

# Fostering English Foreign Language learners Intercultural competence through foreign films

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**Abstract:** This study intends to investigate how participants perceive when they learn to build intercultural awareness, as well as the extent to which intercultural awareness teaching and learning materials can be used effectively to create intercultural competence in students in English teaching classes. The participants were a group of 62 tertiary-level students who were sampled on purpose. A collection of teaching and learning materials designed to develop intercultural awareness adopted and adapted from Intercultural language activities by Corbett (2003) and Building cultural competence by Berardo and Deardorff (2012), as well as other materials that can help introduce intercultural awareness (understanding). This research also includes the use of foreign films as an integral part of intercultural teaching and learning materials to encourage the development of intercultural awareness when it is included in the process of teaching English. Survey questionnaires, reflective writing, and self-assessment forms were used to collect data according to a mixed methods approach and pre-experimental single group pre-test-post-test design. The results show that the participants have a positive attitude towards their intercultural learning experience in various aspects, especially with regard to incorporating films into the learning process, but are still hesitant to incorporate an intercultural component into the English teaching class as a whole.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communicative competence, intercultural awareness, intercultural competence, foreign language film, English language teaching,

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## 1. Introduction

Culture and language are related to each other. As globalization, increased mobility, and advances in technology have changed the way of life and communication; there is increasing awareness of the need for an intercultural focus in language education, namely the development of intercultural competence (Borghetti, 2011; Byram, 1989; Deardorff, 2006; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Moeller & Osborn, 2014; Snow, 2015). Nonetheless, one of the difficulties of this integration is creating a consistent practice based on the recognition of the need for a multicultural emphasis in foreign language teaching.

According to Alluri (2018), "there is a belief that every language has its unique culture." To achieve the goal of communicating with the language within its social context, it is, therefore, vital to know and comprehend the culture of the language being studied. Alptekin (2002) asserted that the proper use of language necessitates consideration of the concept of social context, which refers to a culture's norms, values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns. In the context of studying English as a foreign language, both linguistic and cultural knowledge are required and complementary to effectively master the target language and create meaningful and effective communication, as required by the government, as described previously. Students cannot be considered to

have mastered a foreign language until they comprehend the cultural context in which the target language is spoken, according to NSFLEP as, stated in Frank (2013).

There is widespread agreement that culture and language are intertwined and should be introduced effectively into foreign language training. For pupils to be able to speak and comprehend the target language, it is strongly advised that they develop various abilities. Linguistic competence, strategic competence, communicative competence, discourse competence, pragmatic competence, and intercultural competence are a few to list. According to Tomlinson, it is crucial in this regard to develop foreign language learners' cultural awareness as a prerequisite for intercultural competence (2019). In addition, teachers must utilize various instructional materials and tactics within and beyond the classroom (Sung, 2018). Typically, in-class assignments are confined to those found in course texts. In addition to introducing students to the target culture through coursework, it is possible to build and apply technology-based educational aids. In this sense, teaching materials for the target culture can be supplemented with media such as movies and television shows, as cinema can be used to assist language acquisition and cultural knowledge (Bonsignori, 2018; Prathoomthin, 2009; Sert, 2009).

There is scant evidence of the adoption of insights from research on the intercultural learning experiences of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, for whom cultural awareness, language awareness, and adaptation skills are essential abilities during actual movement or interaction across linguistic or cultural boundaries (Baker, 2009, 2011; Jenkins, 2006). Moreover, although the pedagogical use of film as a teaching tool for intercultural business communication is well-established (Briam, 2010; Chen, 2010; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003), relatively little research has been published on the use of film in the context of intercultural learning in the EFL curriculum in Asia.

Most research on the usefulness of films and television shows has focused on their use as teaching tools and supplementary materials to facilitate language acquisition and enhance learners' intercultural competence. Numerous research investigates the effect of movies on the growth of linguistic skills like listening, speaking, and reading (e.g., Alluri, 2018; Baek, 2020; Blasco, Moreto, Blasco, Levites, & Janaudis, 2015; Chaya & Inpin, 2020; Ye & Liu, 2021). In addition, films and television programs can instruct and enhance cultural and intercultural competence (e.g., Blasco, Mònaco, De Benedetto, Moreto, and Lewi, 2010; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003; Tomlinson & Yue, 2019; Zhou & Li, 2021).

This study illustrates that previous research has yet to evaluate films and television programs focusing on cultural expressions associated with the target language to increase language learners' intercultural communication competency. According to the researcher's knowledge, there is a need for a study analyzing the use of films and television series to improve the intercultural communication skills of foreign language learners, particularly in Asia. In addition, this paper explores pre-service teachers' attitudes regarding the use of film in teaching culture. Therefore, this study is an original contribution to the subject at hand.

## 2. Literature review

### ***Culture instruction***

Research indicates that language training should not be pure and decontextualized; rather, it should be relevant to real-world issues and obstacles. However, this may be more difficult, given that most EFL institutions rely on pre-made curricula and instructional materials to teach the target language. To provide learners with simple language, teachers may use technology to engage students in "actual" language outside the classroom. Kukulka-Hulme (2010) concurs that students could benefit from technology by exploiting interactive social learning spaces in formal and informal settings. Simultaneously, several aspects of language acquisition and the use of technological gadgets as teaching aids have been studied.

Teachers of English are today confronted with the rapid development of technology. As a result, pupils are exposed to the target culture somehow. Therefore, establishing a target culture and acclimating students to the host culture is crucial for many teachers and course designers. In this aspect, teachers act as cultural mediators to help students shift from their own culture to a foreign language culture (Baek, 2020; Byram, 2021; Kim, 2020). Similarly, Kramsch (1995) contends that language teachers will not only possess linguistic competence but will also function as catalysts for critical cultural competence in the future. However, in many foreign language education systems, the linguistic aspect dominates the cultural one. This lack is also present

in several teacher education programs, and numerous educators seek cultural education resources and remedies,

Bringing cultural issues into the classroom to help students become more culturally or interculturally aware. Having cultural awareness gives us three main benefits: knowing how our culture affects how we act, knowing how our culture affects how others act and explaining how our culture affects how we see the world. So, the expected result is the growth of cultural intelligence, which can be defined as the ability to work well in situations with cultural differences (Early & Ang, 2003). So, students can learn more about what words and phrases mean in the target culture when they are used for communication. With the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in place in Europe, the way culture is taught in a foreign language and second language schools has changed (Byrd, 2014). When it comes to teaching a foreign language, CEFR says that teaching about culture should improve learners' ability to communicate in all situations. So, the purpose of the study described in this article is to use films as cultural elements and important bridges to help trainee teachers learn more about the culture of the target language.

According to Brown (1994), culture is profoundly established in our very being, but language — the means of communication between members of a culture — is the most obvious and accessible manifestation of that culture. Consequently, a change in culture can disturb a person's worldview, self-identity, and systems of thinking, behaving, feeling, and communicating. To speak a language fluently, one must be able to think in that language, according to Tang (1999), and thought is incredibly potent. Language is the essence of a nation and its inhabitants. As language and culture are closely intertwined, we may choose to shift our focus from the inclusion or removal of culture in foreign language curricula to deliberate immersion versus non-deliberate exposure to it (Cakir, 2006).

### ***The use of Foreign Film in ELT classrooms as a new way of learning.***

The most well-known non-print media utilized in ELT are foreign films. They are freely accessible and readily available in most of the world's nations. In addition to being a popular form of entertainment, video games play a vital role in the classrooms of language instructors (Sabouri & Zohrabi, 2015). Initially, videos were employed to help language learners comprehend literature in the target language (Bouman, L.1996). Then, films were utilized to increase English competency, such as grammar, speaking and listening abilities, vocabulary, reading, and translation (Kasper, 2000).

Focusing on topics such as immigration, racism, discrimination, etc., Kramersch (1995) argues that intercultural material in film can indicate how individuals from diverse backgrounds think and interact. Consequently, the use of film can heighten students' understanding of cultural differences (and similarities) and foster in them a sense of empathy. Roell (2010) proposes that films can be utilized effectively in education and ELT to assist students in acquiring language abilities, interpersonal communication skills, and intercultural awareness. Finally, Tognozzi (2010) conducted a qualitative analysis of how brief snippets from foreign language films could be included in university language and culture instruction.

Foreign films introduce students to a particular culture from broad and specialized perspectives, such as everyday living and lifestyle customs. Sherman (2003) argues that real film serves as a "window into English language culture." Therefore, foreign films can be used for teaching and educating students about social issues. They have significant potential in language and culture classes, particularly in promoting ICC.

Films are a form of multimedia technology used in language instruction as authentic or real-world content that simulates non-print media-based methods of gaining knowledge. Films offer the following type of exploratory and stimulating learning (derived from Kramersch, 1993):

- Films present a non-sequentially ordered realm of knowledge that encourages relational thinking and hierarchical structuring of the seen occurrences.
- It is suggested that students must learn how to use the acquired knowledge in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes and that movies increase an area of cultural knowledge that must be acquired in a variety of contexts.
- It is claimed that movies encourage learners to reinterpret, rearrange, and reconstruct old knowledge in light of the new, to recognize the remnants of prior texts and events as they arise in new situations with new meanings.

- Films are easily accessible authentic material that contributes to forming a certain social reality by a society in dialogue with itself. Non-native learners who have been exposed to films must develop and reconstruct the meanings.
- After viewing a video, a popular comprehension classroom exercise consists of a conversation in which students can explore different levels of comprehension and become aware of their knowledge assets and shortcomings.

### 3. Methodology

This qualitative research is appropriate for intermediate or upper-intermediate students, so 62 students of tertiary level as participants gathered. The intercultural learning assignment is task-based and combines language learning with several key skills, such as Internet use, writing a summary, improving presenting abilities, and teamwork. When selecting a film for the project, the teacher must ensure that both the topic's level of difficulty and the film's rating is appropriate for the students' ages. Before the students view the film, the necessary prior knowledge, such as nonverbal or para-verbal communication and relevant cultural categories, should be introduced and discussed. For a concise review of certain intercultural aspects. The teacher provides students with one set of questions discussing the film in general and another set of questions for intercultural analysis of the film. Students will view the film, conduct research to answer the questions and write a summary report that will be presented to the entire class.

### 4. Finding and discussion

#### **Sorts of cultural expressions learners picked up from the film**

As the results show, the film is an authentic material to enhance learners' lexical competence involving all the lexis in the target language. Furthermore, native speakers use idioms frequently in their daily speech, which can undoubtedly be handled in the EFL classes accordingly. The following excerpts extracted from the dialogs prove that each part of the film includes a lot of cultural elements embedded in the dialogues. Some expressions that the participants mentioned in their report.

Cultural Expressions	
Part 1	<i>... You stepping on my shoes</i>
	<i>... American eyes and ears</i>
	<i>Chinese people are mean behind your back; French people mean to your face.</i>
	<i>Americans have the wrong balance; they live to work, French work to live.</i>
	<i>You come to Paris, and you don't speak French; that is arrogant.</i>
	<i>Don't you understand? You just put a book in that girl's hand.</i>
Part 2	<i>... best nose</i>
	<i>French is romantic but also realistic.</i>
	<i>...but in French, customers is never right</i>
	<i>It is unlogical culture in Paris, but it's beautiful.</i>
	<i>...you've got a better idea. I'm all ears.</i>
	<i>...that's girl working on my last nerve</i>
	<i>Frenchwork#Smokin'Body</i>
	<i>French are very disagreeable.</i>
	<i>Okay, now I'm even more jealous. I mean your life is croissant and sex.</i>
	<i>She's getting on my nerves. Nothing but problems since she got here.</i>
	<i>...I'm worried. It won't translate in the State.</i>
	<i>'Balance bon porc'...'out your pig...in America</i>
	<i>I can't believe, I'm drinking before noon.</i>

Part 3	<i>You come to Paris, you walk into my office, you don't even bother to learn the language. You treat the city . . . and after a year of food, sex, wine, emm, maybe some culture, you'll go back from where you came. So, perhaps we'll work together, <b>but no, we won't be friends.</b></i>
	<i>I like American pussy (impolite word)</i>
	<i>You're nice, you're French, and you speak English?</i>
	<i>"Everything coming up roses"</i>
	<i>Well, that was a nice elevator pitch. I'm here till tomorrow.</i>
	<i>. . .so we have the head and the nose. What does that make you?</i>
	<i>Ok Antoine . . .let's nail down the scent.</i>
	<i>. . . and maybe some things get 'lost translation' . . . but just now . . .</i>

Meanwhile, the class noted the unfamiliar cultural expressions they watched together. The aim of bringing them presenting in the class was to raise their awareness and teach the language in an authentic and meaningful manner because when something is meaningful, it is also comprehensible. As Krashen (2003) claims, foreign language learners acquire and develop literacy when they understand the messages conveyed through different channels like ears and eyes. Therefore, to make learning sensible for learners, teachers should give the class meaningful instructions in which the target language is presented authentically. In other words, the language produced by native speakers for not educational purposes would help learners broaden their learning perspectives. Educationally speaking, any authentic audiovisual material is of great help for learners to discover the target language along with its culture.

## 5. Conclusion

The film is a valuable resource for language-learning classrooms, particularly at the academic level, when students can appreciate and profit from the film's complex themes and ensuing conversations. Film instructors will discover that using authentic language paired with thought-provoking drama enhances cultural competence and the acquisition of English.

To effectively blend language and culture in language classrooms, language educators should choose from a broader range of "real life"-appropriate teaching resources. Authentic film/ drama series are a potentially beneficial resource for language teachers and students to investigate.

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