

# DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE COURSE: THE CASE OF A BA IN ENGLISH STUDIES PROGRAMME IN HUNGARY

[doi.org/10.61425/wplp.2020.14.55.79](https://doi.org/10.61425/wplp.2020.14.55.79)

**Maroua Talbi**

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

[Maroua.talbi@ppk.elte.hu](mailto:Maroua.talbi@ppk.elte.hu)

**Abstract:** The present study focuses on the teaching of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) practices in tertiary education. The teaching of ICC tends to be overlooked by teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), as they are more committed to teaching language than culture (Sercu et al., 2005). The present exploratory case study therefore seeks to describe and analyse how the ICC of English studies students is developed at BA level on the course “Communicating across cultures,” taught at a prestigious university in Hungary. It also explores good practices for developing the ICC of future EFL professionals in the same context. Systematic class observation and an analysis of the course reading materials were carried out to examine the features of ICC development on the course. These were followed by a semi-structured interview with the teacher, and a group interview with five students to examine their views on the course. The findings indicated that the students’ ICC was successfully developed on the course using both the target cultures and the students’ cultures. Moreover, cooperation among the students was found to be a central feature of this course, as it provided an opportunity for them to experience and discuss their intercultural interactions and thus develop their multiperspectivity. The examination of the teacher’s views revealed that he aimed both to raise the students’ awareness of cultural diversity and to develop their English language proficiency. His attitudes and teaching style may well have contributed to the student interviewees’ appreciation of this course. The case study introduces an example “of good practice” and shows that the approach and activities used on this course can be applied to the teaching of ICC when training future professional teachers of English in tertiary education programmes.

**Keywords:** intercultural communicative competence, developing future EFL professionals’ ICC, good practice, EFL teacher

## 1 Introduction

Due to globalisation and technological, economic, and social development, there is an increasing need for people to be interculturally competent in order to be able to interact successfully in a multicultural environment. In the context of such interactions, it is essential to acquire intercultural attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding, and to apply them in practice to achieve effective cooperation (Barrett et al., 2014). In foreign language teaching, there is an increasing demand to prepare learners for life in a multicultural world (Menyhei, 2016) for effective and appropriate interaction with people from different cultures (Deardorff, 2004). The importance of developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is also stated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). The need to develop ICC was also emphasised by Barrett et al. (2014), who argued that ICC cannot be acquired spontaneously but must rather be developed through intercultural encounters or formal, non-formal, and informal education.

While ICC is an important element in international business studies, it tends to be overlooked in some English major programmes. Hermessi (2017), for example, stated that secondary school EFL teachers are not trained to develop ICC because it is not part of the curriculum at university level. Similarly, Sercu et al. (2005) found that teachers were more committed to teaching language than culture. In contrast, Menyhei (2016), who wrote her PhD thesis on the development of English majors' ICC in the classroom, maintained that there was growing interest in the teaching and learning of ICC at Hungarian universities, which is why the present research was conducted in a Hungarian context.

The present paper explores the possibilities of integrating ICC training in an English major programme within the framework of a case study of the course "Communicating across cultures," taught as part of the BA in English studies programme at a Hungarian university. By focusing on a course aimed specifically at dealing with ICC development, and by means of prolonged engagement, it was possible to gain a deeper understanding of how ICC can be developed. The present study also identifies good practices for the development of future EFL professionals' ICC that may be transferrable to other contexts. The case study was based on a variety of methods: classroom observation, course materials analysis, as well as interviews with the course teacher and students. In order to present the concise theoretical background to the research, the term "ICC" is defined below, and teachers' views and practices with respect to the teaching of ICC are presented, along with students' views regarding this particular ICC courses.

## 2 Review of the literature

### 2.1 Definition of intercultural communicative competence

Various terms are used in the literature to refer to the phenomenon of understanding different cultures, including one's own, and interacting successfully with people from different cultures. These include ICC and intercultural competence (IC). In 1997, Byram highlighted the difference between IC and ICC, defining IC as:

the ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering, i.e. of overcoming cultural difference and enjoying intercultural contact. Their ability to do this will probably derive from their experience of language learning, even though they do not use the specific language on a given occasion. (p. 70)

Byram further stated:

Someone with Intercultural Communicative Competence is able to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. They are able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to themselves and the other and they are able to act as mediator between people of different cultural origins. Their knowledge of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately sociolinguistic and discourse competence and their awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language. (p. 71)

Thus, IC was defined as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness, whereas a language component was added in the case of ICC, namely, linguistic

competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. In Byram's approach, ICC is therefore a combination of IC and language proficiency, which is particularly important since a large number of people involved in intercultural communication use a foreign language. Today and in the context of the present study, this foreign language is mostly English. We therefore use the term ICC here according to the definition proposed by Byram (1997, p. 71).

Various models have been proposed in the literature in an attempt to conceptualize ICC, and the terms ICC and IC are often used interchangeably. The model proposed by Barrett et al. (2014) is used in the present study, as their IC model is the most complex and the most recent compared to other models. It also stresses the element of action through which the attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills are applied. In this model, IC is made up of: attitudes, knowledge of different beliefs, values, and practices and understanding of cultural diversity, skills, and actions in Table 1:

<b>Intercultural Competence (IC)</b>			
<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respect for cultural diversity/multicultiplity</li> <li>- Willingness to learn from and about people from different cultures</li> <li>- Willingness to question practices and behaviours that are taken for granted</li> <li>- Tolerance</li> <li>- Willingness to look for opportunities for intercultural interactions</li> <li>- Willingness to empathise with people from different cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness of one's own and other people's prejudices and preconceptions</li> <li>- Awareness that people from different cultures have different verbal and non-verbal ways of communicating</li> <li>- Knowledge of the beliefs and practices of culturally different people</li> <li>- Understanding that one's language and cultural orientations have an impact on the way one perceives the world</li> <li>- Understanding the diversity of cultural groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skills of multiperspectivity</li> <li>- Skills in learning new knowledge about other people's cultures</li> <li>- Skills in interpreting other cultures' practices and beliefs and relating them to one's own</li> <li>- Changing one's own thinking and adapting one's behaviour to new cultural environments</li> <li>- Behaving appropriately and adapting one's behaviour to the culture in question</li> <li>- Skills to critically evaluating the cultures in question</li> <li>- Acquiring linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse skills; acquiring the skills needed to mediate in intercultural interactions</li> <li>- Skills of communicating with empathy</li> <li>- Acquiring the ability to understand and respond to other people's beliefs and values</li> <li>- Plurilingual skills</li> <li>- Mediating in intercultural exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looking for opportunities to interact with people from different cultures</li> <li>- Collaborating with culturally diverse people</li> <li>- Discussing differences in their cultures, negotiating a mode of interaction</li> <li>- Challenging behaviours that are against human rights</li> <li>- Communicating appropriately, effectively, and respectfully with people from different cultures.</li> </ul>

Table 1. A summary of the Intercultural Competence Model by Barrett et al. (2014)

## 2.2 Teaching culture and intercultural communicative competence in tertiary education to English major students

The relevance of ICC has been demonstrated by the Council of Europe's endeavour to encourage the development of ICC at different educational levels. In its *White paper*, published in 2008 to promote intercultural dialogue, the Council of Europe recognized the role of universities in the development of ICC, stating that

[t]he university is ideally defined precisely by its universality – its commitment to open-mindedness and openness to the world, founded on enlightenment values. The university thus has great potential to engender “intercultural intellectuals” who can play an active role in the public sphere. (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 31)

The document also places an emphasis on the teaching of ICC in the framework of teacher training, arguing that “education institutions should make full use of descriptors of key competences for intercultural communication in designing and implementing curricula and study programmes at all levels of education, including teacher training and adult education programmes” (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 43).

Holló (2017) conducted an interview study involving eight teachers of various culture-related subjects who taught courses with intercultural content, and five EFL teachers in the BA and MA programmes, and the teacher training programme at a Hungarian university. The objectives of the tutors who taught courses with intercultural content were to raise the students' awareness of cultural diversity and to develop students' intercultural skills, and intercultural attitudes. The teachers referred to various methods that could be used to develop students' ICC, such as analysing films and texts using discourse analysis and questioning techniques; and cooperative learning, including debates followed up by insightful activities. Other methods and approaches used by the teachers to integrate interculturality into their courses included the comparison of different discourse structures in order to understand thought patterns in various languages, and the analysis of gender representation.

Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008) suggested several activities that can be used to develop students' ICC in relation to the four language skills. With regard to listening, they proposed using audio- and video- taped cultural incidents and listening to songs and jokes from the target culture to develop students' intercultural awareness. In relation to speaking skills, practicing cultural differences in speech acts through role play and asking questions to native speakers can develop knowledge of the target culture. The authors also proposed activities to develop reading skills, with an emphasis on intercultural aspects. For example, they mentioned the use of cultural bump activities and the analysis of written texts. In terms of writing skills, activities such as designing stories, which involves describing what is happening in a variety of pictures, can be used. The authors presented a detailed description of the use of these activities, demonstrating how they can be integrated in three steps: explanation, collection, and implementation. In the first step, the students are informed that they are going to focus on the culture of the target language. They are then asked to collect various materials relating to the cultural issues to be discussed, such as pictures or recorded interviews with native speakers, etc. The teacher then collects the materials and implements them in the course. Eken (2015) argued that this approach can result in the students being more engaged in the lessons, as they participate in the process of collecting the classroom materials.

## **2.3 Previous studies on intercultural competence development in English major programmes**

### **2.3.1 Teachers' attitudes and practices towards teaching intercultural communicative competence**

Eken (2015) conducted an interview study to investigate the attitudes of Turkish university teachers of EFL toward developing their students' ICC. All the informants stressed the importance of incorporating activities into language teaching to develop students' ICC. When asked what kind of activities they would include in their teaching, they mentioned carrying out a project with a teacher from a different country and discussing their students' cultures as well as the target culture. Other activities included reading texts about different cultures, asking students to do research on various cultures and share it with classmates, and raising students' awareness of "World Englishes." Despite suggesting several activities for developing their students' ICC, the teachers failed to mention how they would incorporate these activities into their teaching. This can perhaps be explained by their lack of experience in teaching ICC.

Menyhei (2016) carried out an interview study with three Hungarian teachers of EFL courses in a university BA programme. Two of the teachers taught individual seminars introducing intercultural communication, while the third gave a lecture on the subject. Menyhei found that the teachers had mixed feelings: On the one hand, they appreciated the opportunity to select the teaching approach. However, one of the teachers expressed confusion as to the aim of the course and the way in which ICC should be assessed. This finding suggests that teachers of EFL and ICC should be knowledgeable about the topic they teach or should undergo training if they had not done so already. This finding was confirmed by Larzén-Östermark (2008), who maintained that an essential criterion for the teaching of ICC in a wider context was the development of teachers' own ICC.

Önalán (2005) conducted a mixed-methods approach study in which he performed interviews with eight Turkish EFL university teachers, while 40 teachers answered a questionnaire. A total of 95.8% of the teachers included cultural aspects in their language teaching because they believed it was useful in educating better speakers of English. It can therefore be assumed that they had a positive attitude towards teaching cultural information in the interest of English learning, rather than seeing it as a component that needed to be taught and learned. Although the teachers defined culture from a sociological point of view, that is, in terms of values and beliefs, their teaching focused on the superficial level of culture such as foods and non-verbal language. He explained this approach by the fact that the teachers found it easier to teach this superficial level and to match it to their aims, which were to develop the learners' awareness of cultural diversity while also developing them intellectually. Önalán also reported that the teachers regarded reading and vocabulary as more critical, although they believed that ICC was useful to their students. This finding was explained by the fact that they did not think of culture as a distinct goal to be attained, but rather as a motivational tool for learning the target language. While it is natural to teach language on an EFL course, language proficiency should nevertheless go hand in hand with cultural proficiency. The emphasis on language over culture in a language class, however, can be explained by the fact that the success of language teaching is measured by language exams, which do not include cultural content, as this cannot be measured objectively (Holló, 2017).

### 2.3.2 Students' attitudes towards teaching intercultural communicative competence

In her 2016 study, Menyhei examined the attitudes of 16 second- and third-year Hungarian BA students of English studies towards their ICC course. The students were enrolled on the course "Introduction to intercultural communication," which comprised two seminars and a lecture. The results suggested that they had positive views about the course and their reasons for liking it were the teachers' personalities and the group discussions. Moreover, the interesting topics they dealt with, such as cultural differences increased their enthusiasm for the course. However, among the things they did not like were the lack of PowerPoint presentations, the high number of students in one class, and the small number of students in the other class. They also referred to the usefulness of the course for their academic studies as some students were writing their theses on cultural topics. On a more personal level, they believed that the course would help them in their subsequent intercultural interactions, as they learned about ethnocentrism, stereotyping, otherization, and intercultural understanding.

The investigation of teachers' attitudes towards teaching ICC also indirectly revealed students' views about ICC courses. The teachers in Larzén-Östermark's study (2008) stated that their students had positive attitudes towards different cultures and traditions. It can thus be concluded that the students enjoyed having ICC content in their language classes.

Salem (2012) conducted an interview study at an English-medium Lebanese university with 24 Lebanese EFL students who were enrolled on an "intercultural language teaching" course. She found that the students considered the ICC course to be useful, as it examined issues relevant to their lives. As part of the course, they were encouraged to reflect on their culture and to discuss sensitive and taboo topics, while taking care to avoid clashes. They also developed an openness towards other cultures, especially western cultures. The course had a significant impact on the students' ICC. The students stated that learning about ICC would prepare them for dealing with cultural differences. To demonstrate the value of the course, this particular ICC course was compared with other courses that were based on the communicative approach.

As mentioned above, in some of the studies reported in the literature, teachers of EFL favoured the teaching of language over ICC. Ironically, however, the students were nevertheless aware of the importance of learning ICC. In Salem's (2012) study, one participant stated, "Language is more than subject-verb-object" (p. 207), suggesting that the students had a clear understanding of the fact that language teaching involves more than teaching grammatical competence. Unlike some universities, where teachers of EFL focus more on language than on ICC, Hungarian universities offered courses with intercultural content. The present research was therefore carried out at a prestigious Hungarian university.

## 3 Methods

The main objectives of the present research were to describe and analyse how the ICC of future English language professionals is developed on one particular course at BA level at a Hungarian university. It also aimed to identify good practices for developing future EFL professionals' ICC. The questions that guided the research were therefore the following:

- 1) What features of ICC development are present in the "Communicating across cultures" course in the BA in English studies programme at the Hungarian university?

- 2) How does the teacher view the potential for ICC development on the course “Communicating across cultures”?
- 3) How do the students participating in the “Communicating across cultures” course view its value in developing ICC?

In order to obtain a deeper insight into the practices of teaching culture and interculturality integrated into English major programmes, a case study appeared to be the most appropriate approach. Although a case study focuses on a single entity, it is nevertheless characterized by a reliance on multiple interpretations and multiple viewpoints (Cohen et al., 2018) through triangulation (McDonough & McDonough, 2014). A case study was therefore designed and carried out focusing on one particular course “Communicating across cultures.” The course was observed throughout the autumn term of 2019, the course materials were studied, and both the course teacher and some of the students were interviewed. The course was selected as it was linked to the focus of the present research. It is also part of a larger study in which a series of classroom observations, interviews with teachers who teach courses with (inter)cultural content, and interviews with students are being performed. After observing a variety of courses, this course was chosen specifically because of the greater diversity of classroom activities designed to help develop the students’ ICC.

### 3.1 Setting and participants

The research took place at a faculty of humanities in Budapest that offers BA, MA, and PhD programmes with a major in English, as well as teacher training in English as a foreign language and English culture. According to the faculty’s website, besides the local students the university welcomes 2500 international students from 80 countries each term. This atmosphere encourages students from different cultures to interact with one another and as a result, some of the courses focus on the culture of English-speaking countries as well as ICC.

The participants in the present study were the BA course teacher and some of his students. The teacher himself is multicultural, as a German who has been living in Hungary for several decades and has been involved in teaching and teacher training in English as a foreign language throughout his career. He also has extensive teaching experience in various parts of the world. He has been teaching the “Communicating across cultures” course for over eight years. This course, along with other courses in this programme, is taught in the English language.

There was a total of 24 BA students on the course, from Hungary, China, Syria, Algeria, Libya, Kazakhstan, and Japan. All the participants in the present study were attending the course during the time I observed it. The interviewees were five BA students of English language studies. They were selected on the basis of their nationality and their engagement in the class. Both active and shy students were invited to be interviewees, although participation in the study was voluntary. In order to ensure anonymity, interviewees were also asked to choose a pseudonym that reflected their nationality and gender (see Table 2). The interview subjects were Hungarian and international students (2 male Hungarians, 2 male Chinese, and 1 female Libyan). It should be noted that the predominance of male interviewees was not intentional, as all the participants were volunteers who agreed to take part in the study. In the case of some students, this was their first course related to culture and interculturality, while others had previously taken cultural or intercultural courses.

Student	Pseudonym	Gender	Nationality
S1	Gábor	Male	Hungarian
S2	János	Male	Hungarian
S3	Khadija	Female	Libyan
S4	Lee	Male	Chinese
S5	Fan	Male	Chinese

Table 2. Demographic information about the interviewees

### 3.2 Data collection instruments

The context for the case study took the form of classroom observations throughout the duration of the course. An observation sheet was created in order to make the observations more systematic. I also examined the course materials – the readings and activities – to see how they served the aims of the course as well as the ICC aspects that could be developed through them. No specific instrument was used for the analysis of the course materials, although the IC model proposed by Barrett et al. (2014) was used to identify the IC content in the materials. The observations and course material analysis were then supplemented by interviews with the course teacher and five students.

The observation sheet was designed on the basis of the literature on teaching ICC, such as Byram (1997) and Menyhei (2016), in order to create the categories that required examination. The sheet was validated through consultation a senior researcher, whose comments were taken into consideration. The observation sheet was also piloted, and the final version was created using the data from the piloting. (For the final version of the observation sheet, see Appendix A.)

The observation sheet comprised four main sections: intercultural content, lesson description, the teacher's role, and the students' engagement. It also included some background information, such as the aim of the lesson, the name of the teacher, the title of the course book, if used, and information on the teaching materials. Besides using the observation sheet, I took notes on the content of the lesson and the interactions between the students and the teacher. The notes were useful in that they provided additional details for the categories in the observation sheet. After each classroom observation, I noted my reflections in my research journal. I recorded items of information, such as terms or ideas, to help me recall events that I wished to elaborate on, as recommended by Maykut and Morehouse (1994).

Permission to observe in the classroom was obtained from the course teacher. The classroom observations took place throughout the autumn semester of 2019. I preferred to remain an observer, without participating in the activities (Creswell, 2009) so that my notetaking and the completion of the observation sheet would not be negatively affected. In each lesson, I sat where I would not disturb the students, but at the same time not so far from them that I was unable to listen to their interactions, since group discussions took place in most of the sessions.

The observations were complemented by interviews. The semi-structured interview is one of the most widely used instruments for qualitative data collection. Researchers such as Larzén-Östermark (2008), and Menyhei (2016) have used it to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of the teaching of culture and ICC. In order to answer the second research question ("How does the teacher of the course view the potential for ICC development on the

course?"), I therefore used a semi-structured interview with the teacher (see Appendix B). The questions focused on background information about the course, the course contents, teaching approaches, the students' attitudes towards the course, and the teacher's evaluation of the course.

In the present research, the interview with the teacher took place in December 2019 and lasted for 30 minutes. The interviewee signed a consent form, allowing the interview to be recorded. He not only responded to the questions, but also showed me an online platform (Moodle) where students could write and comment on each other's intercultural experiences.

To answer the third research question ("How do the students participating in the course view its value in developing ICC?"), I conducted a group interview with students. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) define a group interview as a conversation among the members of a small group in order to achieve an aim. This type of interview can therefore elicit a large amount of information in a short time.

The student interview schedule comprised 16 carefully designed questions (see Appendix C). The students were asked about their reasons for choosing the course, and their opinions about the topics, course materials, and teaching methods. They also answered questions related to the impact of the course and their experience of cultural learning. The interview schedule was validated with a senior researcher and piloted before use, and the necessary modifications were made.

The group interview was conducted with five interviewees who volunteered to participate after I informed them about the focus of the study and the expected duration of the interview. Before the interview, they signed a consent form. The interviewees offered their views freely, and none of the interviewees were questioned individually. One of the interviewees, however, sometimes declined to answer questions, saying that he had nothing to add. The interview was audio-recorded and lasted for an hour and a half.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

A thematic analysis was performed on the classroom observations, course materials, semi-structured interview, and group interview. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p. 6). Interpretations of the data were therefore developed, and patterns emerged.

The observation provided a large amount of information regarding the content of the course, as well as the students' attitudes towards the course based on their behaviour. Some initial categories were defined, such as which ICC components are taught, the content of the course, the teacher's role, and the students' engagement. The interviews were transcribed and coded immediately after data collection. As described by Cohen and his colleagues (2018), "the researcher reads, re-reads, reflects on, infers from and interprets the raw data" (p. 645). The data was hand coded instead of using a qualitative computer data analysis programme. Although it is time-consuming (Creswell, 2009), this method was preferred since only the researcher is able to decide on the codes and identify the sections of the interviews that belong to particular codes. However, it is easier to track the assigned codes when using a qualitative computer data analysis programme. The researcher went through the data several times, reflected on them, and

listed the possible meanings. Recurrent themes were then identified, and the data were grouped according to these themes. The documents and course materials were also analysed according to themes, and these were matched against the aims of the course.

## 5 Results and discussion

The results are presented under three main subsections: the features of ICC development using the results of the classroom observations and material analysis; the teacher's views on the course; and, the students' views on the course. Codes are used to identify the interviewees by their pseudonym initial letters that refer to the interviewee and the instruments that was used to collect data. Therefore, the course tutor will be referred to as T1Int1. The students will be referred to as S1Gint1, S2Gint1, S3Gint1, S4Gint1, and S5Gint1.

### 5.1 The features of ICC development on the “Communicating across cultures” course

The examination of the intercultural content showed that the focus of the course is on English-speaking cultures, the target cultures for the students. For example, the students reflected on British/American sentences in order to learn the difference between what is said and what is typically understood. The phrase “very interesting,” for example, is often understood as conveying the idea of being impressed. However, many British/American speakers use it to mean that they do not like something. These types of examples, and the related activities help to raise students' awareness about communication in the target language cultures. It can also prevent intercultural misunderstanding.

The course teacher also raised students' awareness about their own cultures by constantly asking them about aspects of their own cultures. For example, the students did an activity in which they had to think of a movement or gesture that is understood in their culture. One Japanese student bowed; another student raised her thumb. In another activity, they had to evaluate communication in their cultures in terms of directness and indirectness. It was found that Hungary was the most direct compared to Germany, Kazakhstan, China, Syria, and Japan, because Hungarian people tend to express their needs more explicitly. A Chinese student commented that China was the least direct country among those mentioned. He was aware that he was too indirect in his discourse. For example, he shared his experience of emailing his supervisor, when he wrote a whole paragraph and at the end added one sentence expressing what he wanted (S5Gint1). It is important for students to be aware of the directness or indirectness of their discourse, as this can minimize misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. These results are consistent with those obtained by Eken (2015) and Salem (2012) who found that students' cultures were discussed in the classroom to develop their ICC. Such activities can also raise students' awareness of their own cultures (Barrett et al., 2014).

The course teacher compared different cultures, for example, he occasionally compared Hungarian and American cultural phenomena. In terms greeting, for example, when American people are asked how they are they respond with simple, short statements, while in Hungary people are expected to explain how they feel at length. The students' knowledge of the different interpretations of greetings could therefore be developed, which, in turn, can raise their awareness that people from different cultures have different styles of verbal communication (Barrett et al., 2014). The students on the “Communicating across cultures” course came from

different cultures; thus, it was important to refer to the culture of the students' country of origin as a way of helping them to avoid intercultural misunderstandings.

The teacher's role in the course was also examined, and his behaviour demonstrated that he is interculturally competent. Apart from the course materials, his approaches and input were crucial aspects of the course. Both the stories he told, and his actions were geared fulfilling the aims of the course. For instance, at one point in the course he went to China and brought back some Chinese food for his students, which was an ideal way to improve the students' knowledge of a particular culture. It was also an opportunity to raise their awareness of the concept of cultural and religious diversity. On this occasion, there were two Chinese students in the group, and the teacher asked them to explain to the other students what the food contained, since the group also contained Muslim students<sup>1</sup>. This revealed a high level of awareness of his students' cultures on the part of the teacher. It also demonstrated his intercultural attitude of respect for cultural differences (Barrett et al., 2014). This finding confirmed the statement made by Larzén-Östermark (2008) that teachers must possess ICC in order to teach it.

The observations also revealed cooperation among the students. For instance, the Chinese students were very keen to help their classmates and recommended to the Muslim students those foods that did not contain meat or alcohol. This activity was an opportunity for the students to learn more about each other's cultures and demonstrated an attitude of acceptance and respect for the different cultures on the part of the students (Barrett et al., 2014).

The group and pairs activities encouraged cooperation among the students. In one of the group activities, the teacher handed out cards of different colours (blue, white, and red) and asked the students to interact with each other. The cards featured instructions that they had to follow. According to one of the cards, the person holding it was from Blue-land, where people gently but consistently touch each other's arms when they talk. They like meeting foreigners but avoid people from White-land. The students immediately started to interact with each other. This role play gave rise to intercultural interactions among the students and probably some intercultural misunderstandings as well (Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2008). One student complained that her interlocutor did not look at her, and she interpreted this as being disrespectful. Another student said that she had encountered someone who was loud and easy-going. The activity helped the students experience how people's behaviours can differ, thereby contributing to developing their interpretive skills as well as an attitude of acceptance, in line with the intercultural model proposed by Barrett et al (2014).

Alongside the classroom observations focusing on the intercultural course content, the teacher's role, and the interactions among the students, an analysis of the course materials was also carried out. The students were given six passages to read. One was the article "More than please and thank you" (Hancock, 2010), which deals with politeness strategies, published in the journal *English Teaching Professionals*. On the same theme, the students were asked to read the chapter "The many faces of polite: Evaluating performance and providing negative feedback" (Meyer, 2014), which examines the difference in politeness strategies in France and the Netherlands in terms of management. These two texts developed students' communicative awareness of the politeness conventions in different countries (Barrett et al., 2014; Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2008). Another book chapter, "Transitions shock: Putting culture shock in perspective" (Bennett, 1998), describes cultural shock and the stages of transition shock. It helped students learn to cope with cultural shock by developing intercultural attitudes,

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Islam, Muslim people are prohibited from eating pork and drinking alcohol.

knowledge, and skills such as empathy, awareness of one's own culture, and cognitive flexibility (Barrett et al., 2014). The fourth text was an excerpt from the textbook "Popular culture: An introductory text" (Lause & Nachbar, 1992), which defines stereotypes in popular culture and their significance. This excerpt developed students' intercultural attitudes by challenging stereotypes and demonstrating the value of cultural diversity (Barrett et al., 2014). The next passage was part of the chapter "How do cultural learnings affect the perception of other people?" (Nemetz-Robinson, 1986), which concerns the impact of cultural experience on social perception in terms of cues and schemas. This text encouraged students to challenge existing stereotypes and critically evaluate people who are culturally different (Barrett et al., 2014). The final text was a chapter by Irishkanova et al. (2004) that deals with empathy as a form of cultural mediation in intercultural encounters. This text developed students' intercultural skills, and, more specifically, their ability to understand and respond to people from different cultures (Barrett et al., 2014).

None of the passages exceeded 10 pages, which the teacher justified by saying that if he gave the students longer passages, they would not read them. He said, "[...] because the students are not very good at reading a lot, so I'd rather they read an excerpt well and process it well than giving them a good long reading that nobody touches" (T1Int1).

The students enjoyed the topics dealt with in the reading materials, describing them as "relevant" (S5Gint1), "useful" (S1Gint1), and "interesting" (S4Gint1). The interviewees expressed different preferences regarding the topics. Khadija, for example, specifically liked reading about the stages of acculturation,

It's relevant to me, and especially the stages of acculturation. The teacher said that the first thing that you feel when coming to foreign countries is a tourist, then a survivor, then you feel stressed, and then you get into a new stage. On top of this was the citizen, which does not mean having necessarily citizenship, but you just feel that you're used to the stuff. That's what I really felt during this class, because when the first time I came to Hungary, I felt the same thing that he explained<sup>2</sup>. (S3Gint1)

Gábor enjoyed reading about the schemas and cues that people use in intercultural interaction. In his view, learning about these two concepts could help prevent people from being racist towards those who are different from them. He said, "for me, these schemas and cues and preconceptions of people were really interesting, how to tackle them, how to solve them, and how to live without them, how not to be racist" (S1Gint1).

Fan stated that the passages about politeness strategies were essential when he would travel abroad. He said, "The most interesting part for me is the politeness strategies, which means in case I am abroad it is very useful" (S5Gint1).

Although the interviewees stated that the reading materials were interesting and useful, most interviewees did not enjoy all the articles since, they "are theoretical and go too deeply into the topics" (S5Gint1). However, the teacher used these passages to help them understand the theory that would later be discussed in class. In his words:

---

<sup>2</sup> The quotations from the interviews are recorded word for word. They have not been corrected in terms of the use of English.

The students find it hard to get into the theory without having dealt with it before then, and the reading makes more sense and the model or input makes more sense. Once they have an intuitive understanding of it, it becomes more relatable. (T1Int1)

Besides the reading materials, the teacher incorporated Moodle, an online learning management system, into his teaching of ICC. The Moodle platform is used by teachers and students at the university, for example for uploading reading materials. On the “Communicating across cultures” course, the teacher used it as a way for students to share examples of successful and unsuccessful intercultural interactions and to respond to each other’s posts. This was an extracurricular activity and was not followed up by discussion in class.

Writing about intercultural experiences in Moodle gave students an opportunity to reflect on actions that they had taken for granted (Barrett et al., 2014), as well as to develop their awareness and understanding of their own and others’ cultures. Some aspects of intercultural knowledge were therefore addressed. It also developed their intercultural attitudes by encouraging them to reflect on situations where they had experienced uncertainty and ambiguity. This was a useful way to develop the students’ multiperspectivity, as they were able to interpret practices belonging to others’ cultures and relate them to their own. Their cognitive flexibility and empathy were also developed in the process (Barrett et al., 2014). It can be concluded that this type of activity is an effective means of developing students’ ICC.

On the “Communicating across cultures” course, ICC was developed by discussing the students’ cultures as well as the target cultures. Another important feature was that the teacher was interculturally competent, thus his attitudes and behaviours served as a model for his students, especially in terms of promoting openness and acceptance. It was also found that intercultural role play, and cooperation among the students, whether through pair or group work, helped create genuine intercultural interactions. The reading materials were well-chosen and were definitely useful for developing the students’ ICC. The use of the online platform, where students could report and discuss their intercultural encounters, was inspiring and certainly contributed to developing their multiperspectivity and their ability to interpret of events and others’ behaviours.

## **5.2 The teacher’s view of the course**

Following the discussion of the potential of the course content in terms of developing the students’ ICC, the participants’ own insights offered further perspectives. The following section deals with the course tutor’s opinions regarding the aims of the course, the topics discussed in class, and his perceptions of how the students view the course.

The teacher designed the course with particular attention to the methodology. He was guided by two principles: to make the course experience based and participant oriented. He took care to ensure that the content would motivate students to share their experiences. He maintained that

The content is basically a trigger for the students to either get into an experience that is related to their background experience or through some of the clips that we view, some of the other inputs, there is a shared experience in the group during the class time, something happens which makes the topic significant at the personal level. (T1Int1)

The students were thus encouraged to participate and share their experiences, confirming Holló's (2017) findings that teachers should use experiential learning and rely on students' intercultural experiences to teach ICC.

One of the course-aims set by the teacher was to develop the students' English language proficiency. To encourage them to speak, he got them to discuss their ideas in small groups, which changed continuously so that different students would interact. He explained that,

The two are inseparable, just now in the school, there is a discussion going on because lots of colleagues in other departments who are not happy with the students' level of English... if I find that the students are not there, then, I will look for ways of what might help them. You see in my class how much interaction there is. So, they have a chance to, which they were very afraid of to begin with, actually say anything and to do that first in small groups, then there is some change, to make sure that not the same people who speak. (T1Int1)

The teacher encouraged the students to speak and participate actively in class, thus, ICC development also provided an opportunity to practice and improve their English language proficiency. This finding is consistent with the study by Barrett et al. (2014), who argued that communicative awareness is a fundamental component, as it helps people to express, share, and explain their perspectives and values.

According to the teacher, all the topics worked well, although he highlighted that one specific activity made the students particularly keen to engage in group work. He read them the story "Fish is Fish<sup>3</sup>" by Leo Lionni and asked them in groups to draw how the fish would imagine what people, cows, and birds might look like. The teacher believed that this activity created a connection among the students and made them more willing to work in groups. He said, "the group becomes more relaxed and more ready to engage and more open, and somehow the drawing of the fish always helps. It is kind of a milestone and from then on, I found the group works better" (T1Int1).

When the teacher was asked whether the students liked the course, he referred to the high attendance levels at every session which he saw as a reflection of the students' appreciation. He maintained,

I think the fact that actually on average, say, we have about 17/18 people out of 24 is a good sign. So, attendance and just reading their faces suggest to me that they find the course interesting on the whole. (T1Int1)

This finding corresponds with the results obtained by Larzén-Östermark (2008), which suggested that the teachers in her study believed that students liked learning about ICC.

When the teacher was asked about the development of the students' ICC after the course, he referred to the difficulty in judging whether students had in fact become interculturally competent having taken the course. However, he did stress that the students might be more aware of cultural differences and their impact on communication, saying

---

<sup>3</sup> This is the story of two friends, a tadpole and a fish, who live in a lake. The tadpole becomes a frog and leaves the lake. When the frog returns to the water, it brings back descriptions of the world. It talks about cows, birds, and people. The fish attempts to discover the world like the tadpole has done, but it is unable to breathe outside the water and realises that its life is in the lake.

Intercultural competence comes out when they are in the real world. I do not see that competence growing; I see more clarity I think I would say over time. I would like to hope that there is more awareness. I would like to think that there is more awareness compared to where they were before the course. But being interculturally competent is hidden competence, not something that I actually can judge at this point. (T1Int1)

This finding indicates that the tutor's aim was very reasonable, since it is hard, if not impossible, to measure ICC objectively. The aim of the teacher of the course "Communicating across cultures" was to create a group and a small community. This was a difficult task, as the students take all their courses with different classmates and there are very few opportunities to develop as a community. However, he expressed his satisfaction that people from different cultures who were taking his course became friends: "I am happy over time, halfway through now, the international and Hungarian students mingling a bit after class or coming in together, chatting a little bit or going off together" (T1Int1). This aim was acknowledged by Gábor, who indicated that the aim of the course was to get to know people from different cultures and consequently to share their experiences. He said, "I think the main point of the course was to get to know new people from different cultures and how they experience life" (S1Gint1).

Overall, it was found that the teacher used experiential learning and allowed the students to share their experiences. It was emphasised that ICC development also included improving the students' English language proficiency. Another finding was that the teacher aimed to develop his students' awareness of cultural diversity. His aim was realistic, although the results, that is, the improvement in the students' ICC cannot be gauged objectively. The teacher was also aware that one course alone is not sufficient to turn the students into interculturally competent speakers of EFL. However, he did succeed in creating a small community of people from different cultures, who – in his view- enjoyed the course.

### 5.3 The students' views of the course

In order to put the teacher's perceptions about the course into perspective, the students' opinions were also sought by means of a group interview involving five course participants. To start with, they all shared their appreciation for the course, stating that they liked it and that the main reason for this was the personality of the teacher. In fact, two students had chosen to take the course because they already knew the teacher, thus they had certain expectations about the course and some idea of how it would be taught in terms of methodology. One interviewee (János) stated "I know the teacher from my past. So, I knew it would be a great course" (S2Gint1). Another interviewee (Fan) added "I knew the professor; I knew he is an awesome professor" (S5Gint1). The interviewees seemed to like the course primarily because of the teacher's personality. It is well known that a teacher's personality has a significant influence on the success/effectiveness of a course. For instance, Menyhei's (2016) study suggested that the students had positive views about the ICC course because of the teacher's personality.

One interviewee (Khadija) identified the multiculturalism of the teacher as the main reason for her taking the course. The fact that the teacher was multicultural and multilingual, as a speaker of German, English, and Hungarian, meant that the interviewee could relate to him, as they were both from different cultures and had probably gone through the same stages of adaptation when learning to live in a new country. They studied the U-curve of cultural adjustment, for example, which consists of cultural shock/stress (survivor stage), acceptance (immigrant stage), and assimilation (citizen stage). This topic provided an opportunity for the teacher and the students to share their experiences of acculturation in "new" countries. It

provided students with support and the reassurance that what they were going through was universal.

The Chinese interviewees appreciated the teacher's methods for creating a positive atmosphere, which helped the students to talk and interact in class. Lee, who is an introvert, said "The activities actually intrigue you to speak" (S4Gint1). Fan seconded his words "The professor creates a warm atmosphere and encourages us to be more positive and confident when communicating with each other" (S5Gint1).

The five interviewees expressed their appreciation for the incorporation of Moodle. They supported the use of Moodle, as it helped them to share and reflect on their intercultural experiences, as well as to learn from each other's stories. Among the positive comments, Gábor described how they:

had to read each other's homework, write reflections, and comment on them. So, the whole atmosphere was connected. And I think that was the goal and he managed to do it. Doing this activity, I learned other people's stories, interesting stories that happened to them. (S1Gint1)

This demonstrated that the teacher had created an ongoing activity where the students reported and commented on each other's intercultural experiences. Moodle provided a safe space for the students to share their personal feelings and experience. Writing about their intercultural experiences created an opportunity for them to reflect on their own actions, which they had earlier taken for granted (Barrett et al., 2014). The fact that the students learned about one another's intercultural stories and responded to them created a bond among them that was regarded as highly advantageous by their teacher. This suggested that the intercultural attitude of valuing cultural diversity (Barrett et al., 2014), as well as training the students to learn from and about each other's cultures and perspectives, were indirectly addressed leading to the enhancement of their cognitive flexibility and empathy.

In summary, the five interviewees liked the course and thought that it was interesting. The reasons mentioned were the teacher's personality and his multiculturalism. They also liked how he created a positive atmosphere that helped them to talk and interact in class. This finding was linked to the aim of the course, which is to develop students' English language proficiency. They also expressed their approval of the integration of the online platform, because it helped them to share and reflect on their own and their peers' intercultural experiences. It also raised their awareness of cultural diversity in terms of practices and values, which was in keeping with the course aims stated by the teacher.

## 6 Conclusion

The present case study aimed to describe and analyse how the ICC of BA students in an English studies programme is developed on one particular course. A second aim was to identify good practices for developing EFL learners' ICC that can potentially be transferred to a wider context in tertiary education.

The classroom observation and the analysis of materials for the "Communicating across cultures" course showed that students' ICC was developed by presenting and discussing their own cultures as well as the target cultures. The research also found that the teacher could be a role model, particularly because the teacher of the course in question had a very high level of

intercultural competence, which he used in the context of the course and the students. His attitudes and behaviours could therefore be imitated by his students, especially in terms of promoting openness and acceptance. Cooperation among the students was identified as an important feature of this course, mostly in the form of pair or group work. The study also found that the creation of a co-operative activity on the Moodle platform, where students were able to report and discuss their intercultural encounters, developed the students' multiperspectivity and their abilities to interpret events or behaviours.

The analysis of the class materials revealed that the teacher did not assign long passages, in the expectation that students would read shorter excerpts more thoroughly. The teacher explored and understood the needs of his students and presented topics that were relevant to them and that would develop their ICC, such as the various stages of acculturation and politeness strategies.

The examination of the course objectives revealed that the teacher aimed to develop his students' English language proficiency. In terms of ICC, his objective was to raise the students' awareness of cultural diversity. He also achieved a further goal, which was to create a small community made up of people from different cultures.

In the examination of the students' views about the course, it was found that the five interviewees liked the course primarily because of the teacher's personality. They liked the teacher because they felt able to relate to him, as he had a multicultural background and had experienced the same stages of acculturation that international students are likely to go through. The study also showed that the interviewees valued the integration into the teaching of ICC of a collaborative activity on the course's online platform, which created an opportunity to raise their awareness of cultural diversity. According to the IC model proposed by Barrett et al. (2014), this task developed their intercultural attitude of valuing cultural diversity. It also contributed to developing their intercultural competence, and, more specifically, their multiperspectivity and their ability to interpret practices belonging to others' cultures and relate them to their own. Moreover, their cognitive flexibility and empathy were also developed (Barrett et al., 2014).

The goal of the present research was to contribute to the literature on the development of students' ICC by examining the teaching of ICC at BA level in an English studies programme. The findings can provide EFL course tutors with insights into developing their students' ICC, taking into consideration the growing need for interculturally competent students. As mentioned above, teachers tend to overlook the significance of developing ICC in a focused manner, thus the "Communicating across cultures" course reported on in the present study can perhaps be used by English language teachers as a model for the teaching of ICC. The findings of the present research highlight the importance of using materials and activities that are able to develop students' ICC, while at the same time emphasizing how content that facilitates the development of ICC is also entirely appropriate for language teaching. The findings indicate that the development of students' ICC should be accompanied by the development of their English language proficiency, particularly as the English language is used among people from different cultures.

The most important limitation of the present study is that it focused on one course only. In order to obtain a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the way in which ICC can be developed, a larger-scale study needs to be conducted that includes more ICC classes at various levels and in different contexts of tertiary education. Since the group comprised students

from different cultures, further research is required in order to examine whether the same methods would be applicable when developing students' ICC in a monolingual and monocultural group.

*Proofread for the use of English by: Rachel Hideg is a freelance translator and language editor. She studied classics and modern languages at Oxford University, UK, and has lived in Budapest since 1997.*

## References

- Barrett, M., Byram, M., Lázár, I., Mompoin-Gaillard, P., & Philippou, S. (2014). *Developing intercultural competence through education*. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Bennett, J. M. (1998). Transition shock: Putting culture shock in perspective. In M. J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Selected readings* (pp. 215-223). Intercultural Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe. (2008). *White paper on intercultural dialogue: Living together as equals in dignity*. Council of Europe.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2004). *The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization at institutions of higher education in the United States* [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University]. NC State University Libraries. <http://repository.lib.ncsu.edu/ir/bitstream/1840.16/5733/1/etd.pdf>.
- Eken, D. T. (2015). Intercultural communicative competence: EFL teachers' beliefs and practices. *Journal of Teaching and Education*, 4(3), 63-71.
- Hancock, M. (2010). More than please and thank you. *English Teaching Professional*, 70, 49-52.
- Hermessi, T. (2017). An evaluation of the place of culture in English education in Tunisia. In S. Hidri & C. Coombe (Eds.), *Evaluation in foreign language education in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 203–220). Springer International Publishing.
- Holló, D. (2017). Teaching intercultural communication in English degree programmes: The practitioners' voices. *Language World*, 70-79. [https://uni-bge.hu/kvik/Folyoirataink/Nyelvvilag/Kotetek/NyelvVilag-XIX.szam\\_T.pdf](https://uni-bge.hu/kvik/Folyoirataink/Nyelvvilag/Kotetek/NyelvVilag-XIX.szam_T.pdf).
- Irishkanova, K., Röcklinsberg, C., Ozolina, O., & Zaharia, I. (2004). Empathy as part of cultural mediation. In G. Zarate, A. Gohard-Radenkovic, D. Lussier, & H. Penz. (Eds.), *Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching* (pp. 101-131). ECML Publications.

- Larzén-Östermark, E. (2008). The intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching: A study of conceptions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52(5), 527–547.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830802346405>.
- Lause, K., & Nachbar, J. (1992). *Popular Culture: An Introductory Text*. Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. The Falmer Press.
- McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (2014). *Research methods for English language teachers*. Routledge.
- Menyhei, Z. (2016). *Developing English majors' intercultural communicative competence in the classroom* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pécs].  
<https://pea.lib.pte.hu/bitstream/handle/pea/14601/menyhei-zsofia-phd-2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Decoding how people think, lead and get things done across cultures*. Public Affairs.
- Nemetz-Robinson, G. L. (1986). *Processes and approaches for foreign language, English as a second language, and bilingual educators*. Prentice-Hall.
- Önalın, O. (2005). EFL teachers' perceptions of the place of culture in ELT: A survey study at four universities in Ankara/Turkey. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 1(2), 215–235.
- Salem, L. R. (2012). *Incorporating intercultural competence in English language teaching in a Lebanese university intensive English program context: An action research project*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester]. EThOS.  
<https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.568205>.
- Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheva, L., Laskaridou, C., Lundgren, U., García, M., & Ryan, P. (2005). *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation*. Multilingual Matters.
- Uso-Juan, E., & Martínez-Flor, A. (2008). Teaching intercultural communicative competence through the four skills. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 21, 157-170.  
<https://doi.org.10.14198/raei.2008.21.09>

**APPENDIX A****Lesson observation sheet on intercultural competence teaching**

Title of the course:

Observer:

Date:

Department:

subject:

level: BA /MA/Teacher training/PhD

Teacher:

Compulsory or elective:

Course book (if used):

Teaching Hours/Week:

The aim of the course:

The aim of the lesson:

Total number of students: \_\_\_\_ Hungarian sts: \_\_\_\_ International sts: \_\_\_\_ Students present:

\_\_\_\_

<b>Intercultural content</b>	<b>Observed</b>		<b>Comments, examples</b>
Cultural products and achievements of the target language countries (Big C culture)	Yes	No	
Behaviours of people from different cultures (small c culture)	Yes	No	
Values of different national cultures	Yes	No	
Dealing with English-speaking cultures	Yes	No	
Raising awareness of the students' own culture	Yes	No	
Developing intercultural knowledge	Yes	No	
Developing intercultural skills	Yes	No	
Developing intercultural attitudes	Yes	No	
Developing intercultural communication	Yes	No	
Dealing with taboos, stereotypes or bias (towards different cultures)	Yes	No	
Integration of cultural elements	Yes	No	
Comparison of cultures	Yes	No	
Dealing with differences in verbal communication	Yes	No	
Dealing with differences in non-verbal communication	Yes	No	
Intercultural pragmatics/discourse	Yes	No	
Intercultural content integrated with any other content	Yes	No	
Other intercultural content:			

---

Other content focus (not culture related):

<b>Description of the lesson</b>	Observed	
Theoretical content	Yes	No
Practical content	Yes	No
Interaction	Yes	No
Teaching/presenting new content	Yes	No
Practicing things taught earlier		
Discussion of previous homework in class	Yes	No
Activity types	-	-
Experiential learning	Yes	No
Use of ICT / multimedia materials	Yes	No
Homework for next class	Yes	No

Other:

<b>Teacher's role</b>	Observed	
Presenter of new knowledge	Yes	No
Facilitator	Yes	No
Organizer	Yes	No
Assessor / Corrector	Yes	No
Supporter	Yes	No
Attitude to students (helpful, respectful, non-judgmental...)	Yes	No
Openness /flexibility	Yes	No
Teacher talking time	OK	+ -

Other:

<b>Students' engagement</b>	Observed	
Level of activity	-	-
Work forms: frontal, individual tasks, pair work, group work, whole class work	-	-
Students' interest/enjoyment	Yes	No
Cooperation/communication among students	Yes	No
Relating to other students' (cultural) input	Yes	No
Discipline problems	Yes	No

Other:

---

## APPENDIX B

### Teacher interview questions

It was a pleasure to attend some of your classes. Thank you for the opportunity. Now I would like to ask you a few questions about the course in order to understand more about it. The interview is voluntary; you can decide to withdraw at any time. Please be aware that in order to protect the privacy of all the participants of my research, I will use pseudonyms or codes to refer to them, so your name will not appear anywhere. Still, I would like to ask you to sign this consent form to allow me to record the interview.

1. I would like to know a little about the background of the course.
  - 1.1. What are the major aims of this course?
  - 1.2. For how many years has this course been taught?
  - 1.3. Did you design the course or were you given this course to teach?
    - 1.3.1. If you have designed it, what were your aims and guidelines in designing the course?
  - 1.4. Do other colleagues teach this or very similar courses?
2. I would like to ask you about the course contents.
  - 2.1. I have seen your course description and in it the main topics that you deal with. Why did you choose to address these topics?
  - 2.2. Have the topics changed throughout the years? If yes, how?
  - 2.3. What textbook and/or other educational material do you rely on?
  - 2.4. Why did you choose or keep these (textbooks or other materials) in your syllabus?
  - 2.5. How have these changed throughout the years?
3. Could we talk about the teaching approaches in the course?
  - 3.1. Considering other approaches: How do you address the different topics in your syllabus?
  - 3.2. What oral and written tasks are the students required to do in class and as home assignment?
  - 3.3. How have the tasks changed throughout the years?
  - 3.4. How and why did you choose these tasks?
  - 3.5. Is one of your aims in the course to develop the students' English language proficiency? If yes, did you design tasks to integrate students' English language development and the intercultural content of the course?
  - 3.6. Please describe a task/topic/material that works well, in your experience. Why does it work well? How do you know that it does?
  - 3.7. Please describe a task/topic/material that doesn't/didn't work well, in your experience. Why doesn't/didn't it work well? How do you know that it doesn't/didn't?
4. Let's talk about how the students see this course.
  - 4.1. What are the students' attitudes toward the course?
  - 4.2. How do they give feedback about the course?
  - 4.3. How do the students react to the presentations and the activities that were held?
  - 4.4. What interests them and what doesn't? Did you change the syllabus in the light of this? If yes, how?
5. Finally, I would like to ask you about your evaluation of the course.
  - 5.1. Do you think this is a successful course? Are you happy with it?
  - 5.2. Can you see the growth in the students' intercultural competence/cultural competence as a result of the course?

- 5.3. In your opinion, what do the students learn from the course?
- 5.4. What benefits could you mention about the course?
- 5.5. What difficulties could you mention about the course?
- 5.6. In your view what could be changed to improve the course?
- 5.7. Apart from the issues we have already discussed, would you like to share some more of your views about this course?

## APPENDIX C

### Student interview questions

Thank you for your participation in this interview. I would like to ask you a few questions about the course. The interview is voluntary; you can decide to withdraw at any time you want. Please be aware that in order to protect the privacy of all the participants of my research, I will use pseudonyms or codes to refer to them, so your names will not appear anywhere. Still, I would like to ask you to sign this consent form to allow me to record the interview.

1. Why did you choose to take this course? (If the course is compulsory, the question will be skipped)
2. What were your expectations of this course?
3. What do you think of the topics that this course discusses? Which topics do you find interesting or relevant? Which ones are boring or irrelevant? (Please remember that something that is relevant may not necessarily be too interesting....)
4. Now think about the course materials (handouts, readings, ppt-s, materials used in class, etc). Which of these did you find interesting or relevant? Which ones were boring or irrelevant?
5. And how about the teaching methods? How relevant/interesting/useful were the assignments, activities, the teacher's methods?
6. I would like to ask you about the impact of the course
  - 6.1. How did this course affect your cultural knowledge?
  - 6.2. How did this course affect your attitudes to different cultures?
  - 6.3. How did this course affect your cultural/intercultural skills?
  - 6.4. In what ways did the course raise your awareness about your own culture? And about cultural differences?
  - 6.5. On the whole, did the course live up to your expectations? What were its best features?
  - 6.6. If you had the chance to change something about the course (topics, home assignments, materials), what would it be?
7. The following question would be asked to the students who do not participate in class and where the teacher talks most of the time.
8. I noticed that the majority of students did not (or: do not) participate in class. Is this because you're not interested in the content, you don't like the teacher's way of teaching, you feel shy, or something else?
9. And finally a few questions about your experience about cultural learning:
  - 9.1. Was this your only course about culture or intercultural communication in your training? What other culture related courses have you taken so far? Are you planning to take more courses related to culture?
  - 9.2. How important do you think it is to have culture related courses in your training programme?
  - 9.3. What ways of learning about culture(s) do you find the most useful?
  - 9.4. Have you ever been in a situation for an extended period – at least a month – that allowed you to experience cultural differences in people's behavior, thinking, attitudes, etc.? (E.g., during a study trip abroad, living abroad, being intensively involved with people from different cultures in your own country, etc.)

- 9.5. Have you ever had difficulties in understanding a cultural phenomenon or behavior? Have you ever had difficulty communicating with someone from another culture due to the cultural differences between you? Please tell me what happened.