

# The Role Of Special Courses Based On Communicative Tasks In The Development Of Intercultural Competence Of Students In Higher Education

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this systematic study is to evaluate the role of communicative tasks in increasing intercultural competence among higher education students. Intercultural competence is commonly seen as an essential talent in today's globalised society, allowing individuals to effectively engage and negotiate diverse cultural situations. This study seeks to identify and synthesise existing research on the impact of communicative tasks on the development of intercultural competence, shedding light on effective pedagogical practises that promote intercultural learning in higher education settings. The essay gave theoretical basis on ICC (Intercultural Communicative Competence) and assesses four articles chosen for their topical relevance. The papers were analysed, compared, and contrasted to discover commonalities and discrepancies.

**Keywords:** Communication, intercultural competence, research, interactive methods, systematic analysis, meta-analysis.

**1. Introduction:** In an increasingly connected world, the capacity to navigate and communicate successfully across cultural barriers has become a critical talent for individuals in a variety of fields, including higher education. As students attend higher education institutions, they are exposed to a variety of cultures and ideas, which presents both possibilities and problems for their intercultural growth. In response to this demand, educators and academics have emphasised on the significance of communicative activities in developing students' intercultural competence.

Intercultural competency entails not just learning about different cultures but also developing abilities to participate in meaningful and respectful dialogue with people from various cultural backgrounds (Deardorff, 2015). Higher education institutions recognise the need of developing intercultural competency in their students because it prepares them for a globalised workforce and fosters a more inclusive society. Group presentations, role-plays, and joint projects provide significant chances for students to participate in multicultural exchanges and improve their

communication skills. Students may explore diverse cultural viewpoints, question their preconceived assumptions, and get a better knowledge of cultural diversity by participating in these projects. Furthermore, communicative challenges teach students to negotiate meaning, handle disagreements, and change communication tactics to account for cultural variations.

This paragraph firstly aims to provide the information on theoretical framework of topic, following by background and rationale along with research objectives. Lastly, it will explain the structure of the review.

## 1.1 Theoretical backgrounds of intercultural competence.

There were some debates on the definition of Intercultural Competence. However, based on thorough research of Deardorff (2015), The concept from Byram (1997) was deemed the most appropriate, emphasising knowledge, talents, and respect for others' ideas. The following elements are included in Byram's definition of intercultural competence:

knowledge of others and self, skills for interpretation and relation, skills for discovery and interaction, valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviours, relativizing oneself, and the importance of linguistic competence (Byram, 1997). This broad definition emphasises the diverse character of intercultural competence, emphasising the understanding, abilities, and attitudes required for effective intercultural communication and engagement. As the results of the work of Deardorff (2015) shows, Intercultural competency was defined differently by different intercultural researchers. The most popular definition emphasised successful communication as a result of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Personal characteristics, cultural awareness, adaptive qualities, and cultural understanding were highlighted by scholars. Analysing, connecting, and cognitive flexibility were all key. There was agreement on the need of many components and comprehending others' worldviews. These data demonstrate different viewpoints on intercultural competency. Communication, behaviour, personal characteristics, and cultural knowledge were all highlighted in the definitions.

The aspects of intercultural communicative competence have been defined by the researchers in the context of its development. According to Sue et al. (2022), intercultural communication ability is divided into three major areas. To begin, the attitudes/views component is acknowledging one's own cultural indoctrination and how it affects personal beliefs, values, and attitudes towards a culturally diverse community. Second, the knowledge component comprises awareness and knowledge of people's and groups' worldviews and cultural backgrounds from many civilizations. Finally, the skills component includes the capacity to recognise and employ culturally relevant intervention techniques while working with various socioeconomic groups.

Similarly, Intercultural competence, according to Hofstede and McCrae (2004), may be developed through three sub-components: awareness, knowledge, and skills. These sub-components are seen as necessary for the development of intercultural competence. Understanding diverse cultures' cultural norms, values, beliefs, and communication methods is referred to as knowledge. The practical talents required to effectively manage intercultural relationships, such as changing communication styles and resolving disagreements, are referred to as skills. In contrast, awareness refers to being aware of one's own cultural biases and recognising the effect of culture on behaviour and perceptions. While models of intercultural competence generally emphasise knowledge and abilities, the inclusion of awareness and

attitudes may vary and is not always deemed required. On the other hand, Koester and Lustig (2015) regard intercultural communication skills as a social judgement comparable to how "face" is interpreted in interpersonal interactions. Competence is more than just being able to accomplish certain acts or behaviours; it is also the image that others have of you. It is a conclusion drawn by others based on your motives, expertise, and talents. Competence is measured based on how well and efficiently you communicate in various situations, and it may also be related to the happiness of individuals concerned. In other words, successful intercultural communication is about how people view you based on your talents and the positive results you create in such relationships, not just what you do.

Scholars in the subject have presented numerous models of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC). Further, some of these models will be discussed.

Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a comprehensive framework that outlines the key components necessary for effective intercultural communication. It emphasizes the importance of knowledge about one's own culture and the target culture, practical skills for navigating cultural differences, attitudes of open-mindedness and respect, self-awareness and awareness of cultural dynamics, and critical cultural awareness to challenge stereotypes and discrimination (Byram, 2020). By integrating these components, educators and learners can foster intercultural understanding and competence, enabling individuals to communicate effectively and appropriately in diverse cultural contexts. Another model was presented by Deardorff (2015). While both Byram's and Deardorff's ICC models recognise the relevance of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, their emphasis and framing of the components within the wider idea of intercultural competence differ. In establishing international competence, Deardorff's approach emphasises the interdependence of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness. Byram's model emphasises the communicative side of intercultural competence, emphasising the capacity to participate in successful intercultural dialogue. Another concept, The Developmental model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) developed by Chen and Starosta (1996) builds on Milton Bennett's concept by focusing on intergroup dynamics and the social environment of intercultural encounters (Bennett, 1998). Denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration are the six stages of the DMIS. This model distinguishes itself from others by recognising the significance of power systems and emphasising the dynamic nature of intercultural competence

development. It provides useful information for intercultural training and education programmes. The current work is developed based on the Byram's ICC model, emphasising the communicational basic of ICC.

This paragraph discussed different views on ICC and its components. Following part will present Rationale of this work.

## **1.2 Background and Rationale**

Intercultural competency has become a critical talent for individuals to successfully navigate multiple cultural situations in today's fast globalising society. As higher education institutions increasingly embrace internationalisation and diversity, it is critical to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to interact effectively with people from many cultural backgrounds. Intercultural competency allows students to cross cultural borders, form meaningful connections, and communicate in a courteous and inclusive manner. Communicative activities have gained popularity as instructional methods for developing intercultural competency among students in higher education. These projects allow students to participate in dynamic and real conversation, encouraging intercultural learning and the acquisition of skills necessary for effective intercultural interactions.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The aim of this systematic literature review is to explore and analyze the role of communicative tasks in the development of intercultural competence among students in higher education. By conducting a comprehensive review of existing research, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of different types of communicative tasks on intercultural competence?
2. What factors influence the effectiveness of communicative tasks in fostering intercultural competence?

## **1.4 Scope and Significance**

This comprehensive literature review investigates the role of communicative tasks in the development of intercultural competence among higher education students. Discussions, debates, simulations, role-plays, case studies, and collaborative projects are among the communication activities included in the review. It contains research undertaken in a variety of higher education fields and cultural settings. This study intends to add to the knowledge of successful educational techniques for building intercultural competence in higher education by synthesising and analysing current research.

This study's findings have various ramifications for

educational practise and policy. They can provide curriculum designers and instructors at higher education institutions with information regarding the design and implementation of communicative tasks to improve students' intercultural competence. Additionally, the review can guide policymakers in developing policies and initiatives that promote intercultural competence development in higher education settings.

## **1.5 Structure of the Review**

This systematic literature review is divided into chapters to give a thorough examination of the function of communicative tasks in the development of intercultural competence among higher education students. The next chapters will feature a review of important theoretical frameworks, an evaluation of the research methodology used in the chosen studies, a synthesis of the major findings, a discussion of the consequences, and recommendations for future study. The review finishes with an overview of the key results and their implications for educational practise and policy.

In summary, this chapter has provided an introduction to the systematic literature review, highlighting the significance of intercultural competence development in higher education and the potential role of communicative tasks in achieving this goal. The subsequent chapters will delve into a comprehensive analysis of the existing research, ultimately contributing to the understanding and enhancement of intercultural competence among students in higher education.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

According to Pati and Lorusso (2018) a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a research approach for gathering, identifying, and critically analysing available research studies. The purpose is to analyse crucial aspects of existing understanding concerning research problems in order to identify opportunities for additional investigation (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022). The current systematic literature review employed a structured methodology to explore and analyze the role of communicative tasks in the development of intercultural competence among students in higher education. Overall, 5 research articles were chosen to be analysed by the relevancy of the topic. The articles were categorized by the research design and the findings were presented based on the research questions. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

What are the effects of different types of communicative tasks on specific dimensions of intercultural competence?

What factors influence the effectiveness of communicative tasks in fostering intercultural competence?

## **2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

To ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. Only articles published between 2019 and 2023 were considered to capture the most recent research in the field. The focus was on articles that specifically addressed intercultural competence development in higher education and explored the role of communicative tasks in this process.

## **2.3 Search Strategy and Databases**

A comprehensive search strategy was implemented to identify relevant articles. Firstly, Google scholar search was done in order to have overall view of articles. Multiple academic databases, including but not limited to, Researchgate, and Web of Science, were searched to ensure comprehensive coverage. The search terms used included variations and combinations of the following keywords: "communicative tasks," "intercultural competence," "students," "higher education," "development," and related terms. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were utilized to refine the search queries and capture relevant articles.

## **2.4 Limitations**

Despite efforts to ensure a thorough and rigorous review, this study has some limitations. Firstly, the search was restricted to articles published in English, potentially excluding relevant studies in other languages. Additionally, the inclusion criteria focusing on higher education and recent publications may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts or earlier research.

## **2.5 Study Selection and Data Extraction**

The study selection process consisted of multiple stages. Initially, titles and abstracts of identified articles were screened to determine their potential relevance. Subsequently, full-text articles were thoroughly evaluated against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected articles were then subjected to data extraction, wherein relevant information such as study design, participants, communicative tasks utilized, intercultural competence dimensions measured, and key findings were extracted and synthesized for analysis.

## **2.6 Data Analysis and Synthesis**

A thematic analysis approach was employed to analyze and synthesize the findings from the selected studies. The extracted data were coded and categorized based on emerging themes related to the effects of communicative tasks on intercultural competence development and the factors influencing their effectiveness. Through a process of constant comparison and iterative analysis, common patterns, trends, and relationships were identified and synthesized to address the research questions.

By following this systematic review methodology, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of communicative tasks in the development of intercultural competence among students in higher education.

## **3. RESULTS**

Several research articles were viewed and analysed based on the aim of this systematic review. The results were organized by the research questions. The table below is going to represent the articles which were considered to be relevant to the aim and case.

No	Name of publication	Author	Year	Method
1	Developing students' intercultural communicative competence in Foreign language classroom	Oksana Bahlai (corresponding author), Nataliya Machynska, Yuliia Matviiv-Lozynska, Olha Senkovych, Mariia Voloshyn	2019	Mixed research method
2	Development of students' Intercultural Communicative Competence via creating their own cultures	Petra Ivenz and Eva Reid	2023	Action research method
3	Project-based assessment in teaching intercultural communication	Hong -Thu Thi Nguyen	2021	Mixed research method

	competence for foreign language students in Higher Education: A Case Study			
4	A new model of intercultural communicative competence: bridging language classrooms and intercultural communicative contexts	Yoko Munezane	2021	Mixed research method

**Table 1. Relevant research examples which were reviewed in current work.**

### 3.1 The effects of different types of communicative tasks on development of intercultural competence.

The first study of Bahlai et al. (2019) included 37 master's degree students from Lviv Polytechnic National University focusing in international tourism. The researchers wanted to promote intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among religious tourism students using interactive teaching approaches which are based mostly on communicative tasks such as flipped classrooms, role plays, debates, and a particular course on cross-cultural communication within the course developed based on ICC. Students participated in flipped classroom activities while watching videos or listening to podcasts at home. Students were encouraged to voice their thoughts through role plays and debates. The training concentrated on both theoretical and practical elements of religious tourism. Students examined existing tours and proposed enhancements. The study's overall goal was to improve ICC in international tourism students through practical application, teamwork, and understanding in intercultural circumstances. At the end of the study the researchers conducted the questionnaire which showed the effectiveness of the tasks and their difficulties. The students' attitudes towards the special course "Cross-cultural communication in religious tourism" were positive, with most students appreciating aspects such as increased interest in other cultures, awareness of cultural and religious differences, opportunities for English communication, and engaging content materials. Some challenges mentioned included self-discipline, lack of time, language proficiency, task understanding, and technological issues. Observations revealed that the course motivated intercultural communication, allowed practical application of knowledge, and fostered cooperative skills through presentations and discussions. The flipped classroom method developed students' intercultural competence by promoting self-organization, adaptability, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Role plays and discussions facilitated the immediate application of learned material in real-life scenarios, fostering

decision-making and critical thinking.

Unlike the above work, second research article of Ivenz and Reid (2022) used action research methodology design with the goal of enhancing practise and encouraging professional growth. It was divided into four sections: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Twenty-one English language teacher trainees enrolled in the Intercultural Training course at a Slovak university were carefully sampled. The study's major goal was to improve intercultural communication competency and to foster respect and tolerance for diverse cultures. Students were chosen by strategic sampling to participate in the formation of new civilizations in this project. Four sessions focusing on increasing self-awareness, intercultural awareness, sociolinguistic competence, sociocultural knowledge, and pragmatic competence prior to the main activity. Students worked on a variety of tasks, including discussing customs, comparing cultural norms, and exploring idioms and small chat. Students worked in groups to picture themselves as aliens, creating their own planets and societies during the acting part. Students talked in English and displayed excitement and inventiveness throughout the session. Students presented their planets and engaged in conversations during the observation phase, demonstrating curiosity and interest in various civilizations. Students expressed favourable comments and recognised the possibilities for creativity and learning throughout the reflecting phase. Based on the conclusion of the research, the activity was well-received, however smaller groups and more time allocation were suggested for future classes.

The next research work uses the communicative tasks, namely project based tasks to develop ICC in students. The author, Nguyen (2021) suggests adopting project-based exams instead of traditional paper-based evaluations to boost academic and intercultural dialogue in higher education. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perspectives of the feasibility and use of project-based evaluations for learning intercultural communication. It also looks at answers to problems that learners and teachers confront in ICC learning, teaching, and evaluation. Students'

evaluations of project-based assessments for ICC and teachers' opinions about overcoming challenges in ICC practise were essential to the study issues. In this research the data from 124 English majors and 36 EFL teachers were analysed using a mixed research model. Questionnaires, interviews, and evaluation projects were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, notably the frequency descriptive tool, were used to analyse the quantitative data. Students aged 19 to 21 and lecturers aged 30 to 40 from colleges in Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia were among those who took part. As data gathering tools, assessment projects, questionnaires, and interviews were employed. The surveys used a Likert scale and had 31 items as well as 5 open-ended questions. Online and offline answers, such as emails, answer sheets, and interview recordings, were used to collect data. The teacher offered theoretical information to the pupils and assessed their progress through written assessments throughout the course. Following that, the pupils competed in a number of rounds to exhibit their cultural knowledge and talents. A culture knowledge competition, a community cultural project, a talent show, a movie presentation, situational judgement tests, and an eloquence round emphasising the value of intercultural dialogue were among the rounds. The teacher graded each round using rubrics supplied. As a result of analysis of the data, students expressed agreement with the benefits of project-based assessment, including enhancing collaboration and interaction among students, promoting critical thinking skills, reinforcing reflective practice, broadening cultural awareness, and developing skills with few participants opposing the mentioned benefits. The study continues by offering techniques for teaching and learning ICC, such as student participation in cultural clubs, virtual field trips, and real-life experiences, as well as developing interesting and realistic courses using videos, movies, and role plays. The paper recognises the obstacles and restrictions connected with PBA (project based assessment) implementation and proposes solutions such as proper teaching techniques and student autonomy.

One of the recent research on this topic was done by Munezane (2021), having 210 undergraduate EFL students from diverse areas in Japan to take part. The study employed structural equation modelling and had a gender distribution that was balanced. The English ability levels of the participants ranged from basic to high. To assess factors such as willingness to communicate in English, intercultural communication competence, ethnocentrism, interdependent self-construal, openness to experience, constructive conflict resolution, motivation to engage in

intercultural communication, intercultural interaction confidence, and motivation to introduce one's culture, various scales were used. The questionnaire was distributed during class, and data was analysed using SPSS 13 and EQS 6.1. The study was considered relevant to discuss here, because of the result which claims Willingness to Communicate (WTC) to be "indirect predictor of ICC" (Munezane, 202, p. 1676) of ICC. The study discovered that willingness to communicate (WTC) predicts motivation to participate in intercultural communication, with persons who begin discussions being more eager to exchange ideas with others from different cultures. WTC also has a direct impact on intercultural confidence, with higher WTC leading in more confidence in communication circumstances. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is also influenced by confidence in intercultural communication, with persons who are more confident managing circumstances having greater levels of ICC.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Bahlai et al. (2019), Ivenz and Reid (2023), Nguyen (2021), and Munezane (2021) have performed studies on the impact of various types of communication tasks on the development of intercultural competence.

Similarities:

- All studies seek to improve students' intercultural communicative competency (ICC).
- They use flipped classrooms, role plays, discussions, and project-based examinations, among other communication activities.
- The findings show that these exercises improve critical thinking, cultural awareness, and successful communication in intercultural contexts.
- Participants in the research had good attitudes towards the activities and recognise the need of gaining intercultural competence.

Differences:

- Bahlai et al. (2019) investigate international tourism students, Ivenz and Reid (2023) investigate English language teacher trainees, Nguyen (2021) investigates English majors and EFL instructors, and Munezane (2021) investigates undergraduate EFL students.
- The particular tasks and activities vary between study. Ivenz and Reid (2023) engage students in discussing customs, comparing cultural norms, and creating their own societies; Nguyen (2021) investigates project-based assessments; and Munezane (2021) assesses factors such as willingness to communicate, confidence in intercultural interaction, and motivation to engage

in intercultural communication.

- The study methodology, sample size, and data processing methodologies used in the studies differ.

In summary, while these studies all aim to improve intercultural competence through communicative activities, they differ in their unique situations, tasks used, and study approaches. Nonetheless, they jointly give useful insights on the favourable influence of communicative activities on the development of intercultural competence.

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