

# Chapter 6

## The Instructional Design of Cross-Cultural Understanding Course

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural understanding (CCU) has become essential in English language education, moving beyond linguistic competence to encompass intercultural communicative competence—the ability to mediate between cultures and engage effectively across cultural boundaries (Byram, 2021; Kramsch, 2013). Teaching English without cultural dimensions creates what Bennett (2013) termed "fluent fools"—linguistically accurate but culturally unaware communicators. For Indonesian learners in an increasingly globalized context, CCU is crucial for professional success, academic collaboration, and meaningful international participation. Globalization demands individuals who can work across cultures, appreciate diverse perspectives, and contribute to multicultural environments effectively (Deardorff, 2006).

Despite CCU's recognized importance, implementation challenges persist in Indonesian EFL contexts. Many educators have not systematically integrated cultural content, resulting in limited student intercultural competence (Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Morganna et al., 2018). Students lack prior cultural knowledge and engagement, while teachers face constraints including limited authentic materials, inadequate professional development, and difficulty balancing linguistic and intercultural objectives (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021). Theoretical frameworks such as Byram (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model—comprising attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)—and Bennett (1986) DMIS—progressing from ethnocentric (denial, defense, minimization) to ethnorelative stages (acceptance, adaptation, integration)—provide conceptual foundations. However, a gap persists between theory and practice, with teachers uncertain about translating models into actionable strategies (Estaji & Rahimi, 2018). This chapter addresses this gap by presenting detailed instructional design for CCU courses in Indonesian universities, bridging theoretical rigor with practical applicability.

## **2. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

### **2.1 Course Content and Topics**

The course develops three primary learning goals: (1) intercultural awareness through systematic cultural concept exploration and identity examination; (2) ability to analyze cultural differences using theoretical lenses; and (3) intercultural communicative competence for effective cross-cultural interaction. These align with Byram (2021) expanded ICC notion, emphasizing skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness beyond knowledge acquisition.

The recommended 14–16-week curriculum follows progressive developmental sequence:

- *Foundational Awareness* (Weeks 1-4) establishes cultural definitions distinguishing "Big C" and "little c" culture, introduces the cultural iceberg model, and explores personal cultural identity through Hofstede's and Trompenaars' dimensions.
- *Critical Analysis* (Weeks 5-6) examines stereotyping mechanisms, ethnocentrism versus cultural relativism, and judgment suspension—essential for progressing beyond Bennett (1986) ethnocentric stages.
- *Communication Skills* (Weeks 7-9) analyzes verbal and nonverbal patterns, Hall's (1976) high-context versus low-context styles, and cross-cultural conflict resolution.
- *Comparative Studies* (Weeks 10-12) systematically compares Indonesian culture with other systems and examines Eastern versus Western value orientations, developing interpretive and relational skills.
- *Integration* (Weeks 13-16) addresses culture-language nexus, global issues across cultural perspectives, and strategies for continued intercultural development, introducing cultural intelligence for lifelong learning.

This sequence pedagogically follows Bloom's taxonomy and constructivist principles: knowledge/comprehension (Weeks 1-4), application/analysis (Weeks 5-12), synthesis/evaluation (Weeks 13-16). It mirrors Bennett's DMIS progression from ethnocentrism toward ethnorelativism. Optional topics—popular culture, digital culture, migration, cultural appropriation—integrate based on interests and current events.

## 2.2 Teaching Method

Effective CCU instruction requires pedagogical approaches transcending traditional lectures, emphasizing experiential learning, critical reflection, and authentic engagement. Experiential Learning serves as the foundational approach: following Kolb's cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation), students engage with critical incidents, simulations, and role-plays, creating cognitive dissonance that challenges existing frameworks (Lee et al., 2023). Comparative Approach systematically structures analysis using Byram's (2021) framework, developing analytical sophistication rather than superficial comparisons. Communicative Approach, adapted for intercultural contexts, emphasizes authentic communication through structured interactions with international students, virtual partners, or community members (Tran & Duong, 2018).

Critical Pedagogy ensures cultural learning doesn't perpetuate stereotypes, examining culture's intersection with power and privilege to develop critical awareness (Byram's *savoir's engager*)—particularly important in postcolonial contexts. Project-Based Learning structures extended investigations requiring ethnographic research, cultural artifact analysis, or training material development. Blended Learning integrates face-to-face instruction with digital resources—virtual tours, TED talks, online databases—expanding access beyond classroom constraints (Gao et al., 2021). Reflective Practice through journaling and portfolios enables students to document development, articulate evolving understandings, and identify growth areas.

Integration occurs through deliberate scaffolding: students learn frameworks, apply them to scenarios, reflect on application, and refine understanding through repeated cycles—embodying Kolb's experiential learning throughout the semester. Specific techniques include cultural assimilators, culture capsules, ethnographic interviews, film analysis, and case studies.

## 2.3 Teacher and Student Roles

Cross-cultural understanding instruction transforms traditional hierarchical relationships into dynamic, collaborative configurations. The instructor assumes multiple context-dependent roles. As cultural mediator, the instructor facilitates students' navigation between cultural frameworks, modelling intercultural sensitivity and judgment suspension (Kramsch, 2013)—particularly critical when students encounter value-challenging practices. As facilitator, the instructor designs environments that are simultaneously challenging and psychologically safe, establishing norms emphasizing respect, intellectual humility, and constructive dialogue, especially during sensitive discussions. As critical questioner, the instructor interrogates assumptions through strategic questioning, developing students' critical cultural awareness by examining power dynamics, historical contexts, and constructed cultural categories. As resource provider, the instructor continuously curates authentic cultural materials representing diverse perspectives—particularly important in contexts with limited international access (Hasbi et al., 2025). As reflective practitioner, the instructor models intercultural competence through self-disclosure about their learning journey, normalizing development as lifelong process.

Students shift from passive recipients to active agents. As active researchers, students investigate cultural phenomena using ethnographic methods—dominant during project-based learning. As critical thinkers, students move beyond surface descriptions to analytical depth, questioning assumptions and examining phenomena from multiple perspectives. As respectful communicators, students practice perspective-taking and empathetic listening while maintaining cultural integrity. As reflective learners, students systematically document experiences and evolving understandings through journals and portfolios, transforming experience into learning.

As co-creators, students share their cultural backgrounds, enriching classroom diversity.

Special considerations include managing controversial topics through established protocols; creating inclusive environments where diverse backgrounds feel represented; and addressing cultural sensitivity in heterogeneous classrooms by acknowledging power dynamics, ensuring dominant perspectives don't silence minority voices, and avoiding pressuring marginalized students to serve as cultural representatives.

## 2.4 Activity Types

Activity diversity reflects intercultural competence's multifaceted nature, with strategic selection developing specific ICC components. Individual activities build reflection and analysis: cultural autobiographies examine personal cultural backgrounds; intercultural journals connect concepts with experiences; self-assessments using frameworks like the Intercultural Development Inventory benchmark development; reading responses require critical text analysis beyond summary.

Pair and group activities foster collaborative learning: culture puzzles develop discovery skills through reconstructing practices from partial information; critical incidents analysis examines intercultural misunderstandings, identifying underlying cultural assumptions; comparative research investigates cultural dimensions across contexts; interview projects structure interactions with diverse individuals using course frameworks; problem-solving scenarios require negotiating solutions honoring multiple perspectives.

Whole class activities create shared analytical experiences: cultural presentations develop knowledge and communication skills; film screenings enable analysis of representation and stereotyping; debates on sensitive issues develop argumentation and perspective-taking; simulation games which provide experiential learning;

structured guest speaker sessions bring cultural insiders while avoiding cultural stereotyping.

Digital activities extend learning beyond classrooms: virtual museum tours access otherwise unavailable cultural spaces; online forums enable asynchronous discussions; collaborative wikis build collective knowledge; video conferences with international classes create authentic communication opportunities; digital storytelling develops both intercultural understanding and literacy.

Strategic activity-topic matching enhances learning: stereotypes pair with critical incidents and media analysis; communication styles benefit from role-plays and authentic interaction videos; cultural values work with case studies and comparative research; cultural products align with presentations and virtual tours.

## 2.5 Materials and Media

Material selection significantly impacts learning effectiveness. Print and visual materials provide foundational resources: textbooks like Storti's works and Byram's *Teaching and Assessing ICC* (2021) ground instruction in scholarship; journal articles expose students to current research, particularly on Indonesian and Asian contexts; literature provides affective cultural engagement (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015); films and documentaries offer visual cultural representations; images and infographics visualize cultural dimensions and make frameworks concrete.

Digital resources expand access: cultural databases, specialized YouTube channels, and virtual museums provide curated content; social media offers authentic contemporary practice windows; Learning Management Systems organize materials and facilitate discussions; podcasts and music provide audio-based learning; TED Talks combine expert knowledge with engagement. Authentic artifacts—physical cultural objects, travel photographs, cultural

products (food packaging, newspapers)—provide tactile experiences digital resources cannot replicate (Hasbi et al., 2024).

Material selection follows six principles: authenticity (genuine practices over stereotypes); diversity (multiple cultures beyond Western-centric content, including underrepresented cultures); accessibility (appropriate for Indonesian contexts in difficulty and availability); relevance (connecting to student interests and professional needs); multimodality (engaging different learning styles); and currency (up-to-date representations). In Indonesian contexts, prioritize ASEAN and Asian cultural materials, countering historical Western overrepresentation.

## **2.6 Assessment and Evaluation**

Assessment addresses intercultural competence's multidimensional nature—encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes—while recognizing development's gradual, non-linear trajectory. An effective framework integrates continuous, mid-semester, and end-of-semester evaluations, balancing formative and summative purposes.

Continuous assessment provides ongoing feedback documenting developmental trajectories. Weekly reflection journals (15% of final grade) connect course concepts with observations and evolving understandings, evaluated for depth, growth evidence, and critical engagement. Class participation (10%) assesses contribution thoughtfulness, respectful perspective engagement, and willingness to question assumptions. Small assignments (15%)—reading responses, mini-presentations, cultural analyses—provide low-stakes practice with rapid feedback.

Mid-semester assessments (Weeks 7-8) mark developmental milestones. The cultural comparison paper or presentation (20%) requires systematic analysis across cultural contexts, applying theoretical frameworks. Rubric-based assessment evaluates analytical

depth, appropriate framework use, evidence quality, and clarity. Self-assessment using intercultural competence scales helps students identify growth areas and set semester goals, developing metacognitive awareness.

End-of-semester assessments (Weeks 14-16) demonstrate cumulative learning. The final project (25%) offers multiple options: research paper examining intercultural phenomena; intercultural competence portfolio reflecting on developmental artifacts; ethnographic study investigating cultural practices; or creative project (training module, multimedia presentation, artifact analysis). All options must demonstrate concept integration, critical cultural awareness, and sophisticated cultural understanding. The final examination or case analysis (15%) assesses concept application to novel situations through comprehensive case studies requiring intercultural scenario analysis, cultural dimension identification, and culturally sensitive solutions.

Assessment evaluates four aspects: knowledge (cultural concepts, theories, differences/similarities, communication principles); skills (analytical ability, effective communication, application, research/presentation); attitudes (openness, respect, judgment suspension, empathy); and process (effort, collaboration, improvement, reflection quality). Evaluation employs clear rubrics, peer assessment, self-assessment scales, portfolio reviews, and 360-degree feedback combining multiple perspectives. Feedback mechanisms include written commentary, mid-semester conferences, group sessions, and real-time activity feedback.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION**

The instructional design presented in this chapter offers a notable framework for cross-cultural understanding instruction at the university level, integrating theoretical rigor with pedagogical

practicality. The proposed approach emphasizes systematic progression from cultural awareness through critical analysis to intercultural competence, grounding instruction in established theoretical frameworks (Byram's ICC model, Bennett's DMIS) while remaining responsive to Indonesian educational contexts (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018; Atmojo & Putra, 2022). The incorporation of diverse pedagogical methods—experiential learning, comparative analysis, critical pedagogy, project-based learning—addresses the multifaceted nature of intercultural competence development, recognizing that effective intercultural learning requires more than knowledge transmission (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015; Hastomo et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2023). However, implementation challenges must be acknowledged: balancing generalization (necessary for teaching cultural patterns) with recognition of individual variation within cultures; addressing sensitive political or religious cultural topics without imposing instructor values or silencing diverse perspectives (Morganna et al., 2018); securing institutional support for resource acquisition, professional development, and curriculum time allocation. These challenges are surmountable with careful planning, administrative backing, and instructor commitment to ongoing intercultural development.

Looking forward, several developments would strengthen CCU instruction: integration of intercultural learning outcomes across the English curriculum rather than confining them to dedicated courses (Hasby et al., 2025; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021); systematic use of technology for authentic intercultural connection through virtual exchange programs and telecollaboration (Gao et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2023); development of culturally responsive assessment tools recognizing diverse cultural learning styles (Deardorff, 2006); establishment of instructor intercultural competence development programs, acknowledging that teachers cannot effectively facilitate student ICC development without their own intercultural

sophistication (Estaji & Rahimi, 2018); and creation of sustainable intercultural learning communities extending beyond individual courses (Tran & Duong, 2018). The goal is not merely to equip students with intercultural knowledge but to cultivate intercultural dispositions—curiosity about difference, humility about one's own cultural limitations, and commitment to ongoing intercultural learning. As English continues its evolution as a global language, the imperative for Indonesian universities is clear: English language education must transcend linguistic competence to embrace intercultural communicative competence, preparing students not just to speak English but to engage meaningfully and ethically with the diverse global community English enables them to access.

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