, official functions, religious celebrations—batik has adapted to contemporary fashion and design. Government policies, including National Batik Day and batik uniforms in institutions, sustain batik's relevance. Modern designers experiment with non-traditional colors, contemporary motifs, and innovative applications, demonstrating batik's continuing vitality.

UNESCO's 2009 recognition of Indonesian batik as Intangible Cultural Heritage marked international acknowledgment of batik's significance. This highlights batik not merely as decorative textile but as living cultural practice embodying Indonesian creativity, philosophical thought, and social

organization. Through batik, Indonesia communicates cultural identity to the world, demonstrating how traditional arts maintain relevance in globalized contexts while preserving ancestral knowledge.

Today, batik represents more than heritage; it constitutes an active, evolving art form and economic sector. Thousands of artisans, designers, and entrepreneurs continue batik traditions while innovating new applications. For students learning English, batik provides opportunities to articulate cultural pride, explain complex processes, analyze symbolic meanings, and engage in international cultural conversations.

Language Focus

1. Adjectives for Describing Art

Descriptive adjectives enable aesthetic evaluation and cultural analysis. Research shows explicit vocabulary instruction combined with contextual application significantly enhances productive use (Webb & Nation, 2021).

Common Categories:

Category	Examples
Visual Qualities	vibrant, muted, luminous, bold, contrasting
Complexity	intricate, elaborate, simple, minimalist
Style	traditional, contemporary, modern, innovative
Emotional Impact	harmonious, dramatic, peaceful, elegant

Practice:

Fill in the blanks with appropriate adjectives.

Word Bank: vibrant, intricate, symbolic, traditional, abstract, harmonious

- a. Pekalongan batik features _____ colors reflecting coastal vibrancy.

- b. Royal Javanese batik contains _____ patterns with hundreds of tiny motifs.
- c. The Garuda motif is deeply _____, representing national identity.
- d. Batik tulis is a _____ art form practiced for centuries.
- e. Modern designers create _____ batik-inspired paintings with non-representational forms.
- f. The ceremony featured _____ decorations combining textiles with flowers.

Answers: 1-vibrant, 2-intricate, 3-symbolic, 4-traditional, 5-abstract, 6-harmonious

2. Comparative Forms

Comparatives facilitate cross-cultural analysis—key to intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2021).

Formation:

Short adjectives: -er + than → bigger than

Long adjectives: more + adjective + than → more intricate than

Practice:

Complete sentences using comparative forms.

- a. Batik from Yogyakarta is _____ (detailed) than coastal batik.
- b. Contemporary designs are _____ (colorful) than traditional palace batik.
- c. Batik cap is _____ (affordable) than batik tulis.
- d. Modern interpretations are _____ (experimental) than classical designs.

Answers: 1-more detailed, 2-more colorful, 3-more affordable, 4-more experimental

3. Passive Voice for Describing Processes

Passive voice dominates academic writing, particularly in process descriptions where action matters more than agent (Friginal & Hardy, 2023).

Structure: Subject + be + past participle (+ by + agent)

Examples:

Hot wax is applied to fabric using canting.

The cloth is immersed in dye baths.

Traditional patterns are passed down through generations.

Practice:

Transform to passive voice.

- a. Artisans create batik by applying hot wax and dyes.
- b. Batik _____.
- c. The craftsperson draws intricate patterns using canting.
- d. →Intricate patterns _____.
- e. UNESCO recognized Indonesian batik in 2009.
- f. Indonesian batik _____.

Answers:

Batik is created by applying hot wax and dyes.

Intricate patterns are drawn using canting.

Indonesian batik was recognized by UNESCO in 2009.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Indonesian arts—specifically batik—serve as powerful pedagogical resources for English language learning at university level. By integrating visual culture with linguistic

instruction, the approach aligns with contemporary theories of multimodal literacy (Kress, 2021), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2021), and content-based instruction (Nation & Macalister, 2020).

Students have developed multiple competencies: specialized vocabulary for describing visual culture, comparative structures for cross-cultural analysis, passive voice for academic descriptions, and reading strategies for complex texts. They've also gained deep knowledge of batik as technical process, symbolic system, and living tradition.

Research consistently demonstrates that integrated approaches yield superior outcomes compared to traditional grammar-focused instruction. Students develop not only linguistic accuracy but also communicative competence—the ability to use language appropriately in culturally situated contexts (Canale, 2021).

Moreover, arts-integrated learning addresses a critical challenge: maintaining motivation. When learners study English through culturally meaningful content, they perceive language learning as identity-affirming rather than identity-threatening—crucial for sustained motivation (Norton & De Costa, 2023).

Extension Activities:

1. Descriptive Writing: Analyze batik using target vocabulary
2. Comparative Essay: Compare Indonesian batik with textile traditions from other cultures
3. Oral Presentation: Research specific batik regions or motifs
4. Cultural Ambassadorship: Create informational materials about Indonesian arts

As Indonesia continues engaging globally, the ability to articulate cultural heritage in English becomes increasingly valuable. This chapter represents one model for how language education can simultaneously

develop linguistic competence and cultural pride, preparing students as cultural ambassadors capable of bridging Indonesian traditions and international conversations.

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ENGLISH IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL SETTING

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Introduction

1. The Global Context and Islamic Educational Imperatives

In an increasingly interconnected world, English has become essential for international communication, academic discourse, and technological advancement. However, Islamic educational institutions face a distinctive challenge: developing students' English proficiency while preserving their Islamic identity and values. This tension between global participation and cultural preservation defines contemporary English language teaching in Islamic contexts.

Islamic education encompasses holistic human development—intellectual and spiritual, physical and moral—making the integration of Islamic values into English language teaching essential for maintaining educational coherence (Wijayanto, 2020). The Quranic foundation in Surah Al-Anbiya (21:107), which positions Islam as "a mercy to the worlds," indicates that separating religious instruction from language learning contradicts the Islamic understanding of knowledge as unified and holistic (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023). Therefore, English language pedagogy in Islamic institutions must

synthesize Islamic values with communicative competence to create meaningful and contextually relevant educational experiences.

2. Critical Gaps in Current Practice

Despite growing recognition of English's importance in Islamic education, significant gaps persist between theory and practice.

The Integration Gap. A fundamental disconnect exists between educators' recognition of integration's importance and its actual implementation. While all teachers acknowledge that integrating Islamic values is essential, "their perceptions about the importance of integrating Islamic values in English learning were not firmly in line with the implementation" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 18). Critically, "the teachers' lesson plans (RPP) did not depict substantial integration of Islamic values" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 19), indicating systematic absence in both planning and execution.

The Sociopragmatic Competence Paradox. Students demonstrate strong linguistic competence (50% Good, 50% Fair) but face "substantial challenges in interactive aspects, particularly in question response capabilities and interaction norm comprehension, with 41.67% and 45.83% respectively requiring improvement" (Putri, Kristanto, & Sukmawati, 2025, p. 52). This reveals that "strong linguistic skills do not necessarily translate to effective pragmatic competence" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 57). Additionally, while 59.1% report high confidence, assessment data shows significant enhancement needs, and 91% experience language anxiety (Putri et al., 2025).

The Cultural Values Integration Challenge. Current integration primarily reflects Islamic values with limited local cultural diversity. "The cultural values that showed up are Islamic cultural values. Further research focusing on local cultural integration in teaching English may be enlightening"

(Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 709). This highlights complexity where Islamic values, local traditions, and target language culture intersect.

The Affective and Temporal Dimensions. Despite 95.5% acknowledging skill development importance, "40.9% report challenges with time management" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 54). The pervasive 91% anxiety rate indicates that "current instructional approaches may not adequately address these emotional dimensions of learning" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 58)."

3. Chapter Objectives and Significance

In direct response to these identified gaps, this chapter pursues four primary objectives:

- a. To explore comprehensive approaches for integrating Islamic values throughout all dimensions of English instruction, moving beyond superficial content inclusion toward fundamental pedagogical transformation informed by empirical evidence.
- b. To analyze the sociopragmatic competence paradox, investigating why linguistic competence fails to translate into pragmatic effectiveness and proposing targeted interventions for interactive skill development.

Chapter Organization. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework by examining Islamic values in language education and communicative competence constructs. Chapter 3 details integration strategies and approaches for lesson planning and sociopragmatic development. Chapter 4 synthesizes empirical evidence through analyzing performance patterns and success factors. Chapter 5 offers comprehensive pedagogical recommendations and best practices. Finally, the chapter concludes with key insights, theoretical contributions, and future research directions.

Significance. This chapter makes several important contributions. From a theoretical standpoint, it introduces "Islamic communicative competence" as a distinct construct that extends beyond traditional frameworks to incorporate faith-based values. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of synthesizing diverse research perspectives for comprehensive understanding. On a practical level, it provides stakeholders with evidence-based guidance for developing pedagogically sound and culturally authentic Islamic EFL programs. Beyond these immediate contributions, it engages with broader conversations about language, culture, and identity in globalized contexts, demonstrating how English education can strengthen rather than threaten Islamic identity.

As readers proceed through this chapter, they will find a careful balance between theoretical depth and practical applicability, empirical rigor and pedagogical relevance, and respect for Islamic values and openness to effective methodologies. The ultimate goal is to support English language education that produces students who are linguistically competent, culturally aware, spiritually grounded, and prepared to contribute meaningfully to both local communities and global society.

Islamic Values In Language Education

1. The Quranic Foundation for Holistic Education

Islamic education fundamentally differs from secular approaches through its comprehensive integration of spiritual and intellectual development. The Quranic verse "We have not sent you [Muhammad] except as a mercy to the worlds" (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:107) establishes Islam's role as a universal framework encompassing all aspects of life, including education (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 703). Rather than treating religious values as supplementary content, this universality positions them as foundational principles.

What emerges from Islamic educational philosophy is a definition of education as the development of the "complete human: mind and heart; spiritual and physical; character and skill" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 22). This holistic scope necessitates that "the teaching-learning process could combine the perspective of Islamic values with the perspective of language teaching" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 704). Integration, consequently, becomes pedagogically essential rather than optional. The practical manifestation of this principle extends across multiple dimensions, including "teaching Islamic law, teaching reciting Al-Qur'an, the right of parents, and teaching Islamic characters" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 704). In this way, language learning simultaneously reinforces Islamic knowledge.

2. Institutional Frameworks in Islamic Education

Indonesian Islamic institutions operate under specific philosophical frameworks that shape instructional approaches. At Nurul Jadid University, for instance, learning "must be guided by Trilogi Santri and Panca Kesadaran Santri" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 18). These principles mandate that "each learning program must be able to produce teachers who can integrate Islamic values in their teaching, including learning English itself" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 18). This institutional mandate creates expectations for what might be termed dual competencies: English proficiency and meaningful integration of Islamic values throughout instruction.

These institutional frameworks directly inform how communicative competence is conceptualized and developed in Islamic educational contexts.

a. Communicative Competence in Islamic Contexts

1) Beyond Traditional Models

Traditional communicative competence frameworks appear to require adaptation for

Islamic contexts. Evidence suggests that "integrating Islamic and cultural values helps students understand English more easily. Furthermore, it also supports students with an Islamic background" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 708). This enhanced understanding manifests across multiple skills. Indeed, student achievement in speaking, listening, translation, reading, and vocabulary is outstanding when Islamic values are integrated (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 708). The familiarity of Islamic contexts seems to reduce cognitive load, thereby facilitating more efficient language acquisition.

2) The Sociopragmatic Competence Paradox

Sociopragmatic competence—defined as "the ability to understand and produce socially appropriate speech acts in a given context"—operates across five dimensions in Islamic educational settings (Putri et al., 2025, p. 45). What critical research reveals, however, is that these dimensions develop non-uniformly. "While participants demonstrate relative strength in language use appropriateness, with performance evenly distributed between Good (50%) and Fair (50%) levels, they struggle substantially with interactive aspects" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 52). More specifically, "41.67% require improvement in question response capabilities and 45.83% in interaction norm comprehension" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 52).

This pattern exemplifies what might appropriately be termed the "sociopragmatic competence paradox"—a phenomenon wherein strong linguistic knowledge fails to translate into pragmatic effectiveness. The paradox extends beyond performance to metacognitive awareness. Despite these performance gaps, "59.1% of participants

report high confidence levels" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 54), a finding that indicates significant discrepancies between self-perception and actual competence. These findings carry profound pedagogical implications.

3) Islamic Communicative Competence Framework

By synthesizing Islamic educational philosophy with communicative competence theory, we arrive at a four-component construct:

Linguistic Competence. Traditional grammatical and lexical knowledge represents a relative strength among participants, with balanced Good/Fair performance distribution (Putri et al., 2025).

Sociopragmatic Competence. The capacity to navigate social interactions—including turn-taking and questioning protocols—currently represents a significant challenge area, with nearly half of participants requiring improvement (Putri et al., 2025).

Values-Based Competence. This dimension encompasses the application of Islamic principles in communication, including adab (Islamic etiquette) and gender interaction protocols. When well-developed, this competence "helps students understand the English material easier" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 708).

Intercultural Competence. Perhaps the most complex dimension involves navigating between Islamic values, local traditions, and target language cultural norms while maintaining Islamic identity. This dimension appears currently underdeveloped: 45.83% demonstrate Fair performance, while 29.17% require improvement (Putri et al., 2025, p. 53).

3. Implementation Challenges

Having established the theoretical foundations and institutional contexts, we now examine the challenges that emerge when theory meets practice.

a. The Theory-Practice Gap

Despite widespread recognition of integration's importance, systematic barriers persist. The fundamental challenge lies in what appears to be a disconnect between belief and practice. While "all the teachers admitted that integrating Islamic values in the English lesson was essential," "their perceptions were not firmly in line with the implementation" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 18). This disconnect manifests most clearly in instructional planning: "the teachers' lesson plans (RPP) did not depict substantial integration of Islamic values" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 19).

Several contributing factors emerge from the literature. These include "limited time and resources," "lack of Islamic-based English materials," and "teachers' insufficient knowledge about integration strategies" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 23). Complicating matters further, in science and technology programs, "discipline-specific presentation norms may differ substantially from other academic fields" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 58), thereby creating additional challenges for integration efforts.

b. Interactive Skills and Affective Barriers

Current instruction appears to develop linguistic accuracy while failing to cultivate interactive capabilities. As we have seen, "participants demonstrate substantial challenges in interactive aspects, particularly in question response capabilities and interaction norm comprehension" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 52). This pattern suggests that instruction emphasizes linguistic forms over communicative functions, and monologic over dialogic production.

Equally significant, affective factors significantly impact learning outcomes yet receive insufficient instructional attention. Notably, "91% of participants report language anxiety as a communication barrier" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 58). Adding another layer of complexity, "40.9% report challenges with time management" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 55). Interestingly, however, the "maintenance of relatively strong performance in certain areas suggests potential existence of effective coping mechanisms" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 58)—mechanisms that may well be linked to Islamic practices such as *tawakkal* (reliance on Allah) and *dua* (supplication).

c. Cultural Tensions

Fundamental tensions exist between English language learning and Islamic identity maintenance. As Wijayanto perceptively observes, "Conversations in English lessons often contain depictions of daily interactions between men and women. The manners of Muslim men and women are strictly regulated in the teachings of Islam, which are often very contrary to Western manners" (2020, p. 24). Students must therefore navigate these cultural conflicts while simultaneously developing linguistic proficiency.

The challenge extends beyond Islamic-Western tensions. Current integration efforts remain limited in scope: "the cultural values that showed up are Islamic cultural values. Further research focusing on local cultural integration may be enlightening" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 709). This observation points to incomplete frameworks that fail to honor students' full cultural identities—encompassing both Islamic and local Indonesian dimensions.

4. Theoretical Synthesis

The theoretical landscape examined in this chapter reveals a complex interplay of religious philosophy,

communicative competence theory, and pedagogical constraints. Three key insights emerge from this synthesis, each with distinct implications for practice.

First, Islamic education's holistic philosophy demands what might be characterized as transformative rather than additive integration of values into language instruction. Second, communicative competence in Islamic contexts appears to require expanded theoretical constructs—such as Islamic Communicative Competence—that honor both linguistic effectiveness and religious authenticity. Third, significant theory-practice gaps persist in lesson planning, sociopragmatic skill development, and attention to affective-cultural dimensions of learning.

Collectively, these insights provide the foundation for subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 explores pedagogical strategies for bridging the theory-practice gap, Chapter 4 presents empirical evidence from classroom implementations, and Chapter 5 offers practical recommendations for advancing both linguistic competence and Islamic values integrity in English language education.

Integration Strategies And Approaches

1. Lesson Planning and Material Design

a. The Three-Phase Integration Model

Effective integration of Islamic values requires systematic planning across three instructional phases, advancing pedagogical practice beyond superficial content insertion toward comprehensive transformation.

Pre-Teaching Phase. Integration begins at what might be considered the most critical stage—planning—where "the material in the RPP must be embedded with Islam and those cultural values" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 19). What research

reveals, however, are significant gaps in this foundational stage: "the teachers' lesson plans (RPP) did not depict substantial integration of Islamic values" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 19), a finding that suggests systematic deficiencies requiring urgent attention. Effective pre-teaching integration appears to involve selecting Islamic-themed content, designing materials that reflect Islamic cultural narratives, and aligning learning objectives with both linguistic competence and Islamic values development. Consider, for instance, successful examples such as "using procedure text 'How to perform Wudhu' and 'How to perform Zakat'" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 27), approaches that simultaneously develop procedural text competence and reinforce Islamic ritual knowledge.

While-Teaching Phase. Active instruction provides what are arguably multiple integration opportunities. Among 17 observed student teachers, "14 students are able to integrate Islamic values in teaching materials ranging from initial activities, core activities, to closing activities" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 29), demonstrating that integration across all lesson phases is indeed feasible. Effective strategies include opening with "greetings and prayers" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 27), incorporating Islamic names and places in examples, and "linking topics with appropriate Islamic teachings carried out by citing verses of the Qur'an or relevant hadith" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 25). In one particularly effective example, a practitioner successfully used a "message to remember God Allah and Mother" within functional text instruction (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 27), thereby seamlessly blending linguistic objectives with Islamic values reinforcement.

Post-Teaching Phase. Integration continues through what are often overlooked closing activities and assessment. Effective practitioners

conclude lessons with "prayers and greetings" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 27), with one adding "recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 28). Perhaps equally important, assessment integration occurs through "informal assessments in the form of giving oral questions, teacher observation, assigning tasks, and reading aloud which material included integrated Islamic values" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 25), ensuring that values reinforcement extends throughout evaluation processes.

b. Material Development Principles

Effective Islamic EFL materials must balance what often seem like competing demands: linguistic authenticity and cultural appropriateness. Research demonstrates that "integrating Islamic and cultural values helps students understand English more easily" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 708), thus validating contextualized material development. Successful approaches include incorporating Islamic content across text types: presenting "halal food advertisements" for advertising study, using "examples of announcements about Islamic da'wah" for announcement texts, and including "the year of birth and death of the companions of the Prophets" for memorization activities (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 27).

Material selection should prioritize content that resonates with students' Islamic backgrounds while maintaining linguistic challenge appropriate for proficiency development. Interestingly, evidence indicates that when "students are given this material, it's like now if we give material about culture they get on quickly, so the curiosity about Islam is high" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 19), suggesting that familiar contexts facilitate engagement and reduce cognitive load, thereby allowing greater focus on linguistic processing.

2. Developing Sociopragmatic Competence

Having established the foundational approach to lesson planning and materials, we now turn to the specific challenge of developing sociopragmatic competence—identified in Chapter 2 as a critical area of weakness requiring targeted intervention.

a. Addressing the Competence Paradox

What we have termed the "sociopragmatic competence paradox" (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.2)—where "strong linguistic skills do not necessarily translate to effective pragmatic competence" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 57)—requires targeted interventions addressing interactive skill deficiencies. Current data reveals that "41.67% require improvement in question response capabilities and 45.83% in interaction norm comprehension" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 52), indicating what appears to be an urgent need for explicit pragmatic instruction.

Interactive Skills Development. Given that "participants demonstrate substantial challenges in interactive aspects" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 52), instruction would seem to require several key components:

- 1) Simulated question-and-answer sessions emphasizing Islamic communication etiquette (*adab*)
- 2) Structured practice in academic discourse conventions integrated with Islamic interaction norms
- 3) Role-playing exercises developing spontaneous response capabilities

More fundamentally, these activities should explicitly teach pragmatic functions often neglected in form-focused instruction: turn-taking protocols, appropriate questioning strategies, feedback provision techniques, and topic management skills—

all contextualized within Islamic communication frameworks emphasizing respect, humility, and clarity.

Metapragmatic Awareness Training. The significant gap between self-perception and performance—with "59.1% reporting high confidence levels" despite objective deficiencies (Putri et al., 2025, p. 54)—necessitates what might be called awareness-raising activities. Effective approaches include structured post-presentation reflection analyzing performance against explicit criteria, systematic review of self-recorded presentations identifying pragmatic strengths and weaknesses, peer assessment protocols developing evaluative capabilities, and explicit instruction in interaction norms that makes implicit conventions explicit for conscious analysis and application.

a. Time Management and Organization

Despite "95.5% acknowledging the importance of developing presentation skills," research reveals that "40.9% report challenges with time management" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 55), thereby identifying a critical yet understudied dimension of competence. Effective interventions appear to include explicit instruction in presentation planning and pacing, structured rehearsal sessions with timing feedback, development of organizational frameworks for content sequencing, and practice in adjusting delivery speed and detail level according to time constraints. Significantly, these technical skills can be enhanced through Islamic concepts of time consciousness, emphasizing *barakah* (blessing) in time use and accountability for time stewardship, thereby connecting pragmatic skills with spiritual values.

b. Anxiety Management Through Islamic Practices

The somewhat paradoxical finding that "91% of participants report language anxiety as a communication barrier" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 58) while maintaining "relatively strong performance in certain areas suggests potential existence of

effective coping mechanisms" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 58) points toward Islamic practices as anxiety management resources. Building on this insight, pedagogical approaches should explicitly incorporate:

- 1) *Tawakkal* (trust in Allah) through cognitive reframing that views anxiety as a test of faith
- 2) *Dhikr* and *dua* practices before presentations to calm nerves through spiritual connection
- 3) Conceptualization of presentations as *ibadah* (worship) through knowledge sharing. This reframes anxiety-provoking performance as religious obligation.
- 4) Gradual exposure within supportive Islamic community environments emphasizing collective growth over competitive evaluation

3. Cultural Sensitivity and Identity Maintenance

The integration strategies discussed thus far must be implemented with careful attention to the cultural tensions identified in Chapter 2, particularly those arising from the intersection of Islamic values, local Indonesian culture, and target language norms.

a. Navigating Cultural Tensions

Given that "the cultural values that showed up are Islamic cultural values" (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 709) with limited local cultural integration, instruction must address what are essentially multiple layers of cultural identity. Effective approaches include explicit comparison of Islamic versus Western communication styles, particularly regarding "daily interactions between men and women" where "manners of Muslim men and women are strictly regulated in the teachings of Islam, often very contrary to Western manners" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 24). Rather than avoiding these tensions—as is often done—pedagogy should develop students' capabilities for

conscious cultural negotiation, thereby enabling them to participate in international English-medium discourse while maintaining Islamic identity and values.

b. **Developing Islamic Communicative Competence**

Integration strategies should target all four components of Islamic Communicative Competence (introduced in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.3):

Linguistic Competence: Maintain traditional accuracy-focused instruction while contextualizing content within Islamic materials and themes.

Sociopragmatic Competence: Address identified deficiencies through explicit interactive skills training, as detailed in Section 3.2.1 above.

Values-Based Competence: Ensure consistent integration of Islamic principles across all lesson phases and materials, following the three-phase model outlined in Section 3.1.1.

Intercultural Competence: Given that this is currently the weakest dimension—with "45.83% Fair performance, 29.17% needing improvement" (Putri et al., 2025, p. 53)—priority should be given to developing explicit instruction in cultural navigation strategies, critical analysis of cultural assumptions embedded in English materials, and practice maintaining Islamic identity in cross-cultural communication contexts.

Implementation Principles

Successful integration requires what can best be described as systematic approaches addressing the barriers identified throughout this analysis. Given "teachers' insufficient knowledge about integration strategies" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 23), professional development must provide concrete models and practice opportunities. Given the "lack of Islamic-based English

materials" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 23), institutions are called upon to invest in material development or adaptation. Given "limited time and resources" (Wijayanto, 2020, p. 23), integration strategies must be efficient and sustainable rather than requiring excessive additional preparation.

What the evidence demonstrates, ultimately, is integration feasibility: when implemented effectively, student achievement in speaking, listening, translation, reading, and vocabulary is outstanding (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023, p. 708). The challenge lies not in whether integration works—the evidence clearly shows it does—but, rather, in ensuring consistent, systematic implementation that addresses both linguistic competence development and Islamic values reinforcement through theoretically grounded, empirically validated pedagogical approaches.

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Author's Profile



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With the diverse experiences she has gained, it does not make her stop creating and becoming even better. Email: nurcahyani.kalil@gmail.com, Phone: 081231071938, and can be contacted through all her social media accounts with the same name.

ENGLISH TEACHING IN RURAL INDONESIA: FROM RESILIENCE TO AGENCY

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Introduction

English education in rural Indonesia remains a pressing challenge, marked by persistent gaps when compared to urban areas. Many remote schools struggle with limited infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, often already stretched thin, and irregular access to professional development (Anggela et al., 2025; Luschei & Zubaidah, 2012). Yet, within these constraints, rural educators often show remarkable resilience, finding creative ways to keep students engaged and to strengthen their communicative skills (Fadilah et al., 2023; Stroupe, 2024). This resilience is not simply admirable; it is essential, given the systemic disadvantages they face. In many cases, teachers in rural schools juggle multigrade classrooms, teach subjects outside their area of expertise, and have few consistent opportunities for training and growth (Luschei & Zubaidah, 2012). Without emotional resilience and the flexibility to turn challenges into opportunities, these conditions can erode a teacher's sense of efficacy over time. This chapter examines these realities in depth, drawing on empirical case studies to shed light on the structural barriers, sociocultural contexts, local innovations, and grassroots solutions shaping English teaching in rural Indonesia. It closes

with evidence-based recommendations aimed at informing policy, supporting stakeholders, and improving English language instruction in under-resourced communities. This chapter presents discussions of case studies discovered from various rural English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts, focusing on the challenges, innovations and pathways rural English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers experienced where teachers' resilience built foundational modalities for agency. The chapter outlines structural barriers such as deficits in teacher professional training, limited resources, and sociocultural dynamics underpinning EFL classroom practices where teacher agency was exercised. Finally, the chapter is concluded by formulating some recommendations for rural ELT practices by highlighting the significant role of teacher agency in responding to limitations.

Structural Barriers

Teacher Deployment & Training Deficits

Studies in some of Indonesia's most remote and underdeveloped regions offer a valuable window into the realities of teaching English in rural settings. The SM-3T program (*Sarjana Mendidik di daerah Terdepan, Terluar, dan Tertinggal*), which places fresh university graduates While the initiative helps fill the chronic shortage of English teachers, it also exposes the deep systemic and pedagogical challenges that continue to hold back educational quality (Alayon, 2018). A multi-site narrative study of SM-3T teachers working across Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Papua, and Nusa Tenggara revealed that limited infrastructure remains one of the toughest barriers (Febriana et al., 2018). Many schools lacked proper classrooms, reliable electricity, or even safe learning spaces, forcing lessons to take place in temporary shelters or out in the open. In Papua, seasonal flooding frequently disrupted school schedules, while in rural Sulawesi, a collapsed classroom roof meant lessons had to be moved to a nearby community hall. Such environmental risks make it even harder to maintain

steady, uninterrupted learning. The shortage of teaching materials adds another layer of difficulty. Many SM-3T educators reported receiving outdated textbooks, or none, leaving them with no choice but to design their own learning resources (Budidarma et al., 2024). Often, this meant digging into their own pockets and making do with whatever was available. In East Nusa Tenggara, one teacher crafted illustrated flashcards from discarded cardboard boxes, while in Kalimantan, another prepared homemade multilingual worksheet to bridge the gap (Utomo, 2023). These acts of resourcefulness reflected both necessity and creativity, demonstrating the adaptive skills teachers must develop in resource-poor environments.

Language barriers make the situation even more complex. In many rural communities, children grow up speaking only local languages or dialects at home and have limited proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia (Herizal et al., 2018). As a result, teachers must navigate two language transitions, local dialect to Indonesian, and Indonesian to English, before real language learning can begin. In East Nusa Tenggara, for example, one teacher used bilingual storytelling, switching between the local language and Indonesian, to make English vocabulary more accessible while also respecting the students' cultural identity (Saputri & Sukarno, 2024). In addition to this, community attitudes and parental expectations play another crucial role. In areas where English is viewed as having little economic value, families may place education low on their list of priorities, particularly during planting or harvest seasons (Anggela et al., 2025). In rural Kalimantan, some teachers described visiting students' homes to personally persuade parents to let their children attend school regularly. These efforts required not only persistence but also a deep cultural sensitivity, as teachers worked to keep students engaged despite competing demands on their time.

Studies also revealed that rural EFL teachers faced the challenge of overload role. With too few staff members to share the workload, they are often assigned to teach

subjects outside their area of expertise while also handling administrative tasks on top of their English lessons (Luschei & Zubaidah, 2012). In one rural Sulawesi school, for example, a single teacher was responsible for English, mathematics, and civics, while also coordinating extracurricular activities, leaving little time for focused lesson planning. Despite these constraints, EFL educators demonstrated remarkable adaptability in their teaching. Teachers often relied on drilling, memorization, and role-play to capture the interest of students with minimal prior exposure to English. They also made creative use of inexpensive or improvised teaching aids, ranging from blackboards and hand-drawn illustrations to real objects sourced from local markets, such as fruit, kitchen utensils, or clothing (Romrome & Ena, 2022). These tangible, culturally familiar items helped make English learning more concrete, relatable, and engaging for their students.

These case studies show that teaching in rural areas demands far more than subject knowledge; it requires resilience as a core professional skill. The ability to adapt mentally and emotionally to difficult conditions helps teachers sustain their motivation, hold on to their sense of purpose, and see obstacles as opportunities for creative teaching. Within the Ecological Model of Teacher Agency (Priestley et al., 2015), resilience plays a key role in enabling the practical-evaluative capacity to make sound decisions in the moment, the iterational capacity to draw on past experiences and deeply held values, and the projective capacity to envision future goals even when faced with present-day limitations. For instance, the East Nusa Tenggara teacher who created multilingual flashcards from recycled materials demonstrated resilience by overcoming a lack of resources, and agency by making a deliberate pedagogical choice that celebrated linguistic diversity. Similarly, the rural Kalimantan teacher who visited students' homes to encourage attendance showed agency in addressing socio-cultural barriers, while her resilience allowed her to keep going despite resistance from some parents. In this way, resilience is not just a personal trait; it is the sustaining

force that keeps teacher agency alive over time in rural EFL contexts. Without it, the combined weight of poor infrastructure, societal attitudes, and heavy workloads can erode a teacher's ability to act intentionally. With resilience, however, educators can continuously adapt, find innovative solutions, and implement meaningful changes, turning the constraints of rural education into opportunities for delivering English instruction that is both contextually relevant and culturally responsive.

Infrastructure & Learning Materials

Research on rural education in Indonesia consistently shows that poor infrastructure and a shortage of learning resources remain major barriers to effective English language teaching (Mukrim et al., 2012). In many rural schools, even basic facilities such as sufficient classrooms, reliable electricity, and clean water are lacking. In isolated areas, schools may have only a few multi-purpose rooms with leaky roofs, no dedicated space for English lessons, and limited seating, forcing teachers to hold classes in cramped or shared spaces. Without quiet, safe, and consistent classroom conditions, it is difficult for students to maintain focus during language learning activities.

A qualitative case study in South Sumatra involving two rural English teachers revealed that their schools had no language labs, working projectors, or up-to-date textbooks (Herizal et al., 2023). Teachers relied almost entirely on chalkboards and spoken explanations, which limited the use of visual and interactive elements in their lessons. In situations where printed worksheets would normally be used, teachers often had to write exercises on the board by hand, eating into valuable class time and reducing opportunities for student-centered learning.

Digital access presents another serious challenge. In many remote areas, internet connections are unreliable or completely unavailable, making it nearly impossible to use online resources, digital learning platforms, or even basic educational videos. At one rural school in East Nusa Tenggara, donated tablets sat unused because the

school could not afford the data packages needed to operate them (Putri et al., 2025). This example highlights a common issue that is investments in technology often fail to bring real benefits when they are not paired with ongoing operational support.

The shortage of suitable teaching materials also limits the effectiveness of instruction. Many rural schools rely on outdated textbooks that do not align with recent national curriculum changes, including the Merdeka Curriculum. As a result, teachers are often forced to significantly adapt or supplement existing materials. In rural West Kalimantan, one teacher created hand-drawn vocabulary charts, laminating them for repeated classroom use and one school in North Maluku, a teacher incorporated fishing tools and farm produce into English lessons, making learning more concrete and directly connected to students' daily lives (Febriana et al., 2018). Others adapted children's storybooks bought from local markets into simplified English narratives, keeping the content culturally relevant and engaging for their students (Herizal et al., 2023). Teachers in these settings also struggled to access resources that are standard in better-funded schools such as dictionaries, flashcards, or audio equipment. In their absence, they often turn to everyday objects from the local environment as realia for language teaching. While these improvisations showcase impressive creativity, they are ultimately coping strategies for deeper systemic problems. The lack of standard teaching resources and inadequate infrastructure places an extra burden on teachers, who often shoulder the cost and effort themselves. Over time, this can lead to exhaustion and make it difficult to sustain these innovative approaches without external support.

Limited Professional Growth & Support

One of the most pressing challenges for EFL teachers in rural Indonesia is the limited access to structured professional development. Many work without regular in-service training, mentorship, or opportunities for peer

observation and collaboration. This professional isolation often forces teachers to rely solely on their pre-service education, which may not fully prepare them for the unique realities of rural classrooms (Prahmana et al., 2021). Unlike their urban counterparts, rural educators rarely attend centrally organized workshops due to the barriers of distance, cost, and time. The result is an uneven distribution of professional skills across the education system, leaving rural schools at a disadvantage. Teachers acknowledged that while national policy encourages ongoing professional development, implementation is patchy at best. Most in-service programs are held in district capitals, requiring travel that is often financially and logistically out of reach. In response, teachers have turned to self-directed learning or informal peer support. In this setting, WhatsApp groups emerged as an improvised professional network where educators share lesson ideas, classroom management tips, and assessment strategies. While such networks provide valuable support, they cannot fully replace the depth and consistency of structured, ongoing training (Saputri & Sukarno, 2024).

The *Pendidikan Profesi Guru* (PPG) program, a post-certification professional development initiative, has shown promise for some rural educators. In Southeast Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara, participation in the PPG program significantly improved teachers' pedagogical skills, classroom management, and ability to adapt lessons to local contexts (Mukrim, 2023). One PPG-trained teacher in rural East Nusa Tenggara designed thematic lesson plans that incorporated traditional weaving patterns and folk tales into English vocabulary lessons, making learning more culturally relevant and engaging for students. Such approaches not only boost participation but also bridge the gap between the national curriculum and students' everyday lives. However, these success stories are exceptions rather than the rule. Many rural teachers remain disconnected from formal mentoring systems (Sahib et al., 2020). In urban schools, novice teachers often benefit from senior mentors or professional learning communities. By

contrast, rural schools, especially those on small, isolated islands, rarely have enough English teachers to form such networks. As a result, educators often rely on self-assessment and self-correction without external feedback, limiting opportunities for professional growth.

Another persistent challenge is the mismatch between training content and the realities of rural classrooms. Teachers attending centrally organized workshops frequently find that the strategies and materials assume the presence of resources such as computer labs, projectors, or reliable internet that their schools simply do not have. While they may leave these sessions inspired, they are often unable to apply the methods in practice. This disconnect can be demoralizing and reinforces the perception that national professional development efforts are not sufficiently tailored to the needs of rural educators (Dinata et al., 2025). Despite these limitations, many rural teachers show remarkable self-driven resilience, seeking out alternative ways to grow professionally. Some take advantage of online courses when internet access allows, while others build cross-district partnerships to share resources and, on rare occasions when they can meet in person, observe each other's classes. The growing use of low-bandwidth platforms like Telegram, along with offline educational apps, has opened new possibilities for sharing materials and engaging in micro-learning—even in the most remote settings.

Socio-Cultural Dynamics And Ground Realities

Parental attitudes and home learning practices play a pivotal role in shaping children's interest in English in rural and semi-rural Indonesia. A recent case study of primary EFL learners aged 10–11 by Wahyuni and Bee Tin (2024) followed students both in school and at home, finding that even with similar classroom instruction, differences in home environments and parenting approaches led to markedly different levels of enthusiasm and persistence in learning English. Parents who encouraged daily use of English, provided simple print or

digital materials, or praised effort rather than “innate talent” helped sustain their children’s curiosity and perseverance when faced with challenges. Conversely, a lack of home support often resulted in only brief, surface-level engagement with the language.

Many rural teachers also reported encountering community skepticism toward English and competing household priorities that can reduce attendance and enthusiasm. At a rural madrasah in Jambi, for example, teachers described students who were demotivated, parents who were uncooperative, poor road conditions, and limited access to devices or internet; problems made worse during the pandemic (Shahnaz & Gandana, 2021). The same school saw predictable spikes in absenteeism during harvest season, underscoring how local economic cycles directly affected school attendance and students’ engagement with English learning (Shahnaz & Gandana, 2021).

In communities where local languages dominate everyday interactions, teachers often face the challenge of navigating a double language transition, from the local language to Indonesian, and from Indonesian to English. A 2025 case study in rural Papua found that when teachers integrated Papuan folktales, proverbs, and cultural references into literacy activities, student engagement and comprehension improved significantly (Romrome & Ena, 2025). However, rigid curriculum demands and a lack of relevant materials made it difficult to apply this approach more broadly (Ningsih, Setyarini, & Gustine, 2025). A study with West Papuan EFL teachers also pointed to positive attitudes toward translanguaging, which recognized and leveraged students’ multilingual skills to aid comprehension and reduced anxiety (Sahib et al., 2020). These findings highlight the value of culturally responsive, multilingual teaching strategies in rural Indonesian classrooms.

Regional linguistic ecologies also play an important role in shaping English education. A study from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) shows that indigenous languages remained central in public life and educational discourse,

influencing how English is positioned and perceived. Studies on the linguistic landscape of Kupang revealed a lively interplay between Indonesian, indigenous languages, and English, pointing to the need for teaching materials that reflected local realities and for clear communication of language policies so that English can expand opportunities without diminishing local identities (Benu et al., 2023).

Despite language variations, religious schooling environments also bring their own socio-cultural dynamics. In many Islamic boarding schools, restrictions on gadgets and lecture-heavy schedules limit students' access to digital content and opportunities for interactive practice. Putri et al. (2025) found that while English teachers in these contexts valued technology in principle, institutional rules and resource gaps often lead them back to teacher-centered methods. This underscores the importance of professional development that is tailored to these realities, requiring programs that promote interaction and communicative teaching without relying on personal devices.

In relation to those cases, a community-based initiatives can help bridge socio-cultural and infrastructural gaps. During the pandemic, for example, teachers and parents in remote areas turned to community radio as a low-bandwidth, locally managed alternative for delivering lessons. This approach well-aligned with rural social networks and collective responsibility, suggesting that radio could serve as a hybrid medium for teaching, feedback, and ongoing engagement in areas with poor internet access. (Prahmana, 2021). These socio-cultural point to a clear implication for policy and professional development, rather than focusing solely on rolling out centrally produced materials, efforts should actively support and reward culturally responsive, locally grounded teaching decisions (Shahnaz & Gandana, 2021; Ningsih et al., 2025; Prahmana, 2021).

Resilience To Agency

In rural Indonesian EFL classrooms, grassroots innovations often emerge not from abundance but from necessity. The SM-3T case studies described earlier show that when faced with limited resources, infrastructural challenges, and community-related barriers, teachers frequently design context-specific solutions that combine creativity, adaptability, and dedication. These responses are best understood through the intertwined lenses of resilience and teacher agency.

One example comes from East Nusa Tenggara, where an SM-3T teacher crafted multilingual flashcards from recycled cardboard and integrated them into storytelling lessons. This approach addressed two major challenges at once: the lack of formal teaching materials and the language gap between students' mother tongues and English. Here, resilience was evident in the teacher's perseverance and resourcefulness, while agency was reflected in the deliberate pedagogical decision to connect English learning to culturally familiar narratives. In rural Kalimantan, another teacher took the initiative to visit students' homes to persuade parents to prioritise school attendance, demonstrating resilience by persisting despite repeated refusals, and agency by directly tackling the socio-cultural factors influencing education.

The Ecological Model of Teacher Agency (Priestley et al., 2015) offers a useful framework for understanding these adaptations. The practical-evaluative dimension is seen when teachers who were aware of their resource limitations adapt by replacing unavailable audio-visual materials with items sourced from local markets or farms. The iterational dimension appears when they draw on their own educational experiences which were often shaped by overcoming hardship to empathise with students and design relatable activities. The projective dimension becomes clear when teachers maintain a long-term vision for their students' success, even when immediate rewards are minimal, as in the case of a rural Sulawesi teacher who taught multiple subjects but consistently embedded English into daily school routines.

These examples illustrate that resilience in rural EFL teaching is far from a passive endurance of hardship; it is an active driver of agency. Teachers are not simply surviving in difficult circumstances; they are refining their methods, reimagining the use of available resources, and building stronger ties with their communities to support language learning. The SM-3T experiences suggest a strong link: teachers with higher resilience are more likely to sustain their agency, resulting in tangible classroom innovations such as improvised teaching aids, adapted instructional strategies, and culturally attuned engagement practices.

In these rural contexts, such innovations often create a ripple effect. Handcrafted learning materials can become shared resources within the community which may inspire other educators to adopt cost-effective alternatives. Initiatives to involve parents can gradually shift local attitudes toward education. The visibility of these adaptive strategies sends a powerful message to both students and the wider community that meaningful learning is possible, even in the face of structural limitations.

Future Directions: Multilingualism, Edtech And Community Support

Improving English language teaching in rural Indonesia calls for more than small, incremental fixes; it requires bold, systemic innovation. This means bringing together multilingual teaching approaches, technology-enabled solutions, and sustained community engagement. Evidence from numerous rural case studies shows that when these three elements are adapted to fit local realities, they can significantly raise the quality of instruction and improve student outcomes.

Multilingualism as a Bridge to English Learning

In linguistically diverse provinces such as Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and West Kalimantan, multilingual teaching strategies have proven highly effective in improving comprehension and retention. A study in rural

Papua found that weaving local folktales and cultural idioms into English reading lessons helped students connect new vocabulary with concepts they already knew, easing the cognitive load of learning a third language after their mother tongue and Bahasa Indonesia (Liando et al., 2023). Similarly, translanguaging where teachers purposefully draw on multiple languages within a single lesson has been shown to affirm students' linguistic identities while boosting classroom participation (Sahib et al., 2020). These practices illustrate the iterative dimension of teacher agency, in which educators draw on their own experiences and the collective knowledge of their communities to shape instructional decisions. In rural contexts, multilingualism is not simply a gesture toward inclusion; it is a critical means of ensuring equitable access to English education.

Edtech Innovations For Low-Connectivity Environments

While internet-based platforms are becoming more common in metropolitan EFL classrooms, rural schools often require low-tech or offline-friendly alternatives. The widespread use of community radio during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that blended learning can thrive even without high-speed internet (Prahmana, 2021). In this approach, lessons were broadcasted at set times, and students shared their responses via SMS or during follow-up face-to-face sessions. Similar low-bandwidth strategies had been adopted by teachers in East Nusa Tenggara and Central Kalimantan, who had used preloaded tablets and offline learning apps to give students access to videos, games, and exercises without relying on internet connectivity. These reflect the practical-evaluative dimension of teacher agency, where educators assess existing resource constraints and select or adapt technologies that fit their context.

Strengthening Community Support Structures

Community involvement remains a key factor in the success of rural education initiatives. The Slukat

Learning Centre in Bali, for example, shows how community-led language programs can complement formal schooling by offering free English lessons and practical skills training to young people (Slukat Learning Centre, 2025). In rural Kalimantan and Sulawesi, teachers have worked with parents to establish regular forums where they review student progress, share strategies for supporting learning at home, and align community expectations with school goals. Community-based learning spaces, whether in the form of informal study circles, youth clubs, or NGO-supported centers, also help maintain educational continuity when schools face disruptions caused by weather events, farming seasons, or shifts in policy. Such initiatives embody the projective dimension of teacher agency, as educators and community leaders work together toward long-term educational goals rather than focusing solely on immediate problems (Priestley et al., 2016).

Conclusion And Recommendations

Strengthening English language teaching in rural Indonesia requires viewing resilience and teacher agency as essential drivers of educational change. This chapter has outlined strategies including resilience-focused training, multilingual pedagogy, context-appropriate technology, community partnerships, targeted resource allocation, and sustained peer networks. These strategies are most effective when implemented as integrated, long-term plans where teachers are empowered to adapt, innovate, and collaborate within their local realities. Rural classrooms can thus become spaces where constraints are reimaged as opportunities and education becomes a shared project between schools, communities, and the national system.

The case studies highlight the need for multifaceted strategies to improve rural English teaching. Below are key recommendations focusing on strengthening teacher resilience and agency:

1. Integrate Resilience-Building in Professional Development

Rural teacher training should develop resilience as a core competency beyond content mastery. Workshops can include adaptive problem-solving, stress management, and sustaining motivation in resource-limited contexts. Practical exercises like "constraint-based lesson planning"—designing effective lessons with minimal resources—prepare educators for rural classroom realities, strengthening their practical-evaluative agency.

2. Promote Multilingual Pedagogy

Teacher training and curriculum guidelines should encourage using students' local languages alongside Bahasa Indonesia and English. Strategies like translanguaging, culturally relevant materials, and locally sourced narratives should be embedded in lesson plans. This empowers teachers to draw on community knowledge and linguistic heritage, making learning more accessible.

3. Invest in Context-Appropriate EdTech

Technology initiatives should prioritize offline or low-bandwidth solutions matching existing infrastructure. Community radio, preloaded tablets, and offline applications developed with teacher input ensure practicality. Training should focus on long-term integration without constant internet dependency, enabling teachers to select tools for their specific contexts.

4. Strengthen Community Partnerships

Schools should involve parents, community leaders, and local organizations in English education. Parent-teacher forums, community language clubs, and NGO partnerships help align expectations, share resources, and create extracurricular opportunities. Such engagement shifts perceptions and builds long-term support, reflecting the projective dimension of agency.

5. Align Resource Distribution with Teacher-Led Innovation

Funding should channel resources directly to schools demonstrating effective, context-specific innovations—like SM-3T teachers producing low-cost multilingual flashcards or integrating local market items into vocabulary lessons. Identifying and amplifying these grassroots solutions encourages replication in similar settings, recognizing resilience as a driver for systemic improvement.

6. Foster Peer Networks for Sustained Growth

Given professional isolation in rural areas, structured peer-support networks should be established using low-bandwidth tools like WhatsApp, Telegram, or SMS groups. These facilitate resource sharing, collaborative lesson planning, and emotional support, strengthening resilience and agency by reducing isolation and creating continuous professional learning feedback loops.

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CROSS CULTURAL ENGLISH IN SPECIALIZED EDUCATION

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Introduction

In today's globalized world, English has become more than just a tool for daily communication. In professional sectors like tourism, hospitality, nursing, and aviation, English plays a key role in both work-related tasks and intercultural interactions. As people move across borders more frequently, professionals must not only use English accurately but also communicate appropriately with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

For students in vocational education, English should be seen as a professional tool rather than just an academic subject. A tour guide, nurse, or flight attendant, for example, must interact with international clients who have different expectations and ways of communicating. In such fields, even small misunderstandings can lead to serious problems, such as safety risks or damaged customer trust. Therefore, learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) must include both language and cultural understanding.

This is where cross-cultural English becomes essential. Unlike general English, it focuses on teaching students how to handle cultural differences in real communication. It emphasizes the importance of understanding other people's behaviors, values, and communication styles. Students are trained not only to

speak correctly but also to adapt their language and actions based on cultural context—skills that are critical in international workplaces.

To teach this effectively, educators must combine language learning with intercultural training. Lessons should reflect real-world situations, using case studies, role-plays, and authentic materials that show how communication varies across cultures. Drawing from fields like pragmatics and intercultural communication, teachers can help students develop the cultural awareness and flexibility needed to succeed in global professions. This chapter explores how this approach can be applied, especially in tourism education, and why it is a necessary part of preparing students for international careers.

The Concept of Cross-Cultural English in Specialized Education

Cross-cultural English is the ability to use English correctly and appropriately across different cultures, especially in professional settings like tourism, healthcare, or business. It goes beyond grammar and vocabulary—focusing instead on how to communicate in ways that respect and respond to cultural differences. This includes understanding varied communication styles, values, and expectations.

Unlike General English, which emphasizes basic language use, Cross-cultural English highlights *how*, *when*, and *why* language should be used, depending on cultural norms. For instance, a polite request in one culture might be considered too blunt in another. As Chen and Starosta (2020) note, this skill—called pragmatic competence—is essential for effective intercultural communication.

The concept is supported by Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which includes openness, cultural knowledge, and the skills to interact respectfully across cultures. In tourism, for example, students must explain tour plans in English

and adapt their delivery based on tourists' cultural backgrounds—like how they perceive time, personal space, or politeness.

Recent studies, such as Mosleh (2021), highlight the importance of including ICC in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Doing so helps students navigate multicultural workplaces more confidently. Liu et al. (2024) add that cultural awareness is just as important as language skills in the global job market. In fields like hospitality, poor cultural sensitivity can lead to misunderstandings or even legal issues.

Therefore, English education in vocational and professional programs must include intercultural elements. Cross-cultural English should be a core part of ESP—not an optional extra. This requires updating classroom strategies, materials, and assessments to reflect real-life cultural interactions. With this approach, students can use English not just correctly, but appropriately, ethically, and effectively in any cross-cultural context.

Expanding the Scope: Who Needs Cross-Cultural English?

While tourism is often the main focus when discussing cross-cultural communication, many other fields also require strong intercultural and English skills. Today's professionals often work with people from various cultures, making cross-cultural English a must—not just for tour guides, but for anyone in globally connected industries.

One key area is healthcare and nursing. Doctors and nurses often treat patients whose cultural beliefs affect how they talk about symptoms or respond to treatments. In some cultures, patients avoid expressing pain directly or rely on family members to make decisions. Without cultural awareness, medical staff in English—they also need training in empathy and cultural sensitivity.

International business and marketing also rely heavily on intercultural communication. Businesspeople negotiate, present, and lead teams across cultures. What works in one culture—such as being direct or making quick decisions—may not work in another, where people value harmony or seniority. Marketing messages, too, must be adapted to suit different cultural audiences. Teaching cross-cultural English helps future business professionals avoid misunderstandings and build better global partnerships.

In hospitality management, workers like hotel staff and event planners meet guests from all over the world. Different cultures have different expectations about politeness, formality, and service. For example, some guests expect very formal treatment, while others prefer a friendly, casual tone. Hospitality students need to learn how to read these expectations and respond appropriately—something cross-cultural English training can provide.

In aviation and maritime sectors, clear and respectful communication can be a matter of safety. Flight crews, ground staff, cruise workers, and ship crew all deal with international passengers and team members. Misunderstandings—especially in emergencies—can create serious problems. Cross-cultural English helps professionals remain calm, clear, and respectful in stressful situations, and promotes better teamwork among diverse crews.

Other fields also benefit from this training. Teachers in international schools, social workers in multicultural cities, police officers in tourist areas, and IT professionals working on global teams all face cross-cultural communication challenges. As workplaces become more global, English instruction must adapt to prepare learners for these realities.

Cross-cultural English is not a niche skill anymore—it's essential. By including it in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) programs across various fields, schools can help students become not only fluent speakers but also confident, culturally aware professionals ready to succeed worldwide.

General Framework for Implementing Cross-Cultural English in Specialized Education

Teaching cross-cultural English in specialized education is more than just adding cultural stories or examples to the lessons. It needs a clear and structured approach that combines language skills, cultural understanding, and professional knowledge. To be effective, teaching methods must match the real communication needs in each field. Based on current research and classroom experience, there are five key components to this framework: needs analysis, contextualized materials, task-based learning, reflective practice, and assessment with intercultural feedback.

1. Needs Analysis

The first step is to understand what students actually need to learn. This means looking at the real situations they will face in the workplace and the cultural differences involved. For example, tourism students may serve tourists from many countries, each with different ways of showing politeness or expressing dissatisfaction. Nursing students may care for patients from different cultures who express pain or ask questions in different ways. If these cultural signals are misunderstood, communication can fail. A good needs analysis includes interviews with professionals, observation of real interactions, and analysis of workplace communication. This helps teachers design lessons that reflect the real demands of the job.

2. Contextualized Materials

Once the needs are clear, teachers should use learning materials that fit those real-life situations. General textbooks often miss the complex communication challenges in each field. Instead, materials should come from real or realistic situations—like video recordings, interviews, or email exchanges. For tourism students, for example, studying how a tour guide interacts with international guests helps them understand not just

what is said but how tone, politeness, and gestures vary by culture. Case studies of cultural misunderstandings in business or hospitality can also help students think critically about intercultural communication. These materials make learning more meaningful and directly connected to students' future jobs.

3. Task-Based Instruction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a powerful method for combining language learning with real-world communication skills. Instead of teaching grammar or vocabulary separately, TBLT uses realistic tasks to help students practice both language and cultural awareness at the same time. For example, tourism students might plan a tour for a culturally diverse group, business students could create a marketing pitch for international clients, or nursing students may practice explaining treatments to patients who speak limited English. These tasks make students think about how to communicate clearly and respectfully in different cultural situations, improving both their language and intercultural skills.

4. Reflective Practice

Learning about other cultures isn't just about getting information—it also involves thinking about our own cultural habits and assumptions. Reflective practice helps students become more aware of their own communication styles and how these may differ from others. This can be done through journals, group discussions, or debriefing after role-plays. For example, after practicing a role-play where a tourist complains, students can think about how they responded and whether they were polite, too direct, or unclear. Reflection helps students connect theory with real-life experience and become more thoughtful and flexible communicators.

5. Assessment and Feedback

Finally, assessment should go beyond simple language tests. It should also check how well students can handle intercultural communication. This includes looking at their ability to show cultural awareness, empathy, clarity, and flexibility. Teachers can use rubrics that measure both language and intercultural skills. Useful assessments include peer feedback, video-recorded role-plays, and group evaluations. For instance, in a role-play with a tourist, students can be assessed on how they use English and how well they deal with cultural differences. Feedback should help students understand what they did well and what they can improve. When used well, assessment becomes a tool to support learning—not just to grade students.

To operationalize these five components into actionable teaching strategies, it is useful to visualize the overall framework in a structured format. The following table summarizes the core elements of cross-cultural English implementation, highlighting their defining features and offering discipline-specific examples. This framework serves as a practical reference for educators designing curricula across various vocational fields, ensuring that both linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence are systematically developed through contextually grounded and pedagogically sound practices.

Table 1: Pedagogical Framework for Cross-Cultural English in Specialized Education

Component	Key Features	Practical Examples in Specialized Fields
1. Needs Analysis	- Identifies learners' professional communication tasks - Explores intercultural challenges in real contexts - Informs curriculum design	- Tourism: Analyze tourist expectations from various cultures - Nursing: Interview nurses on cultural misunderstandings with patients - Business: Survey international negotiation styles

2. Contextualized Materials	- Uses authentic or adapted professional discourse - Highlights real intercultural situations - Includes case studies and role-play prompts	- Tourism: Dialogues between guides and tourists - Hospitality: Case study on service failure due to cultural missteps - Aviation: Safety announcements for diverse passengers
3. Task-Based Instruction	- Involves real-world, outcome-oriented tasks - Requires problem-solving and collaboration - Integrates language with intercultural skills	- Business: Create a marketing campaign for global markets - Tourism: Plan a tour itinerary for a multicultural group - Nursing: Simulate explaining medical procedures to patients
4. Reflective Practice	- Promotes self-awareness and critical thinking - Encourages cultural comparison and empathy - Uses guided journals and class discussions	- Hospitality: Reflect on different service expectations - Tourism: Journal about cultural faux pas in simulations - Business: Group debrief after intercultural negotiation role-play
5. Assessment and Feedback	- Evaluates both language and intercultural competence - Uses rubrics with cultural indicators (e.g., empathy, adaptability) - Includes peer and formative feedback	- Business: Evaluate email clarity and politeness in intercultural scenarios - Nursing: Peer feedback on bedside manner in cross-cultural patient role-play - Tourism: Rubric-based guide performance assessment

Expanded Examples of Cross-Cultural English Implementation

Tourism education is a prime field for integrating cross-cultural English, given its inherently international character. English for Tourism programs in several Indonesian institutions have increasingly incorporated

intercultural components, responding to the real-world demands of the industry. These components aim not only to improve linguistic competence but also to cultivate cultural awareness and communicative adaptability. Below are five expanded examples of how these strategies are applied in classroom and field-based settings:

1. Role-Play and Simulation

Role-play activities and simulations are among the most effective methods for developing students' cross-cultural communicative competence. In these activities, students assume the roles of tour guides and interact with simulated tourists from various cultural backgrounds. These scenarios are designed to reflect authentic service encounters, such as explaining the etiquette for visiting religious sites to guests from secular or non-religious backgrounds, or responding to culturally specific dietary requests. Through such immersive tasks, students are trained to anticipate and navigate potentially sensitive topics with empathy, flexibility, and professionalism. The spontaneous nature of these interactions helps develop not only fluency but also intercultural tact and problem-solving skills.

2. Project-Based Assignments

Moving beyond individual tasks, project-based learning allows students to engage with complex, real-world problems over an extended period. One example is designing a culturally inclusive tour itinerary, which requires research into the preferences and sensitivities of different tourist demographics. More advanced assignments may include developing a crisis communication plan for international tourists affected by natural disasters, or crafting a promotional tourism campaign targeted at specific cultural groups such as Japanese retirees, Arab family tourists, or Western backpackers. These projects challenge students to apply both linguistic and cultural knowledge creatively while working in teams, thus mimicking the collaborative environment of the tourism industry.

3. Guest Interaction Practice

Many institutions have established partnerships with local tourism stakeholders—such as hotels, restaurants, museums, and travel agencies—to facilitate live or mock guest interactions. These partnerships enable students to practice English in real or simulated service encounters. Some programs organize “intercultural days,” inviting international volunteers or role-players to act as guests with diverse cultural profiles. During these sessions, students greet, assist, and respond to inquiries from these ‘guests,’ receiving feedback on their language use, cultural appropriateness, and hospitality demeanor. This kind of experiential learning bridges the gap between classroom instruction and actual professional experience, reinforcing both linguistic accuracy and intercultural adaptability.

4. Case Study Discussions

Case-based learning plays a critical role in developing critical thinking and cultural awareness. Students are presented with documented or hypothetical incidents of service breakdown caused by cultural miscommunication—such as a tour guide addressing a guest by first name instead of using formal titles, or confusion over tipping practices. Through group discussions, students analyze the causes of the misunderstanding, identify the cultural norms involved, and propose culturally sensitive alternatives. These insights are then applied in role-play activities where students re-enact the scenario with corrected behavior. This reflective cycle enhances students’ ability to recognize cultural differences and adjust their communicative strategies accordingly.

5. Integrated Reflective Tasks

In tandem with active learning strategies, students are encouraged to engage in guided reflection activities that foster self-awareness and intercultural growth. After participating in role-plays, simulations,

or guest interactions, learners write reflection journals analyzing their own behavior, cultural assumptions, and emotional reactions. These tasks help internalize lessons from practice and turn surface-level experiences into deeper learning. Educators may provide prompts such as: “How did you adjust your language or tone for the guest’s cultural background?” or “What challenges did you encounter, and how might you respond differently next time?” Reflection not only reinforces learning outcomes but also cultivates a habit of mindful communication.

Case Study: Learning Experience at the Department of Travel Business, Sahid Tourism Institute of Surakarta

The Department of Travel Business at Sahid Tourism Institute of Surakarta offers a compelling example of how cross-cultural English can be effectively embedded in vocational tourism education. The program is designed not only to teach English for communicative competence but also to cultivate intercultural sensitivity in real-world professional contexts. The English for Tour Guiding course, in particular, integrates cross-cultural elements through a series of pedagogical strategies, described as follows:

1. Integrated Cultural Modules

Language instruction is purposefully interwoven with cultural awareness content. Rather than treating culture as an optional or supplementary topic, instructors embed cultural discussions into core lessons on vocabulary, grammar, and speaking. For example, while learning expressions for welcoming tourists, students also explore greeting customs from different countries. Class discussions may include topics such as appropriate eye contact in East Asia versus Western countries, the role of personal space in Middle Eastern versus European cultures, or culturally appropriate gestures in gift-giving. These modules are supported by short videos, real-life

scenarios, and group reflection to encourage students to critically compare their own cultural norms with those of potential tourists.

2. Task-Based Practicum

A major strength of the program is its focus on experiential learning. Students are placed in actual tourism service environments—such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators—where they interact with international guests. Key tasks include greeting tourists at the airport, explaining multi-day itineraries, responding to unexpected itinerary changes, and handling complaints tactfully. These real-life engagements are scaffolded by classroom preparation and post-task reflection. Instructors or industry mentors use detailed rubrics to assess both linguistic accuracy and intercultural appropriateness, focusing on traits such as politeness strategies, sensitivity to guest expectations, and ability to adapt communication styles.

3. Collaborative Learning with International Guests

The institution actively fosters intercultural exchange by involving foreign visitors—both short-term students and tourists—in classroom activities. Students are paired with these international guests for structured projects, including cultural interviews, joint presentations, and the creation of bilingual or English-only travel vlogs showcasing Surakarta's attractions. Through these collaborations, students gain firsthand experience navigating intercultural dialogue, adjusting their speech for clarity, and learning how cultural background influences communication preferences. Moreover, these projects often result in informal yet valuable friendships that deepen cultural empathy and motivation to communicate effectively in English.

4. Reflective Portfolios and Journals

To ensure that students internalize their intercultural experiences, the program incorporates guided

reflective writing as a core component. After significant activities—such as mock tour simulations or direct interactions with foreign guests—students write portfolio entries detailing what they learned. These reflections cover both linguistic performance (e.g., fluency, vocabulary usage) and cultural insights (e.g., misunderstandings, stereotypes, successful cross-cultural strategies). Students are encouraged to analyze why certain communication strategies worked or failed and to consider how they might respond differently in future encounters. These reflective tasks are reviewed periodically by instructors, who provide formative feedback to foster students' metacognitive growth and critical self-awareness.

Impact and Feedback

Feedback from both students and lecturers at the Sahid Tourism Institute suggests that this integrative approach to cross-cultural English has produced significant benefits. Students report feeling more confident when speaking with foreign tourists and more capable of anticipating and managing cultural differences. They also express a greater sense of professionalism, realizing that effective communication in tourism goes beyond fluency—it requires respect, empathy, and adaptability. In line with El Arbaoui's (2024) findings, embedding cross-cultural competence into language education leads to deeper, more transformative learning outcomes than traditional classroom-only instruction. The Sahid model thus provides a valuable template for other vocational institutions aiming to enhance the relevance and intercultural sensitivity of their English programs.

Teacher Perspectives: The Need for Professional Development

Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful delivery of cross-cultural English instruction in specialized education. However, despite growing awareness of the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), many educators face significant challenges in

integrating these elements into their teaching practices. These challenges can be categorized into several interrelated areas:

1. Limited Familiarity with Intercultural Communication Concepts

A number of instructors, especially those trained in general English or literature, often lack formal exposure to the principles of intercultural communication. Terms such as “cultural dimensions,” “high-context vs. low-context communication,” or “critical incidents” may be unfamiliar or underexplored. Consequently, these educators may feel unprepared to teach learners how to navigate real-world intercultural encounters, such as managing cultural misunderstandings in hospitality or adjusting communication styles for diverse clients. Without foundational knowledge, even the most linguistically proficient teachers may struggle to design activities that truly foster cultural insight.

2. Pedagogical Background Rooted in Traditional Approaches

Many English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructors come from educational backgrounds that emphasize grammar-translation methods or structuralist approaches. While these methods are effective for teaching basic language forms, they often do not prioritize communicative fluency, intercultural awareness, or critical reflection. As a result, instructors may find it difficult to transition to more dynamic approaches such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), experiential learning, or reflective journaling. Without targeted support, educators may revert to familiar methods that prioritize accuracy over intercultural adaptability.

3. Curricular Constraints and Institutional Expectations

In many vocational and higher education institutions, syllabi are still driven by standardized assessments

focused on language accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, and textbook completion. Teachers are frequently under pressure to “cover” specific linguistic content within a limited time frame, leaving minimal room for cultural exploration. Even when instructors recognize the value of incorporating intercultural learning, they may feel that doing so would be a distraction from test preparation or course objectives. This structural limitation reinforces a narrow view of language learning that neglects its social and cultural dimensions.

4. Insufficient Opportunities for Professional Growth

Institutions often lack systematic programs for ongoing teacher development in intercultural pedagogy. Professional learning is frequently informal or optional, and rarely includes components focused on ICC. Even when workshops are offered, they may be one-off events without follow-up or practical application. Teachers may also lack access to updated teaching resources or peer networks that support innovative intercultural teaching. As a result, motivation and confidence to try new approaches may remain low.

5. Lack of Institutional Recognition for Intercultural Objectives

Another major challenge lies in the absence of institutional frameworks that formally recognize the value of intercultural learning. Curricula, lesson plans, and assessment tools often lack indicators for evaluating cultural competence, such as empathy, adaptability, or cross-cultural negotiation skills. This omission sends a message that these skills are peripheral rather than essential. Without institutional endorsement, teachers may feel that investing time in intercultural components is professionally risky or undervalued.

Addressing the Gaps: Strategies for Professional Development

To close the gap between theory and classroom practice, institutions need to support teachers through targeted development efforts. Here are five key strategies:

1. Offer Practical Workshops

Organize training on intercultural communication, focusing on real teaching practices—like designing tasks that blend language, culture, and job-specific content.

2. Promote Exchange and Peer Learning

Enable teachers to observe or collaborate with peers in diverse settings, either through classroom visits, virtual exchanges, or joint projects. This helps expand their teaching approaches.

3. Build Teacher Communities

Create spaces—online or offline—for teachers to share materials, discuss classroom challenges, and co-create intercultural tasks together.

4. Update Curriculum Goals

Ensure the curriculum includes clear intercultural objectives (like empathy and adaptability), and that assessments reflect these alongside language skills.

5. Reward Innovation

Acknowledge teachers who apply intercultural teaching successfully—through awards, small grants, or chances to share their work at conferences.

With these steps, institutions can empower teachers to integrate cross-cultural English into vocational education in a meaningful, sustainable way—preparing learners for real-world communication.

Challenges and Strategic Recommendations

While the integration of cross-cultural English in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is increasingly recognized as

essential, its implementation in vocational education faces several significant challenges. These challenges stem from systemic, pedagogical, and attitudinal barriers. Below are the key issues, along with strategic recommendations for addressing them:

1. Resource Limitations

One of the most pressing challenges is the lack of culturally diverse and locally contextualized teaching materials. Many educators depend on imported textbooks that prioritize Western cultural settings and scenarios. These materials often overlook the socio-cultural nuances of Indonesian contexts, making them less relatable for students. Strategic Recommendation: Institutions should invest in the development of localized, culturally sensitive ESP materials. Collaboration with local tourism offices, hospitals, or businesses can yield authentic case studies, guest interaction scenarios, or service scripts. Additionally, open educational resources (OERs) with adaptable intercultural components can be curated to fit local needs.

2. Assessment Design Complexity

Measuring intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is inherently complex. Unlike grammar or vocabulary, intercultural competence involves attitudes, empathy, adaptability, and behavioral appropriateness—all of which are not easily quantifiable through traditional paper-based tests.

Strategic Recommendation: Educators should adopt multi-modal assessments such as performance-based tasks, reflective portfolios, peer assessments, and real-time observation using detailed rubrics. Training should be provided for teachers to design and apply these alternative assessment tools effectively.

3. Curriculum Constraints

Vocational education often operates under strict curricular frameworks defined by accreditation bodies or ministry guidelines. These programs

prioritize technical skills and language functions, leaving minimal room for soft skills like cultural awareness.

Strategic Recommendation: Curriculum planners must advocate for the inclusion of intercultural objectives within existing modules rather than creating separate courses. For instance, modules on customer service or public speaking can integrate culture-specific case studies or etiquette comparisons. Interdepartmental collaboration can also enhance flexibility and innovation in course design.

4. Limited Teacher Preparedness

Many ESP instructors come from traditional language teaching backgrounds and may lack formal training in intercultural communication. As a result, they may feel unprepared to design tasks that facilitate deep cultural reflection or to facilitate discussions around cultural norms and sensitivities.

Strategic Recommendation: Institutions should offer regular professional development opportunities, including workshops on ICC, webinars with intercultural experts, and classroom observation exchanges. Long-term strategies may include embedding intercultural training into pre-service teacher education and encouraging further academic research on ICC in ESP.

5. Student Resistance and Misconceptions

Some students, particularly in technical or vocational programs, may perceive cultural components as peripheral or irrelevant to their career goals. There can also be resistance when cultural discussions challenge existing beliefs or stereotypes.

Strategic Recommendation: Teachers must frame intercultural learning as a core employability skill, crucial for navigating multicultural workplaces and enhancing customer satisfaction. Using real-world job advertisements, guest speaker sessions, and alumni testimonials can help reinforce the practical relevance of cross-cultural competence.

By identifying and addressing these five key areas, stakeholders in vocational and ESP education can move toward more inclusive and globally relevant language instruction. The ultimate goal is not only to improve students’ English proficiency but also to cultivate cultural adaptability, empathy, and professionalism—competencies that are indispensable in today’s interconnected world.

To implement cross-cultural English instruction meaningfully within ESP settings, educators and institutions must acknowledge the systemic and pedagogical barriers that hinder its integration. These challenges are not isolated incidents but interconnected issues that reflect broader educational structures, teacher preparation, and learner perceptions. Understanding these challenges allows for more targeted and strategic interventions that align with the goals of both language education and professional development. The following table outlines five major challenges alongside practical recommendations that can guide stakeholders in enhancing the intercultural dimensions of ESP programs.

Table 2: Challenges and Strategic Recommendations for Cross-Cultural English in ESP

No.	Challenge	Description	Strategic Recommendation
1	Resource Limitations	Dependence on foreign textbooks that lack local cultural relevance.	Develop localized materials with input from local industries; utilize Open Educational Resources (OERs) tailored to Indonesian contexts.
2	Assessment Design Complexity	Difficulty in measuring intercultural competence using conventional tests.	Use performance-based assessments, portfolios, and behavior-focused rubrics; train teachers in designing and interpreting such tools.
3	Curriculum Constraints	Rigid curricula in vocational programs limit flexibility for	Integrate cultural components into existing modules (e.g., customer service);

		intercultural content.	encourage collaboration between departments to revise curricula inclusively.
4	Limited Teacher Preparedness	Many ESP teachers are unfamiliar with ICC or task-based, reflective teaching methods.	Provide workshops, teacher exchange programs, and professional development on intercultural pedagogy and materials design.
5	Student Resistance and Misconceptions	Students may see cultural elements as irrelevant or too abstract for vocational purposes.	Relate intercultural competence to workplace success and job-readiness; use testimonials, role-play, and real-world examples to demonstrate value.

Conclusion

In today's interconnected world, cross-cultural English is not a supplementary skill but a fundamental necessity, especially within specialized education. For vocational disciplines such as tourism, hospitality, nursing, and other service-oriented professions, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries is essential for career success. English is not merely a tool for delivering information; it is a medium for building trust, managing expectations, and demonstrating professionalism in culturally diverse environments. Therefore, fostering both linguistic competence and intercultural communication competence (ICC) should be seen as core educational priorities.

The integration of cross-cultural English into ESP (English for Specific Purposes) programs enables students to function confidently in multicultural workplace settings. This can be achieved through a combination of thoughtful curriculum design, authentic task-based learning, professional development for instructors, and reflective pedagogical approaches. By embedding cultural content and interactional practices into language learning, educators can help learners develop not only accuracy and fluency, but also empathy, flexibility, and respect for cultural diversity.

Institutional examples such as the Sahid Tourism Institute of Surakarta serve as proof that meaningful integration is both feasible and impactful. By aligning educational strategies with industry needs and global expectations, such institutions demonstrate how cross-cultural English instruction can enhance both graduate readiness and institutional prestige. Their experiences suggest that a well-supported and intentional approach to intercultural language education can yield transformative outcomes—not only in student performance, but in shaping a more inclusive and globally aware educational ecosystem.

Looking ahead, it is imperative that policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators collectively recognize cross-cultural English as a strategic pillar in producing graduates who are truly globally competent. These are individuals who not only possess the technical vocabulary of their fields but also the cultural intelligence required to navigate complex professional interactions. As global mobility and international partnerships continue to expand, equipping students with such dual competencies will ensure they are not just employable, but truly adaptable and responsive global citizens.

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INCLUSIVE ENGLISH TEACHING

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Introduction

In a culturally diverse classroom, an English teacher, Ms. Smith, initiates her lesson by inviting students to contribute a word from their home languages. The room resonates with a symphony of greetings *Namaste*, *Hola*, *Bonjour*, *Salam* reflecting the breadth of linguistic and cultural heritage present. Ms. Smith uses this exchange not merely as an icebreaker but as a pedagogical tool to underscore the integral role of language in shaping individual identity. By situating this activity within the curriculum, she demonstrates that language learning extends beyond lexical and grammatical acquisition; it encompasses the recognition and appreciation of cultural nuance. Such practices enable learners to acquire not only linguistic competence but also empathy and intercultural understanding—competencies vital in an increasingly interconnected world.

In the context of English language education, inclusivity involves cultivating an environment where the diverse linguistic and cultural identities of students are not only acknowledged but purposefully integrated into the instructional process. Empirical evidence indicates that inclusive pedagogical approaches enhance both learner engagement and academic achievement in multilingual settings (Shaaban et al., 2024; Yuliantari & Huda, 2023). Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), a framework that bridges cultural gaps between educators and learners,

promotes instructional strategies that affirm and validate students' cultural backgrounds (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024; Mouboua et al., 2024). Embedding learners' identities into curricular content fosters a sense of belonging and challenges the prevailing native-speaker ideology, which has historically marginalized non-native speakers (Fang & Xu, 2022).

Moreover, inclusivity serves as a conduit between language learning and the development of cultural empathy. Educators who adopt multilingual pedagogies equip students with the skills necessary to navigate complex sociocultural contexts, thereby advancing both linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence. Immersive practices—such as language learning circles—provide authentic opportunities for learners to engage with peers' cultural narratives, reinforcing the principles of global citizenship (Hernandez & Gupta, 2024; Maqsood et al., 2024). Research further suggests that cultivating cultural awareness directly influences language learners' motivation and overall proficiency (Brainee, 2024; W. Zhu & Li, 2024). By engaging with diverse perspectives in active and meaningful ways, students enhance not only their communicative abilities but also the empathetic dispositions essential for participation in multicultural societies.

Theoretical Foundations Of Inclusion In Language Education

The theoretical foundations of inclusion in language education are grounded in sociocultural theory, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, and principles of critical pedagogy. Central to this discourse is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which conceptualizes learning as an inherently social process. Vygotsky underscores the centrality of social interaction in cognitive development, emphasizing that language acquisition is not merely an individual cognitive activity but a socially mediated practice enriched through collaboration and dialogue among learners (Dunham et

al., 2024). This emphasis on interaction aligns with the tenets of UDL, which advocate for flexible and accessible instructional approaches that meet diverse learner needs, thereby fostering engagement and inclusivity across cultural and linguistic boundaries (Yoon, 2023).

Byram's (1997) framework of intercultural communicative competence provides an essential lens through which to view inclusive language education. ICC extends the goals of language learning beyond linguistic accuracy to encompass attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for engaging with cultural diversity (Feng et al., 2025; Kerouad & Fatmi, 2024). Learning activities that incorporate authentic intercultural encounters, such as collaborative projects with peers from different cultural backgrounds, have been shown to significantly enhance ICC by enabling students to engage meaningfully with multiple perspectives (Atakoziyeva et al., 2024; Sierra-Huedo & Llopis, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that structured intercultural learning interventions in educational contexts can markedly strengthen students' intercultural competence, reinforcing the imperative for language curricula to embed intercultural dimensions as core learning objectives (Sierra-Huedo & Llopis, 2022).

The conceptual distinction between equity and equality is also critical in inclusive language pedagogy. While equality denotes providing identical treatment to all learners, equity requires the recognition of learners' varied linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, ensuring that each student receives the specific resources and support necessary to succeed (Askari & Baumgartner, 2024). In multilingual classrooms, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy operationalizes equity by affirming students' identities and sustaining their linguistic and cultural heritage within the educational experience (Lupo et al., 2025).

Furthermore, critical pedagogy offers a framework for challenging entrenched linguistic hierarchies and cultural biases within educational systems. By integrating social issues into classroom discourse, critical

pedagogy repositions language learning as a tool for questioning and transforming inequitable power relations (Askari & Baumgartner, 2024). Through the cultivation of critical consciousness, educators can empower learners to recognize and disrupt marginalizing practices tied to language and culture, thereby fostering a more socially just and inclusive learning environment (Wesley-Nero & Donley, 2024).

Within the field of language education, *equity* and *equality* represent related yet distinct paradigms for addressing the needs of diverse learners. Equality typically denotes providing identical resources and opportunities to all students, irrespective of their individual circumstances, whereas equity requires a nuanced approach that recognises and responds to learners' varied backgrounds, needs, and lived experiences (Kim, 2024; Schmor & Piccardo, 2024). In multilingual classrooms, where students may encounter systemic barriers that impede access to learning, equity becomes a particularly urgent concern. As Askari & Baumgartner (2024) observe, equitable practice often involves differentiated instruction that accommodates linguistic and cultural diversity, enabling all learners to engage with the curriculum meaningfully. By contrast, approaches grounded solely in equality risk overlooking the complexities of learners' circumstances, thereby failing to provide the additional resources some students require to achieve comparable outcomes (Kim, 2024; Wesley-Nero & Donley, 2024).

Critical pedagogy provides an important lens through which to interrogate these issues, challenging entrenched linguistic hierarchies and cultural biases embedded in educational systems. This approach invites educators and students to critically examine the power dynamics, cultural identities, and social structures that influence classroom experiences (Marstaller & Amoakoh, 2023). As Askari & Baumgartner (2024) argue, embedding social issues and real-world contexts into the curriculum aligns educational objectives with the lived realities of learners, empowering them to contest inequities while affirming their own identities.

From this perspective, critical pedagogy serves as a foundation for culturally sustaining pedagogies—approaches that not only validate but actively promote cultural and linguistic diversity as assets within the learning environment (Wang et al., 2022). Such pedagogies position students’ cultural repertoires as integral to the learning process, enhancing both engagement and achievement (Bendraou et al., 2023; Wesley-Nero & Donley, 2024). Ybarra & Marroquin (2024) further note that programmes grounded in the cultural knowledge of preservice teachers can cultivate a deeper appreciation of diversity and social justice principles, contributing to the creation of genuinely inclusive educational spaces.

Diversity In The English Language Classroom

In English language education, diversity encompasses a broad spectrum of factors, including linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, cognitive, and physical differences, as well as variations in learning styles and abilities. Such diversity shapes not only classroom interactions but also the pedagogical approaches required to meet learners’ needs. Culturally responsive teaching has been identified as a key strategy for addressing these complexities. Yuliantari & Huda (2023) emphasise that embedding culturally responsive pedagogy within English language teaching fosters meaningful communication and mutual understanding among learners from varied backgrounds. By recognising and integrating students’ cultural contexts into instruction, educators can create inclusive environments that enhance engagement, motivation, and language proficiency (Maqsood et al., 2024).

The growing adoption of a *Global Englishes* perspective further challenges traditional “native speaker” norms, advocating for a pluralistic approach to English language teaching (ELT). (Bukhari, 2023) argues that curricula aligned with Global Englishes should embrace multiple varieties and cultural contexts of English, thereby moving beyond the mono-cultural models that still dominate many classrooms. This shift acknowledges the linguistic

diversity present in contemporary educational settings and equips learners to use English effectively as a global lingua franca. In doing so, it reinforces inclusive practices that validate and celebrate linguistic variation.

Learner identities including gender, ethnicity, religion, and disability also exert a significant influence on language learning experiences. Sensitivity to these identities should inform instructional design. For example, the integration of digital literacy tools can accommodate diverse learning needs, supporting students with varying abilities and learning preferences (Rahman et al., 2023). Similarly, recognising the role of cultural background and family language ideologies can enhance English acquisition, as parental involvement and cultural affirmation have been shown to support learners' linguistic development (Chunyan, 2024). Research also indicates that culturally responsive pedagogies strengthen students' sense of belonging, which in turn fosters motivation and academic achievement (Чайка, 2023).

The implications for teacher preparation are substantial. Professional development programmes must emphasise the pedagogical significance of diversity and its intersection with students' linguistic repertoires and personal identities. Such training equips educators to address challenges arising from socio-economic disparities, varied learning styles, and differing abilities, while also preparing them to engage with the wider sociocultural implications of language use (Baker & Fang, 2022; Khaskheli et al., 2021). By adopting innovative, learner-centred strategies that value diversity and cultivate intercultural citizenship, teachers can promote a more holistic and socially responsive model of English language education.

Inclusive Curriculum Design

Inclusive curriculum design has emerged as a central principle in contemporary education, responding to the increasing diversity of students' backgrounds, experiences, and learning needs. This approach entails

developing culturally responsive syllabi, integrating multicultural texts, and incorporating authentic resources to enrich learning across cultural contexts.

The construction of culturally responsive syllabi requires educators to recognise and incorporate the voices and experiential knowledge of all stakeholders, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. As Hendricks & Aploon-Zokufa (2021) argue, the selection and organisation of knowledge are pivotal within curriculum theory and should reflect the lived realities of diverse learners. Exposure to multiple perspectives within the curriculum has been shown to broaden students' understanding, as evidenced by Prevatt et al. (2021), who describe a project introducing undergraduate psychology students to diverse researchers and their contributions. Such initiatives parallel wider inclusivity goals that involve students in shaping content, as illustrated by (Meherali et al., 2021) in their *Girls' Voices* curriculum, which empowered immigrant girls in Canada by embedding their perspectives within the learning process.

Equally vital is the integration of multicultural texts and authentic resources, which enrich the curriculum by providing varied cultural narratives. Akintayo et al. (2024) emphasise that inclusive curriculum design must address students' diverse needs while fostering social improvement through materials representing multiple cultural backgrounds. Complementing this, Mbaki et al. (2021) advocate for the decolonisation of educational resources to foreground perspectives historically marginalised in academic discourse, thereby diversifying learning materials and amplifying authentic voices.

Balancing local and global cultural content is critical for fostering cross-cultural dialogue and cultivating global citizenship. (Luke, 2021) suggests applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to anticipate diverse learner needs while embedding multiple cultural perspectives. Thematic units designed to promote cross-cultural engagement are strengthened when students are actively involved in curriculum development, a practice supported by Saito and Fatemi (2022), who demonstrate how collaborative learning environments prepare students to engage critically with differing worldviews.

Finally, ensuring the representation of diverse voices in reading, listening, and speaking tasks is essential for building inclusive educational spaces. (Shields, 2022), in the context of bioengineering education, illustrates how embedding justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into curricular content can empower learners and affirm their identities. Likewise, participatory mechanisms enabling students to articulate their perspectives allow curriculum content to more accurately reflect their experiences, thereby fostering engagement and relevance (Takhar, 2023).

Inclusive Teaching Strategies And Classroom Practices

Inclusive teaching strategies are essential for cultivating learning environments in which students of all abilities, linguistic proficiencies, and cultural backgrounds can thrive. This section outlines key facets of inclusive pedagogy—differentiated instruction, scaffolding, collaborative learning, translanguaging, safe spaces for expression, and multimodal resource use—supported by current academic literature.

Differentiated Instruction for Mixed-Ability Learners

Differentiated instruction enables educators to meet the diverse needs of learners within mixed-ability classrooms. Liu et al. (2022) emphasise the value of student-centred learning opportunities, noting that tasks designed for varied engagement can foster meaningful participation and progress. Effective differentiation involves modifying content, processes, and outcomes to align with learners' readiness, interests, and strengths, thereby promoting equity and access (Williams, 2021). Such intentional design ensures that students progress at an appropriate pace while maximising their individual potential.

Scaffolding for Varied Language Proficiency Levels

Scaffolding provides structured support for students with differing linguistic abilities. Liu et al. (2022) highlights the importance of pre-class, in-class, and post-class strategies that gradually build learner autonomy while

reinforcing comprehension. Integrating technology into scaffolding, as demonstrated by Evenddy et al. (2024), can facilitate collaborative and interactive learning environments that strengthen both language skills and content knowledge. Such approaches ensure that all learners, regardless of proficiency, have equitable access to learning opportunities.

Collaborative Learning and Intercultural Interaction

Collaborative learning not only develops language proficiency but also fosters intercultural relationships. Chauhan (2021) observes that peer collaboration encourages authentic communication and builds mutual understanding across cultural lines. Creating community agreements, as suggested by Fernández (2024), further supports inclusivity by establishing shared norms for respectful, diversity-conscious interaction. This method promotes empathy, cooperation, and a strong sense of classroom community.

Translanguaging and Code-Switching

Validating students' full linguistic repertoires through translanguaging and code-switching enriches learning and affirms identity. Phyak et al. (2022) contend that allowing the use of home languages dismantles monolingual constraints, enabling deeper engagement with course content. Zano (2022) further notes that incorporating multilingual capacities into instructional design not only supports linguistic mastery but also strengthens cultural connections and peer collaboration.

Creating Safe Spaces for Expression and Risk-Taking

Safe and non-judgemental learning spaces are critical for encouraging intellectual risk-taking and authentic self-expression. Wagh (2023) underscores the need for environments that respect diverse identities, while Capstick & Ateek (2021) highlight translanguaging as a mechanism for psychosocial support, particularly in high-stress contexts such as refugee education. Strategies such as setting clear behavioural expectations and facilitating open dialogue on sensitive topics can help

learners feel empowered to share perspectives and explore ideas (Mendes & Lau, 2022).

Using Multimodal Resources for Accessibility

The use of multimodal resources—including visuals, gestures, realia, and digital tools—enhances accessibility and comprehension across diverse learner populations. Tai & Wei (2021) illustrate how technologies such as tablets can facilitate translanguaging and interaction, while Mendes & Lau (2022) and Williams (2021) stress that integrating multiple semiotic modes can address varied learning needs, support mental well-being, and increase engagement.

By combining these strategies, educators can create inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive classrooms that support both academic success and the development of intercultural competence.

Inclusive Assessment Practices For Diverse Learners

Creating fair and valid assessments for diverse learners requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges and embraces cultural, linguistic, and cognitive differences. To achieve inclusivity, assessments must avoid culturally biased content and authentically reflect the varied backgrounds of all students. Formative assessment plays a central role in this process by reframing errors as opportunities for growth rather than punitive outcomes. By embedding formative practices into instruction, educators can tailor feedback that respects learners' unique cultural contexts, thereby fostering engagement and sustained motivation (Rahmawati, 2023; Valentine et al., 2021).

One strategy for mitigating cultural bias is the adoption of multilingual-oriented pedagogy, which recognises and accommodates students' diverse linguistic repertoires (Nwachukwu et al., 2024). This approach ensures that assessment tasks are accessible to learners from different language backgrounds, allowing them to demonstrate understanding without being hindered by unnecessary linguistic barriers. Additionally, the application of

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles is pivotal in promoting equitable assessment. UDL encourages multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, thereby accommodating diverse learner needs and preferences (Luke, 2021).

Peer feedback and collaborative assessment further strengthen inclusivity by encouraging intercultural dialogue and empowering students to take ownership of their learning (Rahmawati, 2023; Valentine et al., 2021). Such practices not only enhance assessment validity but also cultivate skills in reflection, empathy, and communication key components of intercultural competence.

Alternative assessment formats, such as portfolios and self-assessments, offer additional benefits by fostering learner autonomy, promoting self-reflection, and encouraging metacognitive awareness (Holleran et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2022). These approaches enable learners to document progress over time and to evaluate their development in ways that align with their personal, cultural, and linguistic identities. As Nwachukwu et al. (2024) observe, these forms of assessment engage students meaningfully, allowing them to construct knowledge in ways that resonate with their lived experiences.

Conclusion

Inclusive English teaching is not merely a pedagogical preference but an ethical and practical imperative in today's culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Grounded in sociocultural theory, intercultural communicative competence, Universal Design for Learning, and critical pedagogy, inclusive approaches recognise the multifaceted nature of learner diversity spanning language proficiency, cultural identity, socio-economic status, learning styles, and abilities. By embedding culturally responsive practices into curriculum design, instruction, and assessment, educators can dismantle traditional barriers rooted in native-speaker ideologies, challenge systemic inequities,

and foster learning spaces where all students feel respected, represented, and empowered. Such environments not only advance language proficiency but also nurture empathy, critical thinking, and the intercultural awareness essential for global citizenship.

The strategies and frameworks discussed in this chapter illustrate that inclusivity must permeate every aspect of English language education—from the selection of multicultural texts to the design of equitable assessments and the legitimisation of translanguaging practices. Teacher professional development remains pivotal in sustaining these practices, equipping educators with the skills and reflective capacity needed to respond to evolving classroom demographics. Ultimately, inclusive English teaching is both a commitment and a continuous process, requiring educators to remain responsive, adaptive, and intentional in their pedagogy. By embracing inclusivity as a guiding principle, language education can transcend the transmission of vocabulary and grammar to become a transformative tool for social cohesion, equity, and intercultural understanding.

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EXPERIENCING MULTICULTURALISM AT INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY; FIVE MULTICULTURAL NIGHTS (MCN) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century, higher education is increasingly expected to prepare students for global citizenship and global interactions. Apart from academic competence, graduates are expected to develop intercultural understanding, empathy, and communication skills that will allow them to be competitive in diverse global environments. Universities, particularly those in developing countries with growing international linkages, need innovative platforms to expose students to cultural diversity in meaningful and transformative ways.

At the University of Mataram (Unram), the Multicultural Night (MCN) has emerged as such a platform, facilitating students to experience intercultural learning with a creative and innovative approach. Initiated in 2022 as part of the *Intercultural Understanding* course in the English Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training

and Education (FKIP), the event combines cultural performances, competitions, and direct interaction within a multicultural environment with international guests. Through interactions in a multicultural environment, people learn about cultures different from their own, their customs and traditions, and become aware of various behavioral expectations and communication patterns (Mitevaska Petrusheva & Ziberi, 2024).

Over the years, MCN has grown from a small classroom final project into a faculty-wide event, involving hundreds of students and inviting dozens of international visitors. MCN played a critical role in helping English Education students at the University of Mataram to deepen their intercultural understanding.

This chapter explores the evolution of MCN from 2022 to 2025 and analyzes how it has functioned as a medium for experiencing multiculturalism. It argues that MCN provides students with academic enrichment, intercultural competence, creative growth and networking, and opportunities to represent Indonesian culture to the global community.

Theoretical Framework

Multiculturalism and Intercultural Education

Multiculturalism is generally understood as the coexistence and interaction of diverse cultural groups within a society. It highlights the reality of living together in ethnically and culturally diverse communities (Leeman & Ledoux, 2003). In the context of education, multicultural perspectives shift the role of education. As Lee (2024) notes, education is not only perceived as a pathway for individual mobility but also a tool that connects learners with the wider community. Similarly, Banks (2019) argues that multicultural education equips students with the knowledge, values, and skills needed to engage in a pluralistic and democratic society. It emphasizes the sense of respect, equality, and mutual recognition of cultural differences.

Intercultural education takes this idea further by focusing on interaction and dialogue across cultural boundaries. Deardorff (2006) explains that intercultural competence is not only about knowing other cultures, but also about the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from different backgrounds. This means highlighting open-mindedness, empathy, and the willingness to understand cultural elements that may not easily translate into one's own cultural framework.

The annual Multicultural Night (MCN) at the University of Mataram functions as a platform for intercultural learning, where cultural practices and perspectives from multiple contexts are presented and learned. The event provides students and participants with opportunities to observe, analyze, and interact with diverse cultural expressions, facilitating engagement with and understanding of multiculturalism.

Experiential Learning and Project-Based Learning

Learning by doing forms the basis of experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that the most effective way to acquire knowledge is through direct experience. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the pedagogical value of the Multicultural Night (MCN) program. The theory highlights a cyclical process of learning that involves concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Experiential learning emphasizes the central role of experience in the learning process. By observing, interacting, and exploring real-world contexts, students acquire insights that exceeded classroom instruction. Such an approach offers several advantages: it helps students grasp concepts more easily (Hatoss, 2019), enhances creative thinking, and encourages the use of effective problem-solving strategies (Valentine & Cheney, 2001). Through this process, students not only absorb information but also actively engage in discovery and reflection, making the learning more meaningful and engaging.

Within this framework, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) emerges as one of the key methods of experiential learning. PjBL offers a dynamic approach by engaging students in authentic, collaborative projects that demand problem-solving, negotiation, and critical reflection. When designed with intercultural objectives, PjBL can serve as an effective tool for creating mutual respect, cross-cultural dialogue, and deeper cultural understanding.

The Multicultural Night program at the University of Mataram's Faculty of Teacher Training and Education demonstrates the practical integration of intercultural education and project-based learning. Research has shown that when students work together on a project, they are not only learning content but also developing important interpersonal skills (Yeung, 2023).

Through cultural performances, role plays, and structured interaction with international guests, students extend their learning from theoretical frameworks to engage with real-world expressions of cultural diversity. This form of experiential learning supports the development of knowledge, intercultural competence, and the ability to navigate diverse perspectives.

Background of Multicultural Night at the University of Mataram

The Multicultural Night is organized annually by second-semester students of the English Education Program, FKIP Unram, under the supervision of Dr. Ahmad Junaidi. It serves as the final project (UAS) for the *Intercultural Understanding*, a 2-credit course. The event typically involves months of preparation, including cultural research, rehearsals, and committee work, thereby engaging students in collaborative learning processes.

Over the years, the number of people involved in this initiative has grown substantially, both in terms of student participation, international guests, and event scale. In its first year of implementation in 2022, MCN included only 34 students and 16 international guests.

However, in the following three years, the event expanded significantly, involving eight classes with a total of 248 students and more than 50 international guests.

The growth of this initiative can be viewed through quantitative and qualitative lenses. The event's concepts and formats have continued to change, giving students the space and flexibility to experiment with their creative ideas. Each year has introduced new themes and innovations, making every MCN distinct from the previous ones. This constant renewal is one of the main reasons why MCN has become a highly anticipated event among students of the English Education Study Program at the University of Mataram. This growth reflects the curricular and extracurricular sustainability of the program and its increasing recognition within the campus community.

The Syllabus, Events, and Themes Across the Years

MCN has developed in two interconnected aspects. First, the curricular aspect, in which the overall design of learning has been retained but continuously refined to align with the intended learning outcomes of the course. Second, the extracurricular aspect, in which students independently design showcases and performances to enhance the experiential dimension of the program for both participants and invited guests.

The Curricular Consistency

The syllabus of the *Intercultural Understanding* course is structured through a project-based learning approach, designed to equip students with both conceptual knowledge and practical skills for communication in multicultural contexts. Students are introduced to foundational concepts of intercultural communication, such as relationships, perceptions of time, power relations, language use, writing styles, and negotiation strategies in global English-speaking settings. Throughout the semester, they analyze intercultural conflicts from real-life situations and develop sensitivity and competence through discussions, case studies, and

collaborative projects. The learning process emphasizes teamwork across diverse backgrounds and practice in both simulated and actual intercultural situations. As the culminating activity, students organize a Multicultural Night following the Mid-Semester Examination, where they demonstrate their ability to represent cultural perspectives and apply intercultural communication skills in an open and inclusive event.

The course outcomes specify that students are expected to:

1. Explain basic concepts in various contexts of intercultural communication in English.
2. Analyze conflicts and propose solutions to intercultural communication conflicts in English.
3. Engage in effective communication activities in real intercultural conflict situations in English.

To ensure consistency, the curricular goals are designed around a stable framework that structures the learning process in eight thematic components: (1) concepts of cultures, (2) values in different cultures, (3) concepts of time and power in different cultures, (4) communicating across cultures, (5) writing styles in different cultures, (6) conflicts of communication in cross-cultural settings, (7) business and professional encounters in cross-cultural contexts, and (8) the organization of a multicultural event. This framework provides coherence across course iterations, while also allowing for incremental improvements in delivery and implementation.

This framework provides coherence across course iterations, while also allowing for incremental improvements in delivery and implementation. Based on these thematic areas, students are assigned specific responsibilities that require the practical application of their learning. These include inviting international guests, responding appropriately to acceptances or rejections of invitations, hosting and guiding guests during the event, and engaging in sustained communication with guests to discuss cultural

differences. In addition, students are tasked with facilitating interactive activities, managing event logistics, and documenting the proceedings through reports or reflective portfolios. These assignments provide opportunities to apply skills in negotiation, problem-solving, and intercultural communication while fostering accountability and collaborative planning within a team.

Extracurricular Development

The extracurricular side has been perceived as the more celebratory aspect, complementing the curricular structure of the course. It is primarily organized by students, who are given considerable autonomy to plan, design, and implement activities that bring together cultural expression and social interaction. This dimension is less rigid than the curricular framework, allowing for experimentation in format, themes, and performances from year to year. While its outcomes are not formally assessed in the same way as coursework, it provides a visible and communal setting in which intercultural communication can take place in less structured forms. In this way, the extracurricular component functions as both an extension of the course and as a space where students can engage audiences through performance, dialogue, and cultural representation.

2022 – The First Experimentation

The inaugural MCN was modest in scale, involving a single class of 34 students (cohort of 2021). Sixteen foreigners attended the event, most of whom were international tourists and expatriates living in Lombok. The program included conversation-based games, simple cultural showcases, and a performance of traditional Indonesian dance. While limited in scope, this initial experiment demonstrated the feasibility of linking a formal course requirement with direct intercultural engagement. The 2022 iteration is often regarded as the pilot that set the foundation for later developments.

2023 – Expansion: *Dunia Tanpa Sekat* (World Without Borders)

By 2023, MCN had expanded substantially to include eight classes with a total of 248 students and 46 international guests. The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) campus was arranged as a “multicultural village,” with each group representing different world cultures through costumes, stall decorations, and interaction with guests. Activities combined artistic performances with discussion sessions on selected issues. For instance, performances included Indonesian traditional dances such as Tari Cendrawasih, while discussion topics addressed gender equality, religion, sexual education, and governance. Students conducted interviews with international guests, eliciting comparative reflections on cultural norms and values. One German volunteer, for example, commented on differences in parenting and youth independence between Europe and Indonesia. The design of the event created an immersive context in which students encountered intercultural communication beyond classroom settings.

2024 – Unity in Diversity: *Bridging Cultures through Art*

In 2024, the event incorporated structured competitions for the first time. These included a Cultural Performance competition, a Traditional Costume Parade, and an Ethnic Music Challenge. Approximately 240 students participated, accompanied by 52 international guests. The emphasis was placed on creativity, performance, and the artistic articulation of cultural identity, with students drawing not only on Indonesian traditions but also on a range of cultural forms from other parts of the world. The selected slogan, “Celebrate Diversity, Unite in Creativity,” encapsulated the thematic orientation of that year. Performances were later selected to appear in broader university events, indicating an emerging recognition of MCN as a relevant site of cultural representation within the campus.

2025 – *Colors of the World*

The 2025 edition reflected a further refinement of the structure and scope of the event. It featured three principal competitions: the Intercultural Value Speech, the Multicultural Fashion Show, and the Multicultural Talent Showcase. Participation included 189 students and 50 international guests. The competitions were oriented toward communicative ability, critical reflection, and creative expression, with the speech contest addressing global values, while the fashion and talent segments highlighted cultural diversity through costumes and performance. In addition, a promotional video was produced with the stated aim of enhancing the visibility of the University of Mataram in international contexts. While such documentation may contribute to institutional promotion, the activities themselves primarily served as a site for practicing intercultural communication, performance, and cross-cultural exchange in a structured yet participatory format.

Notable Activities of MCN

MCN consists of a range of structured activities that extend beyond cultural performance and artistic display, with an emphasis on facilitating students' participation in intercultural exchange. These activities are organized to create conditions for dialogue, collaborative engagement, and the exploration of cultural perspectives between local students and international guests. Within this framework, the activities are not approached as pedagogical instruments that draw on principles of experiential learning, intercultural communication, and reflective practice. The following subsections describe selected activities within MCN, focusing on their purposes, modes of implementation, and educational significance.

Find Someone Who

One of the structured interactive elements of the Multicultural Night (MCN) is the "Find Someone Who" activity, designed to facilitate initial engagement between

students and international guests. In this session, participants are given a set of prompts such as “*find someone who believes that parents should decide who to marry*” or “*find someone who cannot eat spicy food.*” They are then required to circulate throughout the venue, identify individuals who fit the criteria, and record responses. The activity is intentionally designed to lower communication barriers, provide a non-threatening entry point for dialogue, and ensure that all students actively participate in intercultural exchanges.

Within the overall structure of MCN, this activity functions as an ice-breaker, complementing the more performance-oriented elements of the program. While competitions and cultural showcases emphasize the representation of creativity and tradition, the “Find Someone Who” activity emphasizes dialogue, interpersonal communication, and direct engagement. The prompts are purposefully varied, combining light and accessible topics with more complex and sensitive issues, such as same-sex marriage or democratic systems. This variation encourages students to develop communicative strategies suitable for both informal conversation and discussions involving value-laden perspectives.

The pedagogical benefits of this activity are multidimensional. It requires students to formulate questions, approach interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds, and manage potentially sensitive exchanges in ways that remain respectful. For international guests, it provides a platform to articulate perspectives shaped by their own sociocultural contexts, thereby enriching the dialogic process. One student noted: “*The questions were really hard to answer, but we found a way to communicate. Sometimes it was confusing, but it made me realize how important it is to keep trying.*” This reflects the challenge of negotiating meaning across cultural boundaries and the learning that arises from such efforts.

Another student emphasized the intensity of the discussions, observing that “*some of the guests could be very strong in their arguments, but that gave us the chance*

to speak a lot and practice responding. I think it pushed me to be more confident.” Such reflections illustrate how the activity advances the educational objectives of MCN: it promotes intercultural competence, develops communicative resilience, and provides authentic practice in navigating cultural difference. In this sense, the “Find Someone Who” activity exemplifies the event’s broader goal of combining cultural representation with interactive, dialogic learning opportunities.

Mini Workshops

A distinctive component of the Multicultural Night is the organization of mini workshops and cultural showcases at student-led tables. Each group is tasked with preparing a small interactive activity that highlights an element of cultural practice, with the intention of creating direct, experiential learning opportunities. For instance, one group guided participants in weaving *ketupat*, an Indonesian rice cake wrapper made from palm leaves. This activity not only demonstrated a traditional culinary skill but also provided insight into the symbolism of food preparation in communal and festive contexts.

Other groups introduced practices specific to Lombok and other Indonesian traditions. A demonstration of *peresean*, a Sasak martial practice, allowed participants to observe the discipline’s cultural significance while engaging in simplified movements under student guidance. Meanwhile, another table facilitated the preparation of a local Sasak snack using accessible ingredients, emphasizing the role of food as a cultural marker. Such workshops extended beyond performance and presentation, as they required participants to physically engage with cultural practices, thereby deepening understanding through experiential involvement.

The inclusion of these workshops within MCN reflects the pedagogical emphasis on experiential intercultural learning. Unlike stage-based performances, table-based activities provide closer interaction between students and guests, fostering sustained dialogue around cultural

contexts and meanings. This format positions students not only as performers but also as facilitators of cultural knowledge, strengthening their communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity. For international guests, the workshops offer accessible entry points to Indonesian culture in practice-based settings, aligning with the broader goal of MCN as a platform for promoting mutual understanding and intercultural engagement.

One of the highlight activities in MCN is the cultural monologue, where international guests are invited to the stage to share unique cultural values from their countries of origin. Typically, around 10 to 15 guests voluntarily participate, presenting traditions and practices that represent their cultural identity. Past participants have introduced celebrations such as Thanksgiving in the United States, the Festival of Colors in India, and Patron Saints Festivals in Italy. Beyond festivals, they also share aspects of daily life and heritage, including traditional foods, clothing, and cultural customs, which provide students and other international guests with a broader understanding of global diversity.

In addition to presenting their own traditions, many international guests also express admiration and appreciation for Indonesian culture. One participant, for instance, highlighted their experience in Lombok, where they were warmly welcomed by locals, even strangers on the street. Others noted the beauty of Indonesia's collective culture, which emphasizes community and togetherness, stood in contrast to the more individualistic values of their home countries.

The cultural monologue served as a safe and supportive space for sharing and appreciating each cultural values, allowing participants to express their traditions freely and engage in mutual learning without the risk of being judged.

Pedagogical and Intercultural Benefits of MCN

Based on the questionnaires' results, MCN has been perceived as beneficial academically, interculturally, and

Academic Benefits of MCN

MCN provides several important academic benefits. One of the main contributions is its role as applied learning for the *Intercultural Understanding* course. This course is designed to help English Education students understand the basic principles of intercultural communication, including how people manage relationships, time, power, and delivery styles in a global context. Through MCN, students not only study these ideas in theory but also experience them directly in practice.

In addition, MCN supports the development of students' academic skills such as speaking, speech writing, and debate. It gives space for them to practice public speaking, prepare speeches, and discuss cultural issues with people from different backgrounds. The event is not limited to cultural performances; it also includes group discussions where each student is paired with at least one international guest. This arrangement allows students to share ideas, compare perspectives, and learn how cultural values shape communication.

Moreover, competitions held in MCN, such as the intercultural speech competition, serve as platforms for students to integrate critical thinking with creativity. According to Indrašienė et al. (2021), critical thinking is one of the key tools for the formation and development of human and social capital. In these competitions, students are encouraged to think critically to analyze cultural issues from multiple perspectives, structure their arguments logically, and present them in ways that are both engaging and accessible to audiences from diverse backgrounds. This process not only enhances their critical, analytical, and problem-solving skills but also trains them to communicate complex ideas clearly in English. At the same time, the creative aspect of the competition challenges students to design speeches that are informative, persuasive, and culturally sensitive.

Intercultural and Social Benefits

While students often face limitations in applying intercultural theory, MCN provides students with a real opportunity to engage in cross-cultural dialogue with international guests. These direct interactions help students move beyond just abstract concepts about multiculturalism and experience cultural differences in a more authentic and practical way.

At the same time, MCN functions as a platform where global diversity meets local traditions. Students are not only exposed to a variety of international cultures but also given the opportunity to showcase Indonesian heritage on the same stage. This exchange creates a balance between learning from others and affirming one's own cultural identity.

Finally, the event contributes to the development of social values such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. By engaging closely with peers and international guests, students learn to appreciate diversity not as a challenge but as a strength. These social benefits extend beyond the event itself, equipping students with the attitudes and interpersonal skills necessary to collaborate effectively in a global multicultural environment.

Creativity, Personal Growth, and Networking

One of the most visible aspects of MCN is the space it provides for creative expression. Students are encouraged to showcase their talents through dance, music, costumes, and other performances. Students' performances ranged from traditional to modern culture, from their own culture or other countries' cultures. These activities allow them to explore artistic forms of expression while also deepening their understanding of cultural identity and cultural appreciation of their own and other people.

Besides individual expression, MCN also strengthens students' leadership and teamwork. All students take part in the organizing committees, where they are

responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing different aspects of the event. These responsibilities encourage collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that are highly valuable in both academic and professional settings.

In addition, MCN has a significant impact on students' personal growth. Many participants reported that the event increased their confidence, particularly in speaking English and interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.

An important outcome of MCN is that the intercultural engagement it facilitates does not end with the conclusion of the event. Many students and international guests maintain connections through social media, informal communication, and in some cases collaborative projects. These continuing interactions extend the impact of MCN beyond a one-night experience, allowing participants to further negotiate cultural perspectives, exchange knowledge, and strengthen intercultural friendships. This ongoing engagement indicates that MCN functions not only as a structured pedagogical activity but also as a catalyst for sustained intercultural relationships, thereby supporting the broader aim of higher education to prepare students for global citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Institutional and International Impact

Besides the numerous impacts it provides for students, MCN also contributes to the institutional goals of the University of Mataram. By inviting foreign guests annually, MCN directly supports Unram's vision of becoming an internationally recognized university. The event is expected to demonstrate Unram's commitment to building a global network and creating a learning environment that prepares students for international engagement.

Through performances, mini workshops, and interactive sessions, students act as cultural ambassadors who introduce local traditions to global audiences. This is expected to enhance international guests' understanding

of Indonesian culture and strengthen Unram's reputation as an institution that values cultural heritage while engaging in global dialogue.

MCN also represents unram efforts and readiness to welcome international students and reflects a culture of openness and collaboration. In this way, MCN is not only a student-centered initiative but also a strategic tool for institutional branding, helping Unram position itself as a globally connected and culturally dynamic university.

Conclusion

The Multicultural Night (MCN) at the University of Mataram functions as an educational initiative linking classroom instruction with experiential learning in intercultural contexts. Since its inception in 2022, the event has evolved in format and scope, culminating in a more structured program by 2025. Students engage in practical applications of intercultural communication, including presenting, interpreting, and comparing cultural practices in interaction with international guests. These exchanges highlight the negotiation of cultural values and perspectives, emphasizing communication as a dynamic process. MCN also facilitates ongoing connections between students and foreign participants beyond the event, providing continuity in intercultural engagement. The event thus illustrates an evolving pedagogical approach that integrates academic objectives, student-led initiatives, and structured cross-cultural interaction.

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EDUCATOR TRAINING FOR CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCE

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Introduction

In a world where everything is connected, learning English isn't just about getting better at speaking it; it's also about getting along with people from different cultures and making connections between different communities. English, which is often called the "global lingua franca," is an important way for people from different language and cultural backgrounds to connect. Because of this, teaching English is very important for international communication and cultural exchange. Learning English is no longer just about learning grammar and vocabulary. It's also about understanding how language carries culture and how you need to be aware of cultural differences when you talk to people (Mawhinney, 2018).

English educators now have additional responsibilities as a result of this change. Teaching English involves more than just teaching language proficiency; it also involves teaching students how to communicate effectively in a range of contexts. Educators need to develop Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC) in order to do this successfully. CCC stands for the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to interact and communicate successfully across cultural boundaries (Carney & Kahn, 1984). Without it, language training runs the risk of being inadequate because students might find it difficult to use English effectively in multicultural, real-world situations.

This chapter aims to investigate potential training programmes for educators to enhance and expand their cross-cultural competency. It provides a concise and useful synopsis of CCC, its significance in English language instruction, and how educator preparation programmes could integrate this competency into professional development. Through an analysis of opportunities and challenges, this chapter aims to provide guidance to educators and organisations on how to develop educators who are not only language instructors but also cultural mediators in the global classroom.

Understanding Cross-Cultural Competence

Cross-cultural competence (CCC) is defined as the capacity to communicate successfully and appropriately with persons from various cultural backgrounds (Bican, 2021). It is typically described in three dimensions: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Knowledge refers to understanding cultural differences, values, and communication styles. Skills, meaning negotiation, and misunderstanding management are all examples of skills. Attitudes towards cultural variety include openness, respect, and curiosity. These three components work together to assist educators and students in developing significant cross-cultural connections.

Language and culture are deeply connected. Learning a language teaches people cultural ways of thinking, behaving, and expressing meaning (Dunham et al., 2022). Language is not just a tool for communication but also a representation of cultural identity. When educators teach English, they are introducing children to different ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting, in addition to grammar and vocabulary (Nguyen, 2021). Simple phrases, such as greetings or manners of politeness, can vary greatly throughout cultures. In English, people may say "How are you?" as a normal welcome, yet in some Asian contexts, people may ask "Have you eaten?" to express concern.

Even the most exact language teaching may feel incomplete in the absence of cultural awareness. Understanding cultural nuances helps learners avoid miscommunication and communicate more naturally (Li, 2024). Ignoring the cultural dimension in English

language teaching can lead to mechanical and ineffective learning outcomes. Teaching English should always be related to the development of cultural understanding and sensitivity (Takhokhov, 2021).

CCC is a must-have for educators. Students in the classroom may come from varied backgrounds, each with their own cultural viewpoints. Educators with a high CCC can foster an inclusive learning atmosphere in which all students feel respected and valued (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). For example, an Indonesian educator working with international students may note that some students prefer not to establish direct eye contact with educators because it may be considered disrespectful in their culture. Without cultural awareness, an educator may mistake this behaviour as a lack of confidence or interest.

A practical example can be found in a BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Learners) class. Some students may prefer interactive group discussions in which they may freely exchange ideas, whilst others may prefer planned lectures with explicit instruction and step-by-step explanations. Educators who recognise these variations can alter their approaches to provide a balance of engagement and structure, ensuring that all students feel involved and encouraged (Prastiwi & Purnama, 2019). This adaptability is indicative of great cross-cultural competency.

Aside from the classroom, educators assist students prepare for engagement in a global society. Educators model cross-cultural competence to enable students to become open-minded communicators and responsible global citizens capable of collaborating across differences.

Core Elements Of Educator Training For Ccc

To encourage cross-cultural competency, educator training should concentrate on a few key components.

First, knowledge of culture and awareness. Educators must recognise that culture influences how people think, communicate, and learn. Educators need training on fundamental cultural ideas such as values, traditions, communication methods, and classroom expectations. For example, in some cultures, children may be hesitant to question professors because it is perceived as disrespectful, whereas in others, questioning is encouraged as a kind of critical thinking.

Practical Activity: Trainees can work in groups to examine short case studies that describe various classroom scenarios. Each group talks about how cultural variables may influence student behaviour and how the instructor should respond appropriately.

Second, develop multicultural communication skills. Educators must be able to properly communicate with students of various cultural backgrounds. This entails active listening, using plain language, being aware of nonverbal signs, and verifying for comprehension. Communication is more than just giving information; it is also about fostering trust and respect across cultures.

Practical Activity: Role-playing activities can be performed in which one educator portrays a student from a specific cultural background while another plays the educator. This helps people practise responding appropriately to various communication styles.

Third, engage in critical reflection and self-awareness. Educators should be trained to consider their own cultural preconceptions and biases. Educators who are conscious of how their own background influences their teaching approach are better able to avoid misconceptions and adapt to different classrooms. Reflective practices, such as keeping a teaching journal or discussing case studies, can help educators gain this understanding.

Practical activity: Trainees might write a brief perspective on a moment when they misread or misjudged a student's behaviour. They then discuss how different cultural perspectives could explain the scenario differently.

Finally, inclusive pedagogy. This involves creating educational techniques and materials that acknowledge and involve different points of view. Inclusive pedagogy encourages all students to participate, values varied perspectives, and fosters a learning environment in which everyone feels accepted. Educators, for example, can incorporate examples from many cultures into their classes or allow students to share personal experiences.

Practical activity: Educators can be requested to modify a short lesson plan by include examples, activities, or materials that illustrate diverse cultures. They then deliver the updated lesson to their peers for feedback.

These factors, combined together, create the foundation for cross-cultural educator preparation. Educators who have been equipped with information, skills, reflection, and inclusive techniques are better able to address the needs of different students.

Training Strategies For Developing Ccc

To effectively develop cross-cultural competence (CCC), educator training programs must go beyond theory along with practical, engaging approaches. Educators can use a range of ways to learn knowledge, practise skills, and reflect on their own experiences.

Practical Methods. Role-playing, simulations, and case studies allow educators to practise cultural scenarios in a safe setting. A role-playing scenario, for example, might portray a classroom with kids from various backgrounds showing opposing learning behaviours. Educators practise responding with empathy and flexibility. Case studies can explain frequent issues, such as misunderstandings caused by indirect communication methods. Discussing these issues in groups allows educators to build realistic solutions.

Reflective activities. Reflection is an essential component in developing self-awareness. Activities such as journals, peer discussions, and portfolios help educators to reflect on their experiences and identify areas for improvement. For example, keeping a teaching

journal after each practicum session allows educators to reflect on cultural exchanges they witnessed, what went well, and what may be improved. Peer talks can also be effective, as instructors benefit from one another's thoughts and perspectives.

Experiential learning. Real-life exposure is one of the most efficient strategies for promoting cross-cultural understanding. Exchange programs, school visits, and community involvement events allow educators to meet directly with people from other backgrounds. Visiting a multicultural school or working in a community centre, for example, can provide educators with opportunities to communicate with students and parents from many cultures. These encounters help to move learning from theory to practice.

Using culturally diverse teaching materials. One effective method for developing CCC is to model inclusive teaching through the use of resources that reflect diverse cultural viewpoints. Rather than depending on examples from a particular context, trainers can show how to create lesson plans that incorporate stories, case studies, or media from several places. For example, a reading comprehension assignment could involve short texts from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Middle East, each with their own set of cultural values. This allows educators-in-training to witness how incorporating diversity into classroom materials not only makes courses more entertaining, but also builds respect for diverse worldviews.

The tactics outlined above can be summarised in a simple table that links each core feature of CCC to the associated training activities. The table below not only summarises these techniques, but also demonstrates how each core aspect of CCC can be implemented in educator training. This makes the framework more accessible to both trainers and participants, guaranteeing that the abstract concept of CCC is transformed into concrete, practical procedures that can be immediately utilised in real-world training scenarios.

Table 1. Table of Training Strategies for Developing Cross Cultural Competence for Educators

CORE ELEMENT	WHAT IT MEANS	HOW TO PRACTICE IT
AWARENESS	Knowing that people think and act differently across cultures	Share stories/case examples from different cultures
COMMUNICATION	Being able to talk and listen across cultures	Do role-plays or simulations of cross-cultural situations
REFLECTION	Checking our own habits, values, and biases	Write short journals or discuss in small groups
INCLUSIVE TEACHING	Making learning materials fair for all cultures	Use texts, media, or examples from different countries
ADAPTABILITY	Adjusting when facing cultural differences	Group work with mixed backgrounds and debrief together

The table gives a clear idea of how CCC can be constructed step by step. However, in fact, various difficulties frequently develop that must be overcome for successful implementation. By integrating these tactics, educator training programs ensure that cross-cultural competency is not just discussed but actively practised and experienced. Educators who see these strategies personally are more prepared to implement them in their own classrooms.

Challenges And Possible Solutions

Although cross-cultural competence (CCC) is an essential skill for educators in globalised classrooms, its development in educator training presents problems. These problems range from personal and institutional constraints to larger systemic issues. However, with careful planning, each of these obstacles can be turned into chances for development.

Lack of Exposure to Different Cultures

Many circumstances, particularly where educators work in relatively monocultural cultures, provide limited chances for direct encounters with cultural variety. This

makes it difficult for educators to develop the sensitivity and awareness required to address multicultural classrooms.

Practical Example: In some parts of Indonesia, educators may only contact with local students until they meet international students in BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing) programmes. A BIPA educator in Semarang, for example, expressed feeling unprepared to teach a class that included Thai, Korean, and Timorese students because each group had extremely distinct communication methods and classroom expectations.

Possible Solutions: To address this, training programs could include virtual exchanges or collaborative projects with educators from different countries. Even without physical movement, educators might gain intercultural exposure and prepare for diverse classrooms.

Stereotypes and Resistance to Change

Educators sometimes have implicit assumptions about students from specific backgrounds. For example, Asian students are frequently considered to be quiet and obedient, but Middle Eastern students are sometimes perceived as outspoken. Such preconceptions may have an impact on teaching strategies and classroom dynamics. Furthermore, certain educators may be resistant to CCC training, viewing it as a "extra" rather than a necessary component of language education.

Practical Example: In the BIPA class, the educator expected all Japanese students to be shy and passive. However, one student proved to be quite engaged and critical, challenging the educator's assumptions. The educator stated that such stereotypes influenced their first classroom method, which needed to be modified after a few sessions.

Possible Solution: Reflective techniques like journaling and guided discussions can help educators identify and challenge their own prejudices. By demonstrating success stories, such as how cultural awareness enhanced classroom management, educators may remove disagreement and demonstrate CCC's practical benefits.

Institutional and Resource Limitations

Not every institution has the resources needed to provide full CCC training. This includes a scarcity of different instructional materials, insufficient funding for international collaboration, and the absence of policies that prioritise intercultural learning.

Practical Example: A small private university offering a BIPA program frequently relies on locally created textbooks that only present Indonesian cultural perspectives and lack comparative content. This inhibits the educator's capacity to demonstrate how Indonesian culture interacts with others. The institution may also lack the resources to bring in guest lecturers or organise cultural immersion trips.

Possible Solution: Institutions may use open educational resources (OER) that are publicly available online and encourage educators to adapt them with multicultural content. Partnerships with embassies, cultural centres, or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can also provide low-cost cultural enrichment. At the policy level, school leaders need actively promote and reward educators who pursue CCC-related professional development.

Practical Ways to Overcome Challenges

Overall, the main approaches to addressing these challenges include:

1. Professional development involves regular training that promotes reflective practice and intercultural understanding.
2. International collaboration includes online and offline partnerships, cooperative projects, and exchange programs.
3. Leadership support: Policies and encouragement from institutions that prioritise CCC as essential for teaching excellence.

The diagram below provides a clear picture of the primary problems in building cross-cultural competency, as well as practical ways for addressing them.

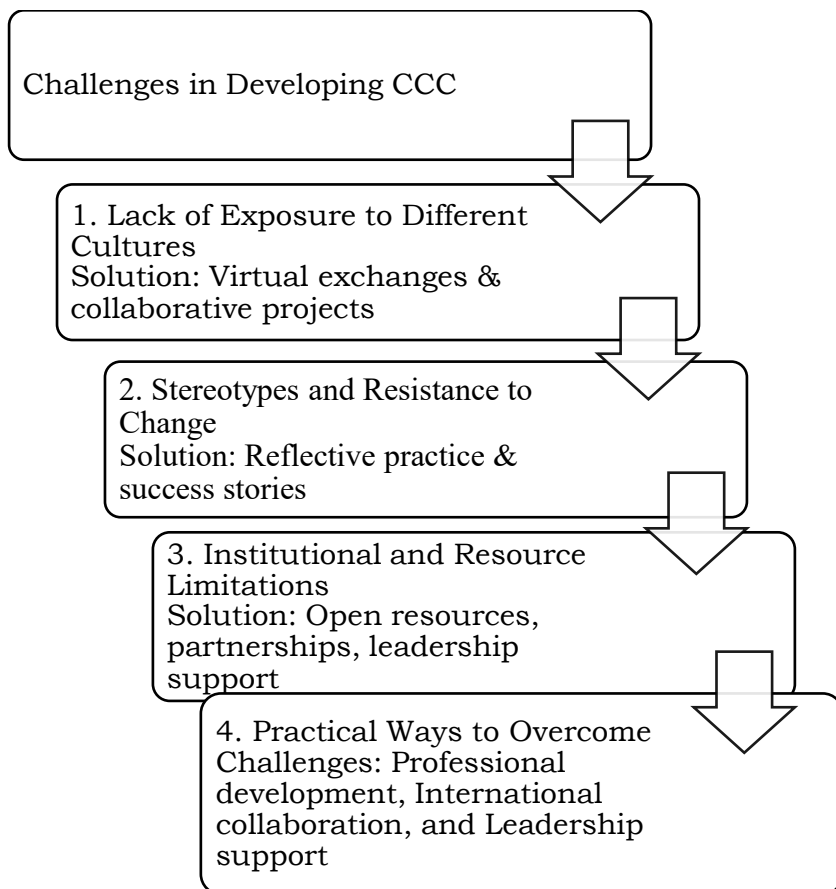


Diagram 1. Ways to Overcome Challenges in Cross Cultural Competency for Educators

This flow illustrates that, while the problems may differ in context, each can be addressed using practical and accessible solutions, ensuring that cross-cultural competency is still feasible for all educators.

By setting these issues in real-world classroom situations, such as those experienced by BIPA instructors, it is obvious that CCC is a lived necessity rather than an abstract concept. Addressing these

concerns with real solutions means that future educators are better equipped to create inclusive, courteous, and culturally diverse learning environments.

Examples And Applications

Theory alone is not enough to develop cross-cultural competence (CCC). Educators should see how it works in practice and how minor changes might make a classroom more inclusive. This section includes short case studies and practical ideas to help educators utilise CCC in real-world teaching scenarios.

Case Study 1: Integrating Cultural Content in BIPA Class

In a BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Learners) lesson, one educator observed that students from various nations responded differently to textbook examples. For example, when the course described Idul Fitri celebrations, Muslim students in Malaysia could easily relate, whereas students from Europe were puzzled because they were unfamiliar with the rituals. To address this, the educator asked students to explain how they celebrate key holidays in their respective nations. This converted the class into a cultural interchange, with students discussing the parallels and contrasts between Idul Fitri, Christmas, Songkran, and Thanksgiving. The end result was twofold: students improved their language skills while also developing respect for ethnic diversity.

Case Study 2: Training Program with Reflective Journals

During an educator training session, participants were encouraged to keep reflection journals after teaching multicultural classes. One participant described difficulty with students who kept mute throughout class discussions. At first, the educator felt they were uninterested. Later, after some reflection and peer discussion, the educator realised that some students came from cultures in which speaking up in class without being asked was considered disrespectful. The educator increased involvement by altering the

technique, such as employing small group discussions before whole-class sharing. This demonstrated the value of introspection in revealing hidden cultural dynamics.

Case Study 3: International Class with Mixed Backgrounds

Students from Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines attended an international undergraduate program where English was the medium of teaching. The lecturer noted that group assignments regularly ended in conflict: Indonesian students favoured peace and avoided confrontation, whereas Filipino students were more vocal and direct. To address this, the lecturer created a simple "cultural briefing" activity at the beginning of the semester. Each group talked about their preferred communication strategies, decision-making practices, and attitudes towards deadlines. By openly addressing these inequalities, students learnt to be more accepting and negotiate roles more effectively. The class not only met academic objectives but also created collaborative skills applicable to multicultural workplaces.

Practical Tips for Educators

1. Start with few cultural aspects. Use examples, texts, or visuals from many cultures in exercises to ensure that students feel represented.
2. Encourage cultural sharing. Allow students to give short presentations about their traditions, greetings, and daily routines.
3. Demonstrate flexibility in classroom interaction. A few students may favour planned activities, whereas others thrive on open discussions. A balanced approach is desirable.
4. Engage in reflective practice. Keep a short teaching notebook to record what tactics worked successfully and what cultural misunderstandings occurred.
5. Collaborate with peers. Share tales and teaching experiences with colleagues who work in different classrooms to broaden your viewpoint.

By taking these small but practical measures, educators may turn problems into opportunities for deeper learning. These examples show that cross-cultural competency is more than simply a theory; it is a skill that develops through daily practice, reflection, and openness.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural competence (CCC) is a never-ending process of growth and adaptation. CCC growth for educators in many circumstances needs ongoing introspection, openness, and a readiness to learn from all perspectives. It cannot be accomplished in a single training session; rather, it requires ongoing practice and incorporation into regular educational activities.

Educators, regardless of role, serve as intercultural facilitators. They do more than just teach content; they encourage dialogue, promote cross-cultural respect, and construct inclusive environments in which students feel valued. Educators assist students grasp information and skills while also engaging in meaningful cultural variety by displaying empathy, curiosity, and critical awareness.

As a result, incorporating CCC throughout educator training and professional development is crucial. It enables educators to prepare students for life in a global culture, where intercultural sensitivity is as vital as intellectual performance. When educational programs intentionally promote CCC, they help to develop students who can think critically, collaborate across cultures, and accept their duties as global citizens.

In the end, CCC improves the entire educational experience. It transforms classrooms, training facilities, and learning communities into areas of connection rather than division. Educators who embrace this skill have a greater impact than just knowledge transfer, contributing to the development of more tolerant, cooperative, and globally minded communities.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of every educator to take small but continual steps in developing cross-cultural competency. Each effort, whether via the use of

inclusive materials, the promotion of intercultural discussion, or the demonstration of openness in daily practice, contributes to a larger culture of understanding. The time to act is now: by incorporating CCC into our professional lives, we not only improve educational quality but also contribute to the development of a generation prepared to live, learn, and lead in a genuinely interconnected world.

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Author's Profile



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The author's interest in the field of English language teaching began in 2004, which led her to pursue formal education in English Literature Department Semarang State University (UNNES), and get her Bachelor's degree. Later, she successfully completed her Master's degree in Master's Program of English Language Education at UNNES, graduating in 2011. Her professional expertise lies in the areas of literature and English language teaching. To support her career as a committed educator, she actively engages in research aligned with her specializations. Several of her studies have been funded by internal grants and Ministry of Education, and focus on improving teaching practices and learner outcomes in Indonesian classrooms. In addition to her role as a researcher, she is also passionate about teaching Bahasa Indonesia for foreign learners (BIPA), writing literature, educational books and scholarly publications.

Through these contributions, she hopes to positively impact Indonesian education and inspire fellow educators. Her dedication to academic writing reflects her strong commitment to lifelong learning and her desire to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of education in Indonesia. Currently, she works as a lecturer at Universitas Semarang, where she continues to teach, conduct research, and share her knowledge with young generations.

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ENGLISH TEACHERS AS CULTURAL MEDIATORS

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Understanding The Role Of Teachers As Cultural Mediators

1. Definition of Teachers as Cultural Mediators in Language Education

In recent years, scholars have defined teachers as cultural mediators in language education as professionals who intentionally facilitate learners' navigation between their home (source) culture and the target culture associated with the language they teach. Michelle Kohler, drawing on Liddicoat and Scarino's work, conceptualizes mediation as "a process through which learners are supported in learning to make and interpret meanings in languages and cultural contexts that are new for them" (Kohler, 2015, as cited in Liddicoat, 2022). This view situates teachers not merely as transmitters of linguistic forms, but as brokers who build bridges between cultural frameworks. In this definition, mediation involves creating connections between familiar cultural grounding and unfamiliar cultural practices associated with English usage.

Extending this definition, bilingual teacher education scholarship (Mawhinney, 2024) recognizes that teachers positioned in bilingual contexts often act as both cultural and academic brokers guiding students

through the linguistic and cultural demands of schooling while valuing their linguistic backgrounds. These teachers must carefully negotiate cultural norms, expectations, values, and communication patterns, translating not only language but cultural meaning. Thus, cultural mediation encompasses interpretive, facilitative, and relational roles.

Additionally, Emma Chen (2025) in her study of bilingual Latina teachers describes cultural mediation as relational work involving translation of school culture for families, reframing deficit-based narratives, and advocating across institutional boundaries to make schooling culturally accessible. Her findings affirm that cultural mediators operate in multiple domains: classroom instruction, family-school communication, and institutional advocacy. They interpret, adapt, and broker cultural meanings for learners and their communities.

Conceptually then, the definition converges on the idea that cultural mediators in language education actively shape learning experiences by bridging cultural divides source culture (e.g., students' home norms) and target culture (e.g., Anglophone cultural norms). According to Kitani & Sakil (2025), integrating cultural frameworks into language education via culturally responsive teaching significantly enhances intercultural competence and learner identity formation. That implies teachers as mediators embed cultural content purposefully in curricula and pedagogy.

2. The Teacher's Role in Bridging Source and Target Cultures

Bridging source and target cultures is one of the most pivotal roles of the English teacher as a cultural mediator. The teacher must design learning experiences that not only introduce target-culture norms but also critically connect those norms to learners' existing cultural knowledge. As Kohler (2015), building on Liddicoat & Scarino (2013),

argues, the teacher facilitates students' contact with the linguistic and cultural worlds of others, enabling them to interpret and construct cross-cultural meanings. This requires pedagogical choices that juxtapose source and target culture elements within communicative activities, dialogue, reading and writing, reflection, and task-based learning.

Effective mediators use translanguaging or plurilingual approaches to support meaning-making across cultural boundaries. Although translanguaging research is developing, Garcia and Lagabaster's work suggests that teachers need openness to learners' multilingual repertoires and willingness to scaffold meaning across language. This scaffolding is cultural as well as linguistic: students draw on home culture frames to interpret target-culture content, and teachers guide them in comparative reflection. In doing so, teachers help learners build conceptual links between cultures.

Teachers also must address underlying power imbalances and challenge stereotypes. The "language diamond" intercultural model by Auger (2023) emphasizes that teachers should actively deconstruct ideological domination and stereotypes by leveraging learners' cultural experiences as assets, not deficits. A mediator, therefore, must critically select materials, frame discourse, and encourage student agency so that both source and target cultures are treated with respect and inquiry.

Beyond materials, the bridging role extends to identity formation and learner agency. Kitani & Sakil (2025) found that culturally responsive frameworks significantly affect learners' intercultural awareness and identity negotiation. This implies teachers must facilitate opportunities for students to reflect on identity, compare cultural norms, and interpret language use in context, helping them navigate dual cultural belonging.

Further, bridging is relational. Chen's reflections on bilingual Latina teachers (2025) highlight how mediating families' understanding of school culture, rewriting institutional expectations in culturally accessible ways, and advocating for students reflect teachers' broader role as bridge-builders between communities. Thus, bridging source and target cultures is performed in classroom instruction, curriculum design, and community engagement.

3. The Importance of Cultural Competency in English Teaching

Cultural competency is fundamental to the teacher's effectiveness as a cultural mediator. Cultural competence refers to a teacher's knowledge of, sensitivity to, and skill in working with diverse cultural norms, values, communication patterns, and identities. Research by Franco (2024) underscores the recognized importance of improving teachers' use of culturally responsive practice (CRP) to better support diverse learners in classroom settings. Without such competency, cultural mediation risks becoming superficial or reinforcing stereotypes.

Suarta et al. (2022) provide quantitative evidence that teachers' indigenous knowledge and cultural competencies positively influence student engagement and learning outcomes in Indonesian context. Their findings show that when teachers draw on students' cultural backgrounds authentically and respectfully, engagement increases, cognitive and social outcomes improve, and students feel more connected to learning. Cultural competence thus plays a direct instructional and affective role.

Moreover, teachers lacking cultural competency may inadvertently reinforce deficit perspectives. Chen (2025) critiques traditional deficit-based approaches to parent engagement and demonstrates how skilled cultural mediators instead adopt strength-based models, valuing families' cultural contributions and reframing institutional narratives in more equitable

ways. This shift requires cultural self-awareness, reflective practice, and an ability to interpret cultural norms dynamically.

On a curricular level, Kitani & Sakil (2025) show that integrating culturally responsive frameworks into English teaching curricula enhances students' intercultural competence and identity formation but only if teachers are trained to apply these frameworks thoughtfully. Cultural competence thus includes ongoing professional development and critical reflection, not just surface familiarity with cultural artifacts.

Strategies For Teachers To Act As Cultural Mediators

1. Utilizing Authentic Cultural Materials and Diverse Sources

Utilizing authentic cultural materials and diverse sources enables teachers to immerse learners in genuine representations of target-culture language use and sociocultural contexts. According to ACTFL guidelines, authentic materials texts, videos, social media, news, literature offer rich real-life examples of language in use and also convey cultural perspectives that cannot be replicated by contrived textbook examples (ACTFL, n.d.). Incorporating such materials supports not only linguistic input but also learners' exposure to cultural norms, values, and communicative practices, fostering more meaningful cross-cultural engagement. This aligns with the mediator's goal of bridging cultures by providing tangible, authentic windows into target-culture contexts.

Recent research recommends that English teachers widen their repertoire of authentic cultural sources to include local and global media, community voices, and student-generated content. Gashi (2021) found that in Kosovo, official curricula emphasize global citizenship and intercultural awareness, yet textbooks seldom deliver authentic cultural content,

resulting in missed opportunities for cultural mediation in classrooms. She argues that teachers must supplement textbooks creatively with videos, interviews, virtual exchanges, and stories from real life to bring target culture alive and allow students to contrast it with their own culture. In this way, authentic materials act as mediating artefacts that encourage learners to interpret, reflect, and compare.

In the Tunisian EFL context, Smaoui (2021) demonstrates how purposefully designed intercultural teaching materials employing techniques such as cultural awareness technique (CAT), critical incident technique (CIT), and cultural misunderstanding technique (CMT) can integrate authentic or near-authentic contexts into language courses. These techniques include real cultural scenarios, reflective prompts, and misunderstanding simulations, thereby deepening learners' cultural insight and communicative preparedness. Such designs exemplify how materials mediate cultural understanding by provoking cognitive and affective responses grounded in authenticity.

Furthermore, Kitani and Sakil (2025) highlight that culturally responsive educational materials must stem from a framework that integrates diverse cultural perspectives, local, global, heritage, and student identity embedded within pedagogy. Their systematic review concludes that using authentic texts, local narratives, intercultural testimonies, and multimedia sources significantly enhances learner engagement and intercultural competence, provided that teachers are trained to scaffold and contextualize these materials effectively. Authentic materials thus serve as essential tools for mediation, enabling additive comparisons between cultures.

2. Teaching Technique that Promotes Cultural Understanding

Teaching techniques that promote cultural understanding are central to the teacher's role as

cultural mediator. Such techniques include guided cultural discussions, critical incidents, role-plays, reflective tasks, intercultural dialogues, and interactive group projects. These approaches go beyond mere transmission of cultural facts; rather, they facilitate learners' investigation of cultural norms, practices, and values through active engagement and comparison.

For instance, Smaoui (2021) designed a course using three specific teaching techniques, cultural awareness technique (CAT), critical incident technique (CIT), and cultural misunderstanding technique (CMT) to deliberately provoke learners into reflecting on intercultural differences and responses. CAT invites students to observe and describe cultural behaviors. CIT presents real-life episodes of cultural conflict or surprise for discussion. CMT frames misunderstandings to prompt resolution strategies. Together, these interactive techniques serve as mediation tools that support learners in constructing intercultural insight and communication strategies.

Complementing these is the communicative language teaching (CLT) paradigm, which emphasizes the use of authentic communication and interaction as both means and goals of language instruction. CLT encourages communicative tasks centered around information exchange, opinion sharing, and discussion on cultural topics, using authentic texts and personal experiences to form the basis of interaction. This approach aligns with cultural mediation, as teachers act as facilitators guiding discussions that reveal cultural assumptions and encourage comparative interpretation.

A systematic review of recent teaching methods (Mohd Noor, 2025) highlights that culturally responsive pedagogy combined with digital tools and student-centered interactive techniques significantly enhances intercultural engagement and learning outcomes. Project-based learning, cooperative tasks, role-plays, and critical reflection tasks allow students

to embody cultural roles, negotiate meaning, and co-construct intercultural understanding, all under the teacher's mediation framework.

3. Integrating Local and International Cultures into Lessons

Integrating local and international cultures into lessons equips learners with a comparative perspective and fosters intercultural competence. When teachers thread students' home culture experiences together with global cultural practices through readings, discussions, comparative projects, they enable learners to see their own culture in a broader context and to understand target cultures more deeply. This synthesis reinforces identity while broadening perspective.

Kitani and Sakil's (2025) systematic review underscores the educational value of combining local cultural narratives with international cultural frameworks in language curricula. They argue that learners benefit most when curriculum materials and pedagogical approaches draw on learners' cultural knowledge and relate it to new cultural perspectives in ways that honor sensitivities and avoid stereotypes. Such global integration enriches learner identity formation, motivation, and intercultural awareness.

In Kosovo, Gashi (2021) observed that while curriculum goals promote global citizenship, actual textbooks rarely integrate local culture nor prompt comparative reflection. She recommends that teachers actively supplement lessons with local cultural stories, community traditions, and student-family narratives, juxtaposed with international cultural examples. This enables learners to analyze similarities and differences, cultivating cultural awareness through comparative mediation.

Similarly, Smaoui's (2021) intercultural curriculum design includes both local cultural scenarios and target cultural incidents, mediated through techniques inviting critical reflection and discussion. Learners respond to scenarios rooted in their own cultural context and compare them to international contexts, exploring values, communication norms, and behavior. This fosters deeper intercultural insight while anchoring learning in students' lived cultural history.

The Impact Of Culturally Mediated Teaching On Students

1. Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Sensitivity

Culturally mediated teaching significantly enhances students' cultural awareness by deliberately embedding cultural knowledge, norms, and values in language instruction. A systematic review of cross-cultural communicative competence (ICC) in EFL teaching in China found that when teachers intentionally integrate intercultural activities and reflection into university English courses, students develop deeper awareness about cultural differences, global challenges, and communication norms in diverse contexts (Zhou et al., 2024). This kind of pedagogical design invites learners to move beyond superficial exposure to more profound understanding of cultural dynamics and their own position relative to them.

Embedding intercultural dialogues within curriculum also fosters intercultural sensitivity by encouraging students to empathize with, interpret, and respond to diverse perspectives. In research by You (2025), implementing structured intercultural dialogues in classroom tasks led to heightened student engagement with cultural diversity and greater sensitivity to cultural nuances (You, 2025). Students exposed to such mediated learning experiences became more attentive to how cultural background shapes communication styles, politeness norms, and assumptions about identity.

Furthermore, cross-cultural strategies in high school English teaching applied in a Sino-American comparative context demonstrated that students in classes using these mediated approaches reported improved cultural awareness and satisfaction, alongside superior performance in speaking and listening tasks (Zhao, 2025). This underscores that when teachers act as cultural mediators, designing lessons that compare and contrast cultural norms, learners perceive these experiences not only cognitively valuable but emotionally motivating.

In addition, the theoretical literature emphasizes that ICC includes multiple dimensions, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, and culturally mediated teaching addresses all of them. Theeuwes et al. (2025) explored teachers' intercultural competence in simulated multicultural scenarios and highlighted that teachers who model sensitivity and responsiveness support the development of similar attitudes among students. As teachers mediate cultural complexities, students internalize attitudes of openness and respect.

2. Developing Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

When teachers incorporate cultural mediation into instruction, students not only learn language but also acquire cross-cultural communication competence. A study conducted in Chinese universities by Li (2024) examined how integrating cultural introduction into English teaching presenting traditional Chinese heritage alongside Western festivals and customs enhanced students' cross-cultural communication skills while improving their comprehension and recognition of English-speaking cultures. This dual cultural framing helps learners develop both pragmatic language skills and cultural context interpretation.

In a broader literature synthesis of ICC in higher education, Zhou et al. (2024) conclude that integrating ICC into curricula fosters learners' ability

to negotiate meaning across cultures, adjust communication styles appropriately, and interpret both verbal and non-verbal signals core components of cross-cultural communication competence. Students exposed to structured intercultural activities learn to listen actively, clarify misunderstandings, and adapt to differing communicative norms in a culturally sensitive manner.

High school contexts show similar outcomes. Zhao's (2025) experimental study comparing traditional methods versus cross-cultural communication strategies (e.g., cultural comparison teaching, multimedia, and interactive discussion) found that the experimental cohort significantly improved in speaking and listening, and reported greater ability to communicate across cultural contexts with confidence (Zhao, 2025). Thus, students actively develop practical communication skills anchored in cultural understanding.

Research on AI-enhanced teaching models also supports this impact: integrating AI simulations of real intercultural scenarios helps students practice language and cross-cultural responses in safe virtual environments, thereby accelerating the development of adaptability, non-verbal awareness, and pragmatic competence (Li & Wang, 2025; Hou et al., 2023). These mediated tools combine cultural content and communication practice to promote skill mastery.

3. Increasing Motivation to Learn English through Cultural Understanding

Cultural mediation also raises students' motivation to learn English by linking language study with meaningful cultural engagement. Anyichie et al. (2023) investigated culturally diverse learners in Western Canada and found that when learning tasks were culturally relevant and embedded within students' identities and backgrounds, engagement and intrinsic motivation substantially increased

(Anyichie et al., 2023). In culturally mediated classrooms where tasks reflect students' culture or invite cultural exploration, motivation is not extrinsically imposed but internally driven.

Linking local cultural knowledge with global English themes enables learners to see value in English beyond the classroom. In Li's (2024) study, integrating Chinese cultural heritage alongside Western cultural practices in English lessons not only enhanced communication skills but also motivated students to learn English to better understand and express their culture in international contexts. When students perceive language as a tool for cultural connection, motivation rises naturally.

Similarly, in high school settings Zhao (2025) found that students in the cross-cultural strategy group reported higher satisfaction with lessons and greater willingness to participate, explaining that comparative cultural discussions made learning more relatable and interesting (Zhao, 2025). The motivating effect came from feeling that English class was about cultural dialogue, not just linguistic drills.

The positive effect of culturally mediated learning on motivation is supported by theoretical frameworks of culturally responsive pedagogy. Abdalla (2024) emphasizes that when teachers integrate students' cultural experiences into instruction, they strengthen students' sense of belonging, relevance, and self-efficacy, all key drivers of motivation (Abdalla, 2024). Learners who feel seen culturally are more invested academically.

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CROSS CULTURAL ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Introduction

In the era of globalization and the rapid development of digital technology, various aspects of life have certainly undergone significant changes, including in terms of mastering foreign languages. We can see that language learning today not only emphasizes linguistic aspects but also stresses the importance of understanding the cultural context, values, and social norms of native speakers of the language. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have become effective tools in bridging this need. Through these media, cross-cultural communication can occur in real-time, allowing for global cooperation, exchange of ideas, and intercultural learning experiences. However, the use of digital media in this context also poses a number of challenges, such as low digital literacy, potential stereotyping, and the risk of cultural misunderstanding. Therefore, a more critical pedagogical approach, strengthening digital literacy, and appropriate management strategies are needed so that social media can be optimally utilized in supporting cross-cultural learning (Setiawan, 2025).

This change not only impacts the learning tools but also the paradigm that underpins the learning process itself. Cross-cultural learning involves a shift from a traditional paradigm to a digital paradigm that is more open and collaborative. Previously, learning took place passively, limited to the teacher, textbooks, or others. But now, learning becomes more dynamic, interactive, and active through digital technology, cross-cultural interaction, authentic practice, and creating one's own content as part of learning (Harras, 2025). Digital media is not just a tool for teaching; it is also a learning environment that allows students to interact with other students in the real world, practice authentically, and even produce original content for their classes. This transition also demands the development of new skills such as media literacy, critical thinking, and sensitivity to diverse values and intercultural norms (Setiawan, 2025). Thus, digitization is not only changing the medium of education but also the way people interact, learn, and develop.

While this development brings many benefits, its implementation is also not free from challenges. The use of social media in education also demands special attention to digital literacy, ethical issues, and the potential for a better understanding of the world. Learners need to be equipped with critical thinking skills, understand context and socio-culture, and build empathy in the face of diversity. Therefore, effective teaching methods, teacher preparedness, and digital literacy integration are crucial in creating meaningful and sustainable cross-cultural learning through social media.

Basic Concepts: Social Media In English Language Learning

Social media is an alternative education platform that allows teachers and students to communicate, review materials, discuss, and create a more engaging and fun learning community. Through informal yet collaborative methods, social media facilitates everyday communication, project-based learning, and digital literacy. In general, social media is an internet-based

communication tool that allows users to communicate, collaborate, and exchange various types of information, such as text, images, videos, and more, interactively. Social media is often considered a communication tool that allows its users to be both producers and consumers (Qadir & Ramli, 2024).

As digital technology develops, the use of social media in English language learning is becoming increasingly relevant. The most popular media platforms are YouTube, which provides educational videos and vlogs for learning; TikTok, which offers entertaining and educational content; Instagram, which provides educational reels and feeds; Threads and X (Twitter), which are used for microblogging and discussion forums; while Facebook Groups and Discord serve as learning communities and text-based discussion forums. Through these platforms, students can access materials, interact with native speakers, and gain a more contextualized learning experience.

More than just a tool, social media has become an informal, open, and participatory learning environment. In the context of English language teaching, social media allows students to learn outside the traditional classroom environment through independent practice, collaboration with other students, and exposure to different cultures and languages. In line with that Frizka et al., (2023) suggests that platforms like TikTok are effective informal learning resources through self-directed learning, incidental learning, and social learning, which are relevant and contextualized for students.

One of the main advantages of social media in language learning is its ability to provide authentic content in real-time, which can improve writing skills, increase language fluency, and facilitate context understanding. In addition, social media allows for the silent exchange of religious beliefs, which is crucial for developing interfaith communication skills (Byram, 1997). Not only do students learn through language materials, but also through expressions, habits, and religious beliefs shown in daily interactions. Social media also inhibits students'

creativity and inventiveness as they not only consume content, but also create and share it, which reinforces their position as active language users. The flexibility of time and space has made social media an inclusive and user-friendly learning tool, especially for the digital native generation.

In closing, it is important to understand that the structure, purpose, and control of social media are very different from formal learning media. Whereas textbooks, LMS (Learning Management System) modules, instructional videos, and other formal educational materials are systematically organized to support curriculum objectives and are usually supervised by educators or educational institutions. Then social media offers a dynamic, flexible, and relaxed environment where students can interact, discover content, and acquire knowledge. Because of these characteristics, social media can enrich the formal learning process by creating learning experiences that are more contextual, relevant, and connected to students' daily lives. However, without adequate pedagogical guidance, learning through social media can lead to linguistic and cultural misunderstandings. Therefore, the role of teachers remains important in directing and guiding the use of social media so that its potential can be maximized responsibly and effectively.

Cross-Cultural Understanding In A Global Context

Cross-cultural communication in the context of language education refers to the process of understanding, interacting, and communicating between individuals from different backgrounds to interact. Cross-cultural understanding is not just a recurring theme in English language teaching; it is an essential component of language learning. As stated by Byram, (1997) Language learners should not only be able to understand the language linguistically, but should also have intercultural communication skills that enable them to understand the norms, values, and social norms of both native and non-native people. The ideal language learning process

reinforces the values of the school so that students not only "speak" the target language, but also "think and feel" within the appropriate school framework.

As globalization and international mobility increase, intercultural competence will become increasingly important in English language teaching. Students need to understand how language is used contextually in social interactions relevant to the culture in question, not just how the grammatical structure or vocabulary of the language is. Bernal Pinzón, (2020) It is mentioned that teaching materials based on traditional foods, national symbols, or local symbols can enhance students' understanding of other religions and even improve their perception of their own religion. World-integrating teaching methods, such as using virtual reality, can increase motivation, openness, cross-cultural awareness, and communication skills. However, integrating intercultural communication competence (ICC) also requires a comprehensive curriculum to overcome the challenges of teaching materials and time.

In the 21st century, language learning cannot be separated from the global context that constantly surrounds students' lives in the digital space where they interact with national, religious, and ideological elements. Consequently, an understanding of religion is essential in developing flexible, critical, and empathetic individuals. According to (Jaya et al., 2023) Modern education must be responsive and relevant, not only in terms of technical knowledge and expertise, but also in understanding the principles and perspectives that facilitate intercultural communication. English language teaching should therefore encourage students to become proficient in the language while also developing social and cultural skills in line with global education goals and the five principles of the Indonesian state teacher profile.

As a concrete example, in Western cultures, eyes are often considered a symbol of confidence and courage, but in Asian cultures, such as Indonesia, eyes are often considered impolite, especially when interacting with older or more experienced people. Qualitative research in

exchange programs shows that norms such as eye and personal rules differ significantly between Indonesian and American cultures, causing misunderstandings in social interactions (Tanasy et al., 2024). With this basic understanding, Indonesian students can communicate in English contexts, even if their language skills are not perfect.

Social Media Integration And Cross-Cultural English Learning

The integration of social media in English language teaching opens up great opportunities to integrate language teaching with cross-cultural teaching. Social media, especially visual and video-based platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, provide multimodal authentic content (images, text, videos, user comments) that promote learning through various means, including language, daily activities, and non-formal communication styles. As authentic input, social media content can improve language skills, illustrate the true meaning of the world, and facilitate exposure to various global English dialects and cultural practices from different countries (Lee, 2023).

Pedagogical Benefits of Social Media Integration for Cross-Cultural Learning

Access to diverse and authentic cultural inputs.	Through postings, videos, comments, and discussion boards, students can learn examples of language usage in specific contexts of popular culture that occasionally appear in traditional textbooks. This exposure helps students develop their practical understanding (how to deal with situations in real life) and sensitivity to differences in everyday life. (Yuna et al., 2022).
Informal and continuous learning.	Platforms like TikTok and Instagram encourage micro-learning, or micro-learning, which can be accessed at any time; this activity enhances

	extracurricular learning, which enhances formal education and promotes linguistic proficiency outside of the classroom. The study's findings indicate that these platforms' affordances are beneficial for informal and collaborative language learning (Lee, 2023).
Cross-cultural competency development	Interaction with international users, whether through discussion boards, teamwork, or virtual exchange programs, provides opportunities for intercultural practice, including interpretation, adaptation, evaluation, and observation. Engaging in collaborative activities through social media or virtual meetings is effective in fostering cultural and linguistic reflection (Heymans et al., 2024).

Teaching Strategies: How to Pedagogically Integrate Social Media

Project-based design.	task	Teachers can help students create a micro-ethnography by asking them to identify a person or influencer from another culture, analyze the content (language, gestures, and values), and present their findings critically. Activities like this combine cultural analysis with language proficiency (reading, speaking, and viewing). As part of the learners-as-ethnographers (LAE) approach, students use social media as an academic research tool to develop their ability to critically analyze linguistic and cultural norms (Berti, 2020).
Micro-tasks multimodal.		Ask students to create a bilingual translated text, a short video, or a discussion-worthy commentary on how humor, tone, or rhetorical

	figures may differ from one another in other cultures. This exercise helps students develop their practical knowledge. As explained by (Heymans et al., 2024) integrating humor into language learning encourages multimodal engagement and deepens cultural understanding, thus enhancing learners' communicative competence in intercultural contexts.
Facilitated virtual exchange (telecollaboration).	A virtual exchange model integrating collaborative tasks and reflection was shown to significantly improve participants' intercultural communication (ICC) skills. According to a recent study by Zhang et al., (2025) in a virtual exchange project between U.S. and Chinese college students, boldly cooperating while integrating daily and reflective components not only improved work efficiency among daily employees but also significantly enhanced ICC for each participant.
Critical learning of social media literacy.	It is important for educators to introduce media literacy to students so that they can improve their ability to assess the credibility of information sources, understand accurate representations of the world, and analyze and explain stereotypes and biases held by users. Critical media literacy teaches students not only to passively accept information, but also to question any biases they may have. They then conduct additional research to consider different points of view and determine the credibility of

	information in greater depth (Probst, n.d.).
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Here are Some Examples of Practical and short activities:

1. **Instagram Case Study (90 minutes):** Students select three posts each from users of other countries: analysis of vocabulary, language figures, nonverbal gestures in the videos; presentation of findings; classic discussion of differences in cultural interpretation.
2. **TikTok Response Task (asinkron):** Students create a 60-second video in which they respond to local customs, such as traditional food preparation, in an easy-to-follow manner. They then have to provide a pragmatist comment (what is polite/rude?).
3. **Virtual Pen-Pal Project (1 month):** students exchanged voice notes/emails with international partners, and the reflection task was directed at comparing communication habits and assessing intercultural communication competence (ICC) rubrics.

Challenges and Mitigations

1. **Risk of disinformation and stereotyping.** UGC (user-generated content) has the potential to be highly generalized. Mitigating factors include critical analysis guidelines, source validation, and facilitation of reflective discussions.
2. **Student privacy and safety.** Before engaging in public interactions, rules for teacher use and supervision (personal accounts, moderated exchanges) should be established.
3. **Digital access gap.** Not all students have a device or quota. Solution: combine online and offline assignments and use lightweight content (text, images) that does not use data.

4. **Teacher competency needs.** Teachers need micro-training in social media design tasks and cross-cultural moderation. Institutional support should be focused on training and resources.

Recommendations for Curriculum Implementation

1. Integrate ICC into lesson plans, with clear indicators such as the ability to interpret cultural expressions, adjust registers, and reflect on values.
2. Use ICC assessment rubrics, observations, and written reflections to assess cultural aspects, not just linguistic accuracy.
3. Design a virtual exchange activity, with stages of orientation, task collaboration, and structured debriefing/reflection sessions.
4. Provide a short media literacy module as part of the unit to improve students' ability to sort out culturally valid information.

Integrating social media into English language teaching involves the use of interactive, collaborative, ICC, virtual exchange, and authentic input methods. It combines critical pedagogy, private education, teacher leadership, and cultural analysis.

Intercultural Competence Through Interaction On Social Media

Intercultural competence, or intercultural competence, is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. The model most often used in language education is that of the (Byram, 1997). Byram's model highlights five key dimensions: an attitude of openness and curiosity, understanding of oneself and the target, ability to understand and relate to religious phenomena, ability to understand and interact with new situations, and critical thinking regarding religious beliefs.

To instill intercultural competence in the English classroom, social media can be used creatively through various activities (Zhu, 2025). Students can create vlogs comparing local and national holidays in English, such as how to handle social situations and customs, teaching cycling skills, and cultural etiquette. Other activities include comparing words or phrases via Instagram or TikTok to improve linguistic knowledge. Discussions or debates with international students on platforms like Reddit or Discord also help them understand how different languages are used in their original cultural contexts. In this way, students become educators who can bridge differences. Positive traits that emerge include empathy, openness, and improved religious literacy (Zhu, 2025).

The integration of social media into cross-cultural education has a positive impact on students' social and personal development. Students become more empathetic toward cultures, sensitive to differences, and open to various global perspectives, even reducing stereotypes about cultures. They also master digital literacy by understanding online communication practices and their symbols. Through social media, students learn language not only as a system but also as an enjoyable social practice. As a result, social media serves as a strategic tool to help students develop their skills in a global context.

The five dimensions of intercultural competence according to Byram, (1997):

Dimensions	Description
Attitudes	Curiosity, openness, and readiness to interact with other cultures
Knowledge	Understanding of one's own culture and the target culture
Skills of interpreting and relating	Ability to critically compare and evaluate cultural phenomena
Skills of discovery and interaction	Ability to adapt and communicate in new situations
Critical cultural awareness	Ability to reflectively evaluate cultural practices, values, and beliefs

Student Engagement In Cross-Cultural Learning Through Social Media

Students are not just consumers of information in today's digital age; they also play an active role in creating global understanding through risk-taking interactions. Students can produce content that explores local and foreign cultures using social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, or podcasts. Examples include vlogs about local events, reaction videos about global events, or audio-visual conversations about national issues. Through these activities, students not only understand language in its functional sense but also the values, social norms, and expressions found in other languages.

These interactions enhance their understanding of everyday life and foster patience and appreciation from a global perspective. However, students' participation in digital spaces also has the potential for negative impacts, such as misunderstandings in communication between individuals, stereotyping, or bias in digital media due to incomplete or poorly understood information. Therefore, educational institutions must implement teaching models that pedagogically integrate social media and introduce students to digital literacy and electronic communication. The assistance of teachers or lecturers is essential so that the learning process is not only technology-based, but also cognitive and reflective.

Learning Practices: Strategies For Using Social Media For Cross-Cultural English Learning

Strategy 1: Learning Through Reaction Videos

One creative approach to teaching social media-based English is through making cross-cultural reaction videos. In this strategy, students are asked to present content from other cultures, such as popular TikTok videos, vlogs about daily life, or movie trailers, and then they discuss their reactions in English. Not only does it improve writing skills, but it also helps students understand how to express their culture through gestures, communication styles, and social norms that are different from their own

culture. By critically analyzing these differences, students learn that language cannot be separated from religion and is influenced by deeper aspects of religion (Byram, 1997).

Strategy 2: Virtual Cultural Day as a Global Exchange Medium

Teachers can design Virtual Culture Day activities that encourage tacit interaction between students from different countries. Students use platforms like Zoom or Google Meet to present elements of local culture, such as traditional food, regional cuisine, or group dynamics. This activity is both a cross-border cultural exchange and an authentic space to practice English. These two areas of interaction help people understand each other better and develop their confidence in a global forum. Teachers can help by providing presentation guidelines, cross-cultural guides, and reflective journals to ensure the learning process runs smoothly (O'Dowd, 2018).

Strategy 3: Analyze Public Figure Accounts as a Cultural Representation Study

The third strategy helps researchers analyze the social media accounts of public figures from different cultural backgrounds. Students have active accounts on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, whether selective, active, or educational, and they share how they develop cultural narratives through visual content, language, and bold interactions. This activity encourages students to analyze how the religious world is represented and critically evaluate stereotypes or biases in digital media. In the context of English language teaching, students learn multimodal literacy skills that also help them understand contemporary culture.

Strategy 4: Digital Journal and Reflective Vlog for Cultural Internalization

One important component of cross-cultural teaching is reflection. Teachers can encourage students to write digital journals or create reflective vlogs after participating in cross-cultural interactions on social

media. For example, after discussing with students from other countries or discussing unfamiliar phenomena on TikTok, students evaluate their understanding and response to the issues mentioned. This helps them develop self-awareness, identify cultural values that may be wrong or incorrect, and develop more creative viewing techniques. As a result, education is not only cognitively stimulating but also effective and transformative.

Digital Literacy and Ethics in Intercultural Learning

In the context of social media-based education, digital literacy and ethics cannot be adequately addressed. Teachers have a crucial role in helping students understand the importance of reading information, understanding the context of digital content, and communicating calmly and politely. Students must understand private property rights, recognize visual plagiarism, and analyze social media bias algorithms that can subtly influence perceptions of the world. By integrating digital technology into the curriculum, students can become not only proficient language learners but also enthusiastic global citizens using technology to enhance intercultural understanding.

Challenges And Solutions

Challenges of Using Social Media in Cross-Cultural Learning

1. Social media has great potential for cross-cultural education, but its use also has complex drawbacks.
2. A key issue is cultural misunderstanding, or cultural interpretation, where students and teachers may inadvertently use religious symbols, expressions, or beliefs in digital content due to context bias and misunderstanding.
3. Short-form video content often leads to misunderstandings as it only briefly discusses the realities of the world without providing explanations.
4. Stereotypes and biases that are not addressed by social media are also a problem, as the

representations of religion that appear in viral content sometimes trivialize the complexity of religion. As facilitators of cross-cultural education, teachers also experience cultural misunderstandings.

5. Teachers also tend to have biases or errors when analyzing the cross-cultural practices they use in the classroom.

Recommended Solution and Approach

Solutions and Approaches	Detail
Implementing digital and cultural literacy	- Read content critically - Understand cultural background - Assess the authenticity of information
Provide teacher assistance	- Provide a discussion forum to discuss viral content - Learning the meaning of cultural symbols - Avoiding over-generalization
Emphasizes critical cultural awareness	- Reflectively evaluate cultural values - Not adopting raw cultural content
Purpose of Approach	Utilizing social media as a rich learning tool without losing cultural sensitivity

Conclusion And Recommendations

Social media has made English language teaching more contextual, authentic, and cross-cultural. For example, digital platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram allow students to learn about the world in a safe environment, interact with real people, and compare different points of view in a fun way. Based on strong pedagogical principles, social media is not only a source of information but also a source of reflection that can help develop students' language skills.

As a recommendation, teachers are advised to use social media platforms relevant to students' lives through tasks that integrate digital literacy and cultural reflection. Students should be encouraged to investigate other cultures with empathy and critical thinking to avoid false information and stereotypes. Further research and curriculum development are needed to develop social media-based learning strategies that balance language learning objectives with cultural norms, so that social media can serve as an inclusive, reflective, and global language learning tool.

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