

DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

MAROUA TALBI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE  
IN THE ENGLISH MAJOR  
PROGRAMMES AT A HUNGARIAN  
UNIVERSITY:  
A CASE STUDY

2023

Eötvös Loránd University  
Faculty of Education and Psychology  
Language Pedagogy PhD Programme

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## **Dedication**

To the soul of my grandfather  
You are going to be missed

To my parents  
You are the reason for my success



## Abstract

The present dissertation focuses on the teaching of intercultural competence (IC) in tertiary education. Sercu and her colleagues (2005) argued that students' IC development tends to be overlooked by teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), as they are more committed to teaching language than culture. The present exploratory case study using qualitative methods seeks to describe and analyse how the IC of EFL students is promoted in courses at BA, MA, and PhD levels and in the teacher training programme at a major university in Hungary. It also explores good practices for enhancing the IC of future EFL professionals in the same context. Systematic class observations as well as an analysis of the reading materials and course documents were carried out to examine the features of IC development in the examined courses. These procedures were followed by semi-structured interviews with the tutors and programme leaders, and group interviews with the students to examine their views on the courses were also conducted. The results suggest that the development of the students' IC is explicitly promoted in the observed courses by discussing and comparing issues concerning both English-speaking cultures and those of the students. It was also found that both course tutors and programme leaders emphasized the importance of incorporating IC development in the English major programmes. To do so, they used a variety of materials aimed at boosting students' IC (e.g., empathy, interpreting skills, and challenging stereotypes). As for the teacher trainees, the activities used in the classroom were aimed at helping them implement activities focusing on culture and interculturality in their future courses.

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## List of abbreviations and acronyms

EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
FLT	Foreign language teaching
Gint	Group interview
IC	Intercultural competence
ICC	Intercultural communicative competence
NNS	Non-native speaker
RQ	Research question
S	Student
T	Tutor

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## 1 Introduction

In light of accelerating globalisation and more frequent contact between people from different cultural contexts and various backgrounds, the acquisition of *intercultural competence* (IC) is becoming increasingly important for the creation of mutual understanding and healthy relationships among diverse individuals as well as the overcoming of cultural misunderstandings (Eken, 2015; Pinto, 2018; Salem, 2012; Sercu et al., 2005). In foreign language teaching (FLT), there is a growing push to prepare learners for living in a multicultural world (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al., 2003; Menyhei, 2016). As such, the development of communicative competence should go hand-in-hand with the development of IC. Otherwise, foreign language students will become “*fluent fools*” (Bennett, 1993, p. 16) who can speak the target language but are not knowledgeable in regard to relevant cultural contexts and meanings.

The incorporation of IC in language courses is aimed at promoting ethnorelative attitudes, questioning practices and preconceptions that are taken for granted, and acknowledging diversity around the world (Pinto, 2018). According to Byram (1997), the main goal of including IC in language classes is for language users to become intercultural speakers of the target language. The term “intercultural speakers” was introduced to describe interlocutors involved in intercultural interactions who are concerned with the “effective exchange of information and maintenance of human relationships” (Byram, 1997, p. 32). They are also depicted as language users who can interpret events from multiple perspectives, and are willing to learn about and interact with people from different cultures, and possess knowledge regarding the countries of their interlocutors as well as their own.

A number of studies have highlighted the need to include IC development in the training of in-service and pre-service language teachers (Byram et al., 2002; Eken, 2015; Gu, 2016; Han & Song, 2011; Kahraman, 2016; Lázár, 2011; Önalán, 2005; Pinto, 2018; Usó-Juan &



Martinez-Flor, 2008; Willems, 2002). Lázár (2006) argued that “developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that learners need for successful intercultural communication should be first and foremost the task of the language teacher” (p. 220). Therefore, the inclusion of IC development in language courses is crucial for in-service and pre-service language teachers, as they are the ones who will teach future generations of foreign language speakers.

Despite the clear importance of teaching IC, courses with cultural and intercultural content are not always widely offered to students. For example, in his study on the Tunisian context Hermessi (2017) indicated that there was very limited cultural content in teachers’ secondary school language books. Such materials may hinder both the development of learners’ IC as well as the teachers’ ability to implement IC development in their own courses. In the same context, a more recent study was conducted by Abid and Moalla (2019) that assessed intercultural contacts represented in a Tunisian EFL textbook designed for third year secondary students. It was found that the textbook included a limited number of tasks which included representations of intercultural contacts and interculturality; instead, the book focused mainly the promotion of students’ linguistic competence with little emphasis on IC. These two studies showcase an educational system where IC is not included in teacher training programmes, and this shows how culture and IC development are not part of secondary education. It is likely that this lack of emphasis on the implementation of IC development is due to the fact that IC is not part of the teacher training curriculum at Tunisian universities, since the textbook designers are also EFL teachers. This then suggests that secondary school EFL teachers are not equipped to develop the IC of their students.

This dissertation examines the practices for developing IC in English major programmes at a major Hungarian university with the goal of applying the findings in similar training settings that might be looking into how to develop their English (or other foreign language) major programmes by incorporating the development of IC. In her PhD thesis, Menyhei (2016)

maintained that there was a growing interest in teaching and learning IC at Hungarian universities. Therefore, this research is conducted in the Hungarian context to describe and analyse how the IC of future English language professionals is developed in courses at BA, MA, and PhD levels and in the teacher training programme of a major Hungarian university. The second aim of the present research is to identify effective practices for developing the IC of future EFL professionals. To examine the issues raised, this study uses a qualitative case study approach to gain in-depth knowledge about cultural and intercultural courses.

In the following chapters, this dissertation presents the *theoretical background* of the study by defining the key concepts and reviewing previous empirical studies related to the integration of cultural content and IC in tertiary education in different programmes, such as medical and engineering. Then, studies about IC development in English major programmes at universities are examined. These studies are connected to topics such as IC teaching materials, teachers' attitudes towards and practices for the inclusion of IC in their language courses, programme leaders' attitudes towards developing IC in English language programmes, and students' attitudes towards developing their IC. This section is followed by the *research methods* chapter, where the rationale of the research and the questions are presented. The rest of this chapter is devoted to details regarding the design of the proposed research, the methods of data collection, (i.e., information on the setting, participants, and various research instruments used to answer the research questions), and the methods of data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the *results and discussion* of the document analysis, observations, materials analysis, and interviews. The IC content in the documents (e.g., syllabi) are examined. In addition, the results of the observations are discussed and compared with the other findings. Then, the various teaching materials used by the participating tutors are explored. Furthermore, the attitudes of teachers, programme leaders, and students towards the development of students' IC are discussed and compared to the literature presented in the earlier chapters of this dissertation.

The final chapter, the *conclusion* summarises the findings, highlights the limitations of the research, and explores the implications of the dissertation research.

## 2 Theoretical background

In this chapter, the key concepts related to culture and IC are defined and explained. The chapter also outlines empirical studies that have examined the ways that culture and IC are taught in tertiary education in different programmes, namely medical, engineering, and business training, as well as to English language majors in various contexts. Teaching materials that have been used to develop students' IC are also presented, and in the final part of the chapter research articles regarding the attitudes that teachers, programme leaders, and students hold concerning the implementation of IC development at the tertiary level are reviewed.

### 2.1 Key concepts

In what follows, the definitions of keywords used in the current research, namely *culture* and *IC*, are explored in order to reach an understanding of what they mean and how they can be integrated into language teaching. Different IC models are also reviewed in this section to gain a deeper insight into this concept. Lastly, I justify the adoption of the definitions of the two concepts that best match the purposes of the present research.

#### 2.1.1 Culture

In his book *The Silent Language*, Hall (1959) defines culture as “the way of life of a people, the sum of their learned behavior patterns, attitudes, and material things” (p. 43). In other words, culture signifies the verbal and non-verbal behaviour, attitudes, and products of a group of people. It is believed that different aspects of people's lives are affected by culture, such as their way of thinking, problem-solving approaches, and emotional expression (Hall, 1976). He also points out that culture and communication are interrelated, claiming that culture influences what people say, as well as when and how they say it. Thus, the context and the meaning attributed to an utterance are inextricably related.

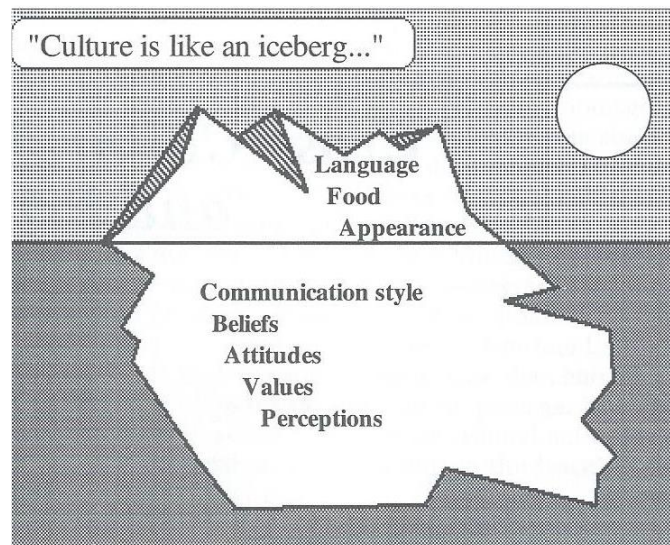
Ruhly (1976) described culture as an iceberg, stating that

culture has been likened to an iceberg, nine-tenths of which lies beneath the surface. This hidden area underlies our behaviors, influences our perceptions, and is out of our immediate frame of reference until we plunge beneath the surface-or, perhaps, like the Titanic, encounter it unexpectedly. (p. 4)

Referring to this analogy, Levine and Adelman (1993) present a visualisation of culture. As shown in Figure 2.1, in this model, phenomena such as language, food, and appearance are visible (i.e., they are easily accessible for analysis and understanding). On the other hand, this analogy also shows that numerous cultural aspects, such as perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, and communication styles, are below the surface and hidden from the interlocutors.

**Figure 2.1**

*Levine and Adelman's Model of Culture (1993, p. xviii)*

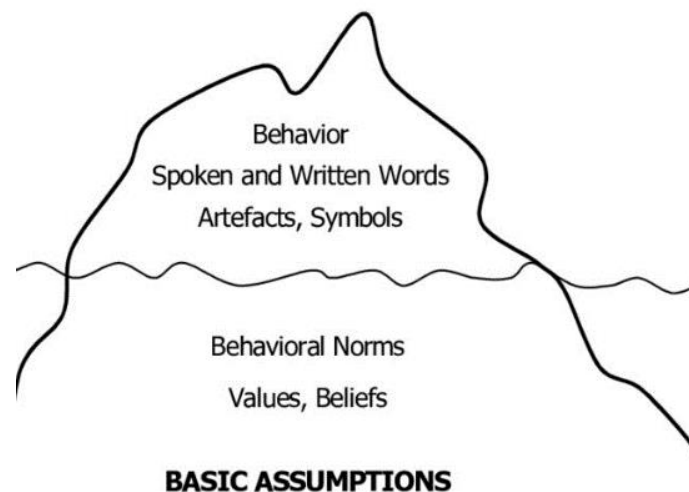


Several interpretations of the iceberg model have been offered. Among others, Friedman and Antal (2005) described the visible part as including behaviour, symbols, and spoken and written language (see Figure 2.2). The larger part of the iceberg is invisible and represents assumptions about the role of the individual in the world which shape the values and norms that are shared among people. The authors claim individuals cannot be aware of the impact of their cultural values on their behaviour as they focus more on the visible part of the iceberg. As a

result, cultural misunderstandings can easily occur as the shared similarities among various cultures on the surface level can hide different interpretations at a deeper level.

## Figure 2.2

*Friedman's and Antal's Representation of Culture (2005, p. 5)*

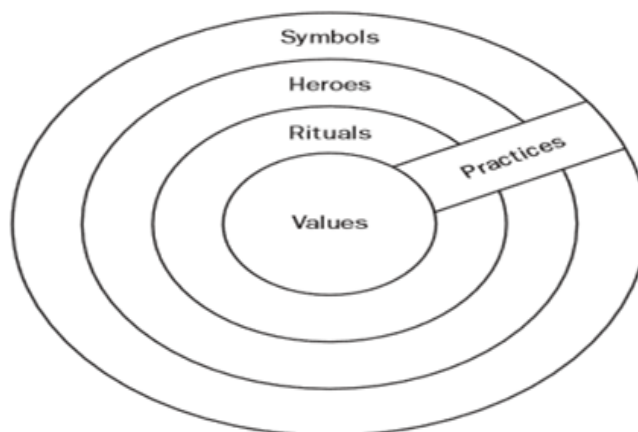


In his study, *National cultures and corporate cultures*, Hofstede (1984) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group, or category of people from others” (p. 51). In other words, individuals of the same group share many of their ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. He also points out that culture is learned from one’s social environment. This view is in line with the definition of culture provided by other researchers. For example, Hall (1976) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), among others, argue that culture is learned and shared among members of a community. Ten years later, Hofstede (1994) drew an analogy between culture and an onion (see Figure 2.3), describing culture as being constituted of two main parts: practices and values, and the components and sub-components form layers like in an onion. The values, which are at the core, are often not visible to outsiders or even to insiders. Practices – which include symbols,

heroes, and rituals – are the most visible part to outsiders, but they also carry hidden cultural meanings.

### Figure 2.3

*Hofstede's Onion Model of Culture (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8)*



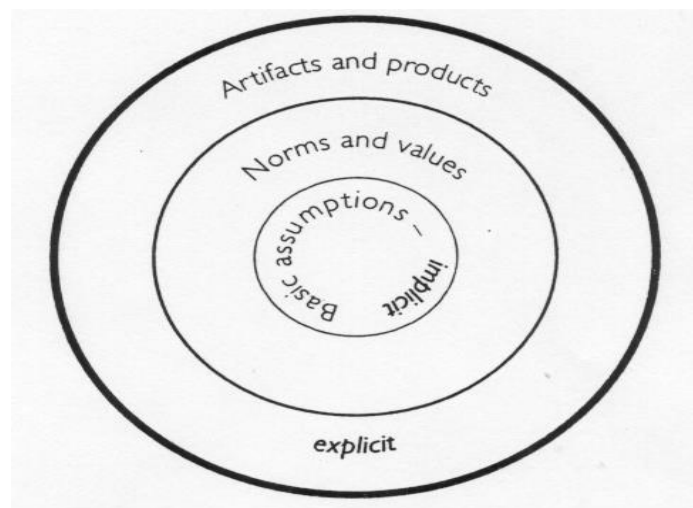
In the language learning context, Halverson (1985) examined the classroom practices at the time related to the teaching of the target culture and developing American students' vocabulary in a foreign culture context. She maintains that these two aspects of teaching often received insufficient attention in the foreign language classroom and identified difficulties such as the way culture is defined by the teacher. She points out that culture consists of 'capital C' culture, which encompasses geography and history among other components, and 'small c' culture, which includes the behaviours, values, and customs associated with a given culture. Halverson concluded that teachers encounter confusion regarding which type of culture should be addressed in the classroom. Kramsch (2013) also acknowledges the role of culture in FLT, supporting Halverson's view regarding the insufficient attention placed on the inclusion of cultural content in FLT and the challenges in defining the concept of culture itself.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) see culture as the shared meanings of a group of people. They state that culture is manmade, shared by members of a group, and transmitted

through generations. As shown in Figure 2.4, they compare culture to a multi-layered onion in which there are visible and invisible aspects. The core of culture consists of assumptions about human existence and can explain differences in cultural values. The outer layer, on the other hand, is an expression of the underlying norms and values of the society that are not visible to the outsider and is the most salient aspect for non-native speakers (NNSs) as it presents the visible products. In other words, when people are in a new environment, they often notice language, food, buildings, fashion, art, and other such conspicuous elements of culture. Prejudices and prejudgments usually occur at this level, as NNSs interpret products of the target culture according to their own cultural perspectives. To avoid miscommunication, Liddicoat (2001) recommends that the knowledge of the target culture should not be limited to decontextualised facts, rather, the focus should be placed on skills development to enable foreign language users to behave appropriately with people of different cultures.

#### Figure 2.4

*Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's Model of Culture (1997, p. 22)*



Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2013) emphasise that understanding culture is crucial in the development of people's intercultural skills. They reviewed other scholars' definitions of



culture to show that culture is not innate but rather acquired through interaction between members of the same culture. This points to the importance of sharing within cultures. They claimed that culture “is learned, transmitted from generation to generation, based on symbols, and is a dynamic and integrated system” (p. 58). They maintain that culture comprises numerous elements, but highlighted in particular: religion, history, values, social organisations, and language, noting that these differ across cultures.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) claims that culture has different meanings, and it is thus difficult to reach a single definition that all researchers accept. Therefore, Spencer-Oatey defines culture as

a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour. (p. 3)

Even though there are similarities and regularities across groups, this definition underscores that people who belong to the same cultural group do not usually share the exact same beliefs or orientations toward life. This shows that “there is thus no absolute set of features that can provide a definitive basis for distinguishing one cultural group from another” (p. 4).

Holló (2014) examined the cultural dimensions in foreign language classrooms and summarised earlier definitions suggested by several authors (e.g., Hofstede, 1994; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Spencer-Oatey, 2000). She concluded that in the field of intercultural communication, culture can be defined “as the shared values and patterns of behaviour and interactions, as well as cognitive and affective concepts that are learned in the process of socialisation generation after generation” (p. 134). Shared values therefore create a sense of belonging among people in the same culture and differentiate between various groups.

Barrett and his colleagues (2014) state that culture has three facets: material, social, and subjective. Material culture represents the physical artefacts used by a group of people, such as

goods and food. Social culture is composed of social institutions such as religions and language. Subjective culture consists of beliefs, values, and behaviours that people rely on when interacting with others. The authors indicate that “the total set of cultural resources is distributed across the entire group, but each individual member of the group appropriates and uses only a subset of the total set of cultural resources potentially available to them” (pp. 13–14). Moreover, individuals can belong to several different groups when considering domains such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, occupations, or religion. In each group, it is possible that only one aspect of their culture is performed. Therefore, it can be concluded that members of a cultural group might identify with multiple cultures as opposed to just one.

The various definitions presented above reveal that there is more to developing students’ IC than teaching them a list of cultural facts (i.e., big C culture). For this reason, in this research, the definition proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2008) – presented above – is used since it highlights the complexity of culture and its impact on people’s behaviours.

In the context of language teaching, particularly in FLT, and considering the various definitions of culture addressed in this section, language courses with cultural content are tasked with incorporating aspects of big C culture (e.g., products and practices) and small c culture (e.g., values and beliefs). The following section presents and explains other components that can be considered in the development of students’ IC.

### **2.1.2 Intercultural competence**

The notion of communicative competence was introduced by Dell Hymes in 1972 to challenge the accepted linguistic theory of the time, which was mainly limited to grammatical competence. Hymes (1972), as well as Canale and Swain (1980), argued that by conceptualising language as a set of abstract rules, its socio-cultural aspect was overlooked. With this mind, Hymes introduced the notion of communicative competence, which signifies the ability to use

grammatical knowledge in different communicative situations. Canale and Swain (1980) identified three main elements of communicative competence: grammatical competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. Three years later, Canale (1983) added discourse competence. Later on, Van Ek (1986) elaborated on these elements by adding socio-cultural competence and social 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 intercultural competence (IC) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC), among others. Deardorff (2004), as well as Fantini and Tirmizi (2006), attribute this variety to the ever-evolving nature of the concept. They believe that previous definitions can no longer be considered valid as the term is still developing. In 1997, Byram highlighted a subtle 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" (p. 70). He adds that IC also includes "the individual's ability to interpret a translated document from another culture" (p. 71).

Byram further states the following:

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 encompasses the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions involved in effectively communicating with people from different cultures, whereas ICC is a more focused

concept that includes the proficiency of the target language and the ability to be flexible and mediate in intercultural interactions.

It is worth mentioning that Byram introduced the concept of ‘intercultural speaker’ instead of the notion of the native speaker. It is undeniable that imitating native speakers presents an impossible goal to achieve, as the language has not been acquired under the same conditions. One of the major drawbacks in striving to imitate native speakers is that foreign language learners can become linguistically “schizophrenic”, abandoning not only their language but also their values, beliefs, and identity to fit in to the new environment and be accepted by its members. In accordance with Byram’s viewpoint, Brown (2000) highlights that learners should be encouraged to acknowledge and view their second language identity as a supplementary aspect of their identity as a whole. This approach develops a comprehensive understanding of language acquisition which is based on valuing and respecting cultural diversity.

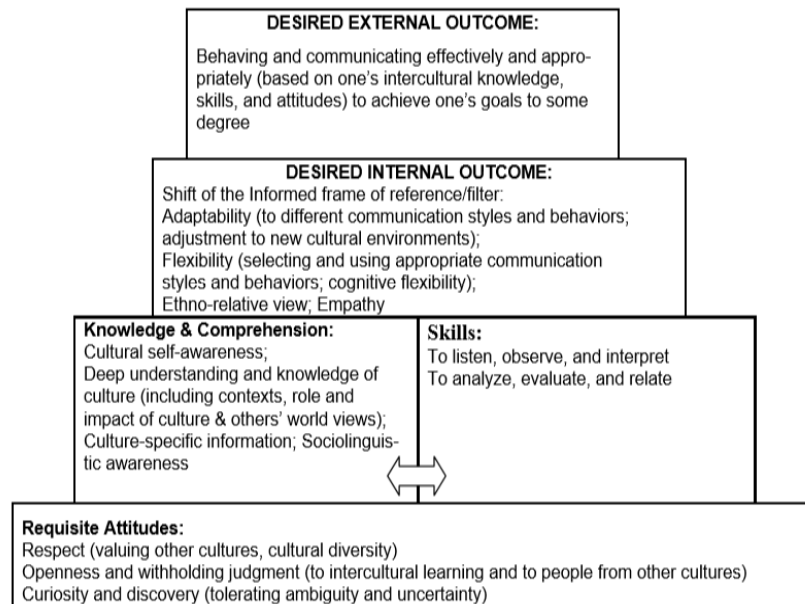
Despite the popularity of Byram’s (1997) model of ICC, some scholars, including Hild Hoff, have criticized his work. Hoff (2014) claims that the goal of component ‘attitudes’ does not encourage learners to develop critical thinking skills and consider such an approach as a “self-effacement” (p. 515). She also points out that the act of ‘adapting’ to the expectations of the target culture leads language users to develop passive roles and leads to power inequality between the participants. Furthermore, she argues that Byram’s model describes an idealistic picture of intercultural interaction through highlighting agreements among participants. According to her, Byram’s model is “painting an overly idealistic, and to some extent, naïve, picture of interculturality through its emphasis on harmony and agreement” (Hoff, 2014, p. 515). Her criticism appears to be valid, as having an intercultural dialogue can sometimes be challenging to interlocutors.

Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) define IC as the abilities needed to behave appropriately and effectively with people from different cultures. In an older study, Fantini (2000) posits that intercultural abilities are manifested through a list of traits that characterise intercultural speakers, namely, “respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, a sense of humor, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment” (p. 28). According to him, IC is composed of five dimensions: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and proficiency of the target language; these components result in the maintenance of relationships, communication with a minimum loss, and collaboration with culturally diverse people.

In order to reach a consensus on the definition and components of IC, Deardorff (2004) carried out a study involving 23 intercultural scholars in which she employed the Delphi technique, a method of structured discussion. This resulted in defining IC as the ability to behave appropriately and effectively when interacting with culturally different people. It was found that IC was composed of core aspects: attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills, which led to reaching the desired internal and external outcomes (Gopal, 2011). As shown in Figures 2.5 and 2.6, the IC elements are illustrated with two different IC visual representations: a pyramid model and a process model. According to Spitzberg and Changnon’s (2009) classification of IC models, the pyramid representation is a compositional model that presents a list of characteristics and traits that must be acquired to be considered intercultural competent. The process model shows the cyclical nature of IC development, in which the acquisition of one IC component leads to that of another.

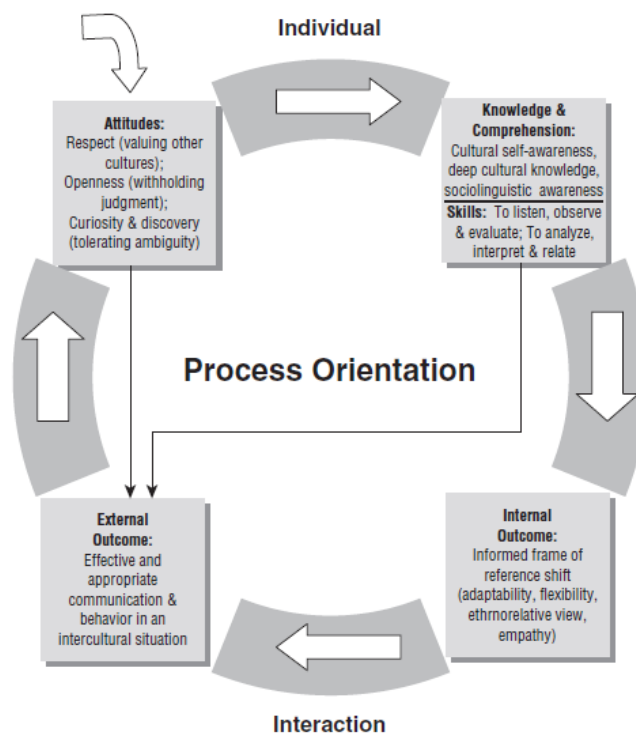
**Figure 2.5**

*Deardorff's Pyramid Model of IC (2006, p. 254)*



**Figure 2.6**

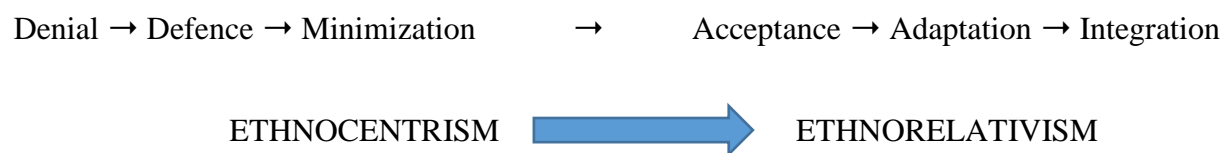
*Deardorff's Process Model of IC (2006, p. 256)*



In order to conceptualise IC, Bennett and Bennett (2004) define it as “the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts” (p. 149). In 1986, Bennett also suggested a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, proposing that greater intercultural sensitivity signified greater IC. The model underscores the linear development of the individuals’ ability to understand and process cultural differences. As illustrated in Figure 2.7, the model specifies six stages of progress from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism reflecting the capability to interpret behaviour and values from the perspective of native speakers.

**Figure 2.7**

*An Adapted Visualization of Bennett’s Model of IC (1986)*



Barrett and his colleagues (2014) defined IC as

a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself; respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people; establish positive and constructive relationships with such people; understand oneself and one’s own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural difference. (pp. 16–17)

According to them, IC comprises the following components: attitudes of tolerance, respect, openness to, and curiosity about people from other cultures, knowledge and understanding of one’s and others’ cultures, skills of multiperspectivity, discovery, interpretation, linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills. The last IC component, actions, reflects a seeking out of intercultural interactions and challenging attitudes that go against human rights (see Table 2.1).

The present research uses the widely recognized understanding of the term IC proposed by

Barrett and his colleagues (2014) to serve as the basis of this investigation<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, Barrett and his colleagues' definition of IC will be used in this research as it stresses the element of actions, which is not included in other definitions and models in the field of intercultural communication. In light of the aims of the present investigation, this definition and model are also useful as they provide a clear set of criteria for examining the participants' IC.

**Table 2.1**

*A Summary of the Intercultural Competence Model by Barrett et al. (2014)*

<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/multiplicity</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 evaluate 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> </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 with people from different 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>

<sup>1</sup> Although I use the term IC in this research, IC and ICC are used interchangeably by different authors. When referring to the work of other researchers, I use their terminology.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	
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## **2.2 Teaching culture and IC in tertiary education in English as a foreign language programmes**

In the following two subsections, some literature is reviewed concerning the incorporation of cultural content in the fields of business, medicine, and engineering which reflects the importance of IC development and the need for IC in various domains. Then, the emphasis is placed on the field of English language teaching in tertiary education. This subchapter identifies and describes the activities that are used in EFL classrooms to develop students’ IC.

### **2.2.1 Teaching culture and IC in tertiary education in general**

There has been a growing interest in integrating IC in different areas other than EFL. In the past few years, several studies have been conducted to examine the significance of IC in different fields. This section provides an overview of some of the studies that have addressed the incorporation of IC in business, medicine, and engineering.

Chiper (2015) argued for the incorporation of a discourse-based approach to develop students’ intercultural communication at business universities. She maintained that the increasingly multinational nature of business has led to the recognition of intercultural communication as a soft skill that business students need to achieve successful interactions. Hence, intercultural communication was taught to ensure respect for people from different

cultures, to develop a willingness to learn from and cooperate with others, and to engage in effective and appropriate interaction. The implementation of intercultural communication development included practical activities in which real-life situations were used.

Another study investigated the implementation of ICC development in business courses. Planken, Van Hooft, and Korzilius (2004) examined how ICC content was integrated at a university in the Netherlands. First-year students majoring in intercultural business communication had the following courses: “A foreign business language, Intercultural communication theory and research, Business communication research and methodology, and Communication and organisational management” (p. 310). Projects and activities were designed to develop their intercultural awareness and foreign language competence. For example, students were required to analyse and interpret authentic business communication held in a foreign language. Along with familiarising the students with the target language, students were exposed to other cultural aspects such as turn-taking and back-channelling.

In the medical domain, Betancourt and Cervantes (2009) claimed that schools in the United States (US) have acknowledged the importance of including aspects of cross-cultural education in medical studies considering the diverse patient population and the direct connection between successful communication and health results. Their study reported on a 4-year cross-cultural course implemented by a committee composed of deans, administrators, and students at Harvard medical school. One of the activities involved watching and discussing a cross-cultural documentary video about the experience of patients and their families from different cultures with the American health care system. The authors concluded that this activity had a positive impact on students’ awareness in regard to possible conflicts as well as influence health decisions and consequences.

A study conducted by Yu (2011) explored the development of the students’ IC in the engineering domain. She created a tutorial to help American teachers in the engineering

programmes integrate IC into their course contents. The designed tutorial aimed to overcome the challenges teachers often experience in their classes, such as lack of time, training, and materials. This approach was implemented in a course entitled “Written communication for engineers” in which undergraduate students learned how to give presentations and write progress report, among other goals. Raising students’ awareness of cultural differences and using examples of misunderstandings between people from different cultures were believed to develop students’ IC. The author highlighted that such activities can be realised through the following materials: research articles and books, critical incidents, and texts from different cultures. Such materials can help learners make cultural comparisons and discuss potential issues that students may face in relation to cultural differences. It was emphasised that the use of the materials should match the course content and the needs of the students. For example, the author shared her experience regarding the length of the readings that her students had to do “[...] students can be intimidated by scholarly readings, so I choose publications that have an overall readable style, are relatively short, or are organised in such a way that shorter excerpts can be used to convey certain key points” (p. 86).

A year later, Yu (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study with 272 third-, fourth-, and fifth-year American engineering students. As it was found that they had no understanding of IC and were not interculturally competent, she suggested activities to teach IC to the students. The author suggested an IC course to teach students how to effectively and appropriately communicate in the engineering industry. She recommended that teachers use culture-general teaching methods rather than having students learn about a particular culture. These methods were aimed at raising students’ intercultural awareness, promoting their knowledge about their own culture, and preparing them to interact with people from different cultures. Yu claimed that this can be achieved by lectures supported by cultural artefacts, videos, and intercultural experiences which students can reflect on and discuss them. Critical incidents (i.e., examples

of cultural misunderstandings) are also proposed as a method through which the students can discuss the reasons behind a particular misunderstanding and how it could be solved. The aim of the activities “is not to familiarise students with a particular culture, but to help students see culture’s influence on communication, to exemplify relevant cultural factors, and to evoke positive feelings from students toward cultural differences” (p. 198), which suggests that the ultimate aim of the course was to raise the students’ awareness of cultural diversity.

As shown by the studies mentioned earlier, IC has been incorporated in various fields such as business, medicine, and engineering. It can be concluded that teaching IC is important in bringing about more successful communication between people of different cultures. The following section examines how IC is integrated in English language teaching (ELT), particularly in tertiary education.

### **2.2.2 Teaching culture and IC in tertiary education to English major students**

This section explores different perspectives on the incorporation of IC development in EFL courses. It includes various studies that were conducted in different countries and addressed issues linked to the promotion of EFL students’ IC.

The relevance of IC is demonstrated by the Council of Europe ’s endeavour to encourage the development of IC at different educational levels. In its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, published in 2008, the Council of Europe recognised the role of universities in the development of IC, 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 emphasis on the teaching of IC 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).

The Council of Europe (2008) identified the IC components that should be taught. It was recommended that IC education should include attitudes of openness, appreciation of cultural diversity, awareness about religious diversity and its effect on society, and cultural products such as clothing, symbols, and music. It was emphasized that students’ awareness of history and past events should also be raised. For example, students could learn about the Holocaust to raise their awareness of genocide and to promote tolerance. In the paper, focusing on such an event served the following purposes:

To raise awareness of all of the genocides and crimes against humanity that marked the 20th century; to educate pupils about how to prevent crimes against humanity; and to foster understanding, tolerance and friendship between nations, ethnic groups and religious communities, while remaining faithful to the Council of Europe’s fundamental principles. (p. 44)

This shows that areas of education such as democracy education are linked to IC education through aspects such as tolerance, openness, and understanding. The study highlights the crucial role of creating social cohesion and appreciating cultural diversity.

In terms of language learning and teaching, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (2001) clearly indicates the significance of linguistic diversity as well as the development of students’ ability to relate to different cultures and languages. This is reflected in the suggestions concerning the objectives for curriculum design in foreign language learning. For example, it is recommended that objectives should be created to develop students’ general cultural competences, namely, their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Even if all of these components cannot be fully addressed, it is still possible to develop

some of them, such as raising awareness towards promoting openness and curiosity towards new perspectives.

In another study about the implementation of IC development in tertiary education, Willems (2002) stressed the need to implement changes in teacher education due to the ongoing changes seen in the world. He highlights that FLT should involve the teaching of IC to develop students' openness and negotiation skills. Similar to what was mentioned in the *White paper on intercultural dialogue* (2008), he urged the implementation of interculturality into the teacher education curriculum: "language teachers, for too long fed on too meagre a diet in their education, need to be offered an exciting field of study in addition to their traditional professional curriculum. This field of study targets intercultural communication" (p. 10). As highlighted in the quote, rather than solely aiming to develop linguistic competence to prepare the students for intercultural interactions, language teachers should attach importance to teaching the negotiation of meaning and developing students' attitudes and knowledge. In addition, he argued that teachers need training regarding the implementation of IC in their courses. Such trainings should prepare them to teach the target language as well as some facts about the target culture and should also assist them in teaching students how to approach intercultural situations. This was supported by Amery (2021), who concluded that teachers should be equipped to help students suspend judgments and engage successfully in intercultural encounters.

Sercu and her colleagues (2005) referred to professional development when teaching IC, suggesting the teaching of cultural concepts such as "culture shock". They also emphasised that experiential learning should be conducted to further involve students in learning about culture. According to the authors, student teachers should study "how the language embodies the concepts and values of the culture" (p. 178). They added that teacher trainees should also show how language and culture can be integrated in a lesson as well as the most appropriate

teaching methods for doing so. They state that the responsibility of foreign language teachers is

introducing learners, whether young or old, to learning which challenges and modifies their perspective on the world and their cultural identity as members of a given social and national group, are enormous. Teacher education has to face the implications and provide them with the practical and theoretical support for those responsibilities. (p. 180)

In a study examining IC implementation in English language courses, Holló and Lázár (1999) found that most EFL tutors did not integrate ICC in their teaching practice despite stressing its significance in helping students achieve successful intercultural interactions. The authors therefore proposed a number of intercultural activities that did not require extra time or effort but rather careful planning by the teachers. They argued that content-based language development courses that usually aim to develop students' English language skills also present an opportunity for the inclusion of intercultural content. This can be presented through supplementary materials used in addition to coursebooks, such as "worksheets, newspaper & magazine articles, handbooks, EFL books with a cultural focus and videos, etc" (para. 2). The authors also provided a detailed account of how to integrate specific intercultural activities, such as "role play, summarising, interpreting (hidden) meaning, formal and informal speaking and writing, discussions" (para. 3). They also recommended activities such as "socio-cultural comparison and personalisation" (para. 3) which can be effective in fostering students' knowledge of their own culture relative to others. Mutlu and Dollar (2017) also highlighted the relevance of cultural comparison, revealing that it was "the only way to help learners become interculturally competent speakers" (p. 160). In addition, Holló and Lázár (1999) pointed out that teaching cultural and intercultural content does not mean teaching civilisation. Other cultural aspects must be included, such as "speech and behaviour patterns as well as characteristics of discourse" (para. 2). Culture-related topics can be introduced and connected with the language aim of the course, such as speaking, reading, and listening. This was

supported by Medgyes (2017), who maintained that all (or most) of the element of IC could be combined with language teaching. Teachers are often free to choose the course contents and the teaching materials used in the classroom, and even if they are not, cultural topics are often presented in language teaching materials at all levels. In his book *The Non-native teacher*, Medgyes (2017) describes the difference between formalist and activist foreign language teachers, which is based on the content they prioritise. According to him,

the formalist teacher is preoccupied with the learning content, while the carrier content is merely a pretext for her to introduce and practise new language items [...] the activist teacher, on the other hand, claims that it is the carrier content that should stand in focus. (p. 27)

In other words, some teachers may prioritize the teaching of grammar and vocabulary while considering learning about cultural content as a secondary learning objective. However, other teachers may put more focus on implementing cultural content in their courses as they view culture as an essential element of language learning.

In a more recent study, Holló (2017) conducted an interview study involving eight teachers of various culture-related subjects who taught courses which included intercultural content, as well as five EFL teachers in the BA, MA, and teacher training programmes at a Hungarian university. The teachers who taught courses with intercultural content were eager to raise students' awareness of cultural diversity and develop their intercultural skills and attitudes. They referred to various methods that could be used to develop students' ICC, such as analysing films and texts using discourse analysis and questioning techniques, as well as cooperative learning approaches, such as debates, followed up by insightful activities. Other methods and approaches used by the teachers to integrate interculturality into their courses included comparing different discourse structures to help students understand thought patterns in various languages and the analysis of gender representation. They also mentioned experiential learning as a method to teach ICC, which supported Sercu and her colleagues' (2015) claims about relying on students' ICC experiences and interactions to teach intercultural content.



In the same vein, Usó-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 presenting audio- and video-taped cultural incidents and listening to songs and jokes from the target culture to develop students' intercultural awareness. Moreover, Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor reported that role-play activities can enable students to simulate cultural differences through speech acts, including complimenting and apologizing, thereby improving their speaking skills. Another activity that was proposed was asking native speakers about their culture, including their educational system and eating habits. These activities, among many others were aimed at expanding students' 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 misunderstanding activities and the analysis of written texts. In terms of writing skills, activities such as designing stories which involve describing what is happening in a series of pictures can be used. The authors presented a detailed description of the use of these activities, demonstrating how they can be integrated with three steps: explanation, collection, and implementation. In the first step, the students are informed that they will focus on the culture of the target language. They are then asked to collect various materials related to the cultural issues to be discussed, such as pictures or recorded interviews with native speakers. The teacher then collects the materials and uses them in the course. Eken (2015) argued that this approach could result in increased engagement among students as they contribute to the materials used in class.

In Indonesia, Morganna and his colleagues (2020) reached the same conclusions in their investigation of the approaches and methods used in peer teaching sessions conducted by 31 EFL MA students. The participants had been observed for two months during their previous semester in a micro-teaching course. The students were asked to simulate English teaching situations, with their partners roleplaying as English students. The students used the following

activities to integrate intercultural content into their lessons: “play a guessing game, using intercultural materials, assigning a group discussion, assigning a free-talk activity in pairs, and assigning a peer-checking activity [...] comparing and contrasting two lingua-cultures [...] peer-checking” (p. 662). These activities aimed to develop the critical thinking of the students as well as their knowledge of the target cultures.

Worawong and her colleagues (2017) reported that, in Thailand, the Ministry of Education has adopted the CEFR developed by the Council of Europe in 2001. This policy also included the incorporation of interculturality into the English language curriculum. As such, Thai university students are encouraged to become proficient in the target language as well as interculturally competent. To examine the IC (with a special focus on non-verbal communication) of 44 students in an English language course using CEFR-based activities, the authors conducted a mixed approach study. The course was designed as follows:

The teacher/researcher taught language use in the situations given, next the students watched 2 video clips, and conducted an interview with foreigners. The students then prepared for a role-play. They performed twice with different topics: Table Manners, and Culture Shock. (p. 39)

The analysis of the role-plays revealed that the students in the two role-plays used non-verbal communication such as gestures, touching, and facial expressions appropriately. However, there were also times when they behaved inappropriately, such as making prolonged gazing at their interlocutor instead of maintaining regular eye contact. To avoid similar problems, the authors recommended practicing additional role-plays to facilitate intercultural interactions and promote students’ non-verbal communication skills. This type of activity was favoured by the students (Kahraman, 2016; Worawong et al., 2017) because it was novel and created lifelike situations but in a safe environment. It was concluded that role-play activities could help develop students’ IC and prepare them for interactions in a multicultural world. It was recommended that students’ intercultural experiences should be shared to promote

discussion and raise their awareness about the misunderstandings that can result from cultural differences.

Another study examining the development of students' IC in the context of FLT was conducted in Turkey. 93 EFL students identified numerous activities used by teachers to enhance their ICC (Mutlu & Dollar, 2017). The most frequent activities used by tutors were sharing their personal experiences with English-speaking cultures or asking the students to visualise life in the target cultures. However, the students pointed out that other teaching practices could be more efficient, such as talking about different cultures, presenting products from the target cultures (e.g., movies or music), taking an interactive approach through asking students about their experiences in the target cultures, and comparing Turkish culture with English-speaking cultures. This was in line with the findings from Kahraman's (2016) study, which revealed that students were willing to learn about different cultures through reading poems and listening to songs. However, it was found that these activities were rarely used in their courses. The study recommends that teachers introduce more cultural elements into the classroom and redesign the curriculum to meet the demands of globalisation. However, Kahraman also asserted that teachers are often limited to the use of textbooks as teaching materials, which may contain very little cultural content. However, this discrepancy between views and teaching practices can be overcome if future teachers are exposed to courses which include intercultural content during their teacher training; this would help to ensure that they are able to successfully integrate interculturality in their teaching practices:

[...] teacher education programs should be revised and may be added courses such as intercultural communication in order to equip prospective teachers with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. Once language teachers become more knowledgeable and competent regarding this issue, they will eventually be more able to integrate cultural practices in their teaching and meet the requirements of the learners in today's changing world. (Kahraman, 2017, p. 10)

This section underlined the importance of integrating culture and IC into EFL and the way it could be implemented in tertiary education in the courses of English major students, particularly to future English language teachers. In order to reach a better understanding of what this entails, the literature examining teaching materials for the development of IC is reviewed in the next section. Furthermore, the attitudes of tutors, programme leaders, and students regarding the development of students' IC are also examined.

### **2.3 Research on IC development in English major programmes**

This section is divided into four parts. The first part is devoted to examining previous studies on IC teaching materials, while the second reviews empirical studies about teachers' attitudes towards and practices for teaching language and developing IC in an integrated way. The third part presents relevant findings about programme leaders' attitudes towards the implementation of IC development. The last part presents studies on students' attitudes towards the integration of IC in their language development programmes.

#### **2.3.1 Teaching materials for developing IC in foreign language teaching**

This section presents an overview of the studies that have investigated IC teaching materials, mainly textbooks. Two studies that examined IC teaching materials in the Tunisian context are also included.

According to Lázár (2011) and Önalán (2005), textbooks can be considered the foundation of the course in terms of what to include or neglect in the syllabus. Therefore, if there is no cultural content in the textbook, teachers will be less likely to design tasks and activities related to IC. Similarly, Sercu and her colleagues (2005) stressed the central role of textbooks in FLT. Their questionnaire study with language teachers found that they relied mainly on textbooks for the inclusion of ICC in their courses, while others used additional complementary teaching materials. Hence, if the cultural content is limited in the textbooks,

teachers are less likely to be willing to include ICC content into their lessons. Therefore, they recommended that teachers should undergo training to reflect on the quality of textbooks and to learn how to adapt materials in order to ensure the inclusion of ICC in their foreign language courses.

In the Turkish context, textbooks are designed to teach British and American culture. Önalın (2005) claimed that providing basic cultural information did not meet the students' needs, as it did not prepare them for living in a multicultural world; this could be achieved by putting increased emphasis on cultural awareness.

Byram and his colleagues (2002) stressed that teaching materials could be modified to raise students' awareness of latent cultural content. They indicated that although textbooks are mainly designed to teach grammar and vocabulary, teachers can enrich them by including intercultural perspectives. For instance, they suggested that "teachers can start from the theme and content in the text-book, and then encourage learners to ask further questions and make comparisons" (p. 16); teachers can also include vocabulary items that are related to cultural diversity, such as dignity, prejudice, stereotypes, and racism.

To integrate ICC in language teaching, Byram and his colleagues (2002) recommended relying on authentic texts:

Including audio recordings and a variety of written documents and visuals such as maps, photographs, diagrams and cartoons... It is a question of challenging the reader by bringing together texts and visual materials which present contrasting views. Learners need to acquire concepts for analysing texts more than factual information. (p. 18)

The use of such materials and the implementation of the above approach can lead to the development of both the awareness and critical thinking skills of students.

Another study investigating the use of IC teaching materials was conducted by Menyhei (2016), who found that the three teachers examined, who taught two seminars and one lecture

on IC preferred to use materials that they had gathered themselves rather than those provided by textbooks. For example, the teachers used pictures and *Time Magazine* articles about cultural issues. Furthermore, they relied on their own intercultural experiences as well as those of the students to facilitate discussions on cultural differences. The results revealed that teachers preferred using content that they found authentic. These results were contradictory to those of Baltaci and Tanis (2018) who found that in-service teachers relied mainly on course books to teach culture. This result was explained by the fact that they would like to respect the time allocated to culture teaching.

In a study by Young and Sachdev (2011), 105 EFL teachers in the USA, UK, and France were specifically asked about the classroom materials they used to develop the students' ICC. The participants agreed that the curriculum did not support ICC development. The textbooks used dealt only with the superficial aspect of culture (i.e., big C culture), focusing mostly on topics like geography and food. Therefore, the teachers in the study reporting using other materials such as newspapers or videos from the target culture, as highlighted in the excerpt below:

In the UK, newspaper articles about shopping habits in the UK, 'metrosexuality' in London (the growing interest in fashion and personal grooming among young men), global warming; [...] the royal family, and excerpts from a soap opera. In the USA, [...] newspaper articles about a music festival being held in San Francisco, excerpts from a guide to foreign visitors about the social effects of the smoking ban in San Franciscan public places, reports of the anniversary of the death of the 19th century author Mark Twain, and a guide to what to do for Thanksgiving Day. [...] the comedy programme 'Friends', the CBS Evening News [...]. In France, [...] newspaper articles about English restaurants that had received stars from the Michelin Guide, an article describing an alleged conspiracy to murder the late Princess Diana, an article about Prince William's love life, and an article about how the English weather was changing as a result of global warming. Television programmes [...] included excerpts from an Agatha Christie murder mystery, headlines from the BBC News 24 television channel, and extracts from a recent Hollywood film. (p. 92)

The use of such materials is believed to develop students' listening and speaking skills while also promoting their socio-cultural and sociolinguistic abilities; this helps to prepare students

for successful interactions with speakers from the target culture. An interesting point which was not mentioned in other studies was that the materials were chosen based on whether they were up-to-date and met the students' expectations.

In the Tunisian context, Abid (2012) evaluated secondary school English textbooks used for grades 6, 7, 8, and 9 in terms of their cultural content. It is worth noting that both the Official Programme for Secondary Education (1998) and the Official Programme of Teaching English (2006) reflect the importance of culture when teaching languages and stress the goal of developing students' ability to learn about and interact with people from different cultures. However, she found that intercultural content was not included in the textbooks and that the cultural content that was included was not adequate for preparing students to interact with people from different cultures. Instead, Tunisian EFL textbooks were designed with a focus on teaching grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. As a result, the students relied on other sources for acquiring cultural knowledge such as television as a way to develop their knowledge about the target culture.

A more recent study was conducted by Abid and Moalla (2019) to evaluate the intercultural contacts illustrated in the content of the Tunisian EFL textbook entitled *Activate and Perform* which was designed for third-year secondary school students. The content of the book was assessed "in terms of the frequency and variety of intercultural contacts and the distribution of their forms, places of interaction, situations, characters, topics, and skills" (p. 4). It was found that the intercultural contacts described interactions between a Tunisian learner and a British individual, overlooking other cultural backgrounds. This limited depiction was perceived to have a negative impact on learners' knowledge of other nationalities and cultures. In addition, the results indicated that intercultural situations were infrequent, and the topics failed to reflect real-life intercultural interaction as they were universal (i.e., generation gap) and did not fully reflect the reality of learners' lives. It was also found that intercultural

situations are presented solely in the form of letters. According to the authors, this single form of communication is not adequate for addressing daily intercultural interactions. It was concluded that the content of the book *Activate and Perform* did not promote the skills that students need to become interculturally competent.

Similarly, Hermessi (2017) investigated the cultural content in EFL teaching materials used in Tunisian secondary schools; the materials examined included eight textbooks. It is worth mentioning that Tunisian EFL textbooks are designed by Tunisian English language inspectors and teachers and are locally produced. The results suggested that the textbooks emphasised linguistic aspects while neglecting the explicit inclusion of the cultural themes, which was only presented implicitly in reading tasks. At the same time, one of the objectives set by the ministry of education clearly states that “as a means of communication English will foster learner self-expression as well as appropriate interaction with peers and other interlocutors” (pp. 210–211). It was also found that the texts included information about singers, writers, and music which, according to the author, promoted learners’ knowledge of cultural facts. The results indicated that students anywhere not presented with opportunities to interpret cultural content. Moreover, they were not required to think critically or compare different cultures, such as their native culture and the target culture.

In the Vietnamese context, Chinh (2013) investigated students’ views about the materials used to integrate culture into their EFL classes. To collect data, the students had to write reflective journals for three months. The researcher provided a set of guiding questions to gain focused answers from students about their opinions towards learning about different cultures as well as the challenges they faced in this regard. Generally speaking, the author reported that the incorporation of intercultural content in EFL courses was guided by two approaches. Textbooks either 1.) highlighted target cultures by discussing the relevant values, practices, and institutions, or 2.) presented facts about the local culture, as the textbooks were



designed by “Vietnamese authors who translate local sources from Vietnamese into English” (p. 2). The findings also suggested that the students’ preconceptions could be reinforced as the multicultural content was often described in a stereotypical manner, such as depicting African culture as limited to wildlife parks.

### **2.3.2 Language tutors’ attitudes to and practices of teaching IC**

This section provides an overview of the research which has been carried out on language teachers’ attitudes towards the incorporation of IC in their courses and its impact on their teaching practice. The literature presented here deals with studies examining pre-service and in-service teachers from many different countries, as well as others which focus on the participants from specific countries such as Portugal, Finland, and Algeria.

Previous studies have mainly investigated teacher beliefs related to science and the teaching of reading skills. Sercu and her colleagues (2005) carried out one of the first studies examining language teachers’ beliefs on teaching ICC. They stressed its importance in helping teacher educators develop teacher education programmes that include ICC content.

Sercu and her colleagues’ (2005) questionnaire study explored the opinions of 424 K-12 foreign language teachers from Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Mexico, Poland, Spain, and Sweden regarding the teaching of ICC. There was an overall agreement among the teachers that they were in favour of implementing the development of ICC in their language courses. The participants claimed that teaching ICC does not only involve learning about target cultures, but also understanding one’s own culture to develop tolerance. However, when it came to actual teaching practices, the findings revealed that there were two types of teacher profiles: those who supported the teaching of ICC and those who were against it. On the one hand, teachers who supported the teaching of ICC believed that teaching culture was just as significant as teaching the language. On the other hand, the teachers who did not support the inclusion of ICC

in language teaching believed that it should not be taught at school as it does not positively influence student attitudes. An analysis of the teachers' practices revealed that they allocated more time to teaching language than culture. As Holló (2017) states, the emphasis on language over culture is largely due to the fact that the success of language teaching is measured based on certificates earned by language exams, which often do not include cultural content, and teachers are motivated to prepare their students for such exams.

Pinto (2018) investigated the perspectives of Portuguese teachers from different disciplines on developing IC in tertiary education. There was overall agreement among language teachers on the importance of teaching language courses with intercultural content; three main reasons were cited for the inclusion of IC, which included “changing prejudiced attitudes, preparing students to live in a global world, and empowering them professionally” (p. 8). The participants found such courses to be essential for preparing learners to live in a multicultural world through the development of their knowledge about different cultures and reflection on their own culture. However, when asked about the implementation of intercultural content in their own teaching practice they expressed hesitation, highlighting difficulties in assessing IC components. Therefore, they suggested that learners should engage in intercultural experiences outside the classroom, such as living abroad.

In a nation-wide survey, Gu (2016) examined the beliefs of 1170 Chinese university EFL teachers on ICC and gauged the extent to which these beliefs were expressed in their classroom practices. Gu's survey was similar to that created by Sercu et al and her colleagues (2005). The majority of the participants considered acquiring factual knowledge about the target culture to be the most important aspect of ICC. Interestingly, one-tenth of the participants were not able to provide answers to items related to ICC components as they were not knowledgeable about the concept of ICC. The results suggested that university EFL teachers in China recognised the importance of incorporating ICC into EFL teaching. However, a deficiency was

noted in terms of the participants' knowledge of what ICC consists of. Moreover, the participants equated teaching ICC with teaching culture. They perceived culture as static knowledge of English-speaking countries, which may reveal a lack of insight into the teaching of ICC.

Although the tertiary education context was not the main focus of her investigations, the interview study carried out by Larzén-Östermark (2008) with 13 EFL Finland-Swedish teachers from 12 comprehensive schools found that all of the teachers interviewed supported the incorporation of intercultural content into EFL teaching. They also believed that their goal was to promote tolerance and empathy. However, the practice of the majority of participants was limited to the mere transmission of cultural facts. This finding was in line with Sercu and her colleagues (2005) study, in which they found that teachers tended to pass on their knowledge instead of helping the students develop intercultural attitudes and skills. Larzén-Östermark (2008) explained these findings by positing that the teachers were likely using the same approaches that they experienced when they were learners.

Eken (2015) conducted an interview study to investigate the attitudes of Turkish university EFL teachers towards the development of students' ICC. All of the informants stated that FLT is related to the teaching of ICC and stressed the importance of incorporating activities into language teaching which would develop students' ICC. When they were asked about the activities they would include in their teaching, they mentioned examples such as carrying out projects with teachers from different countries, discussing students' cultures in addition to the target cultures, and researching various cultures. However, they failed to mention how they would incorporate these activities into their own teaching. This result could be explained by a lack of experience among the participants 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 participants taught individual seminars

entitled “Introduction to intercultural communication” while the third teacher delivered a lecture on the subject. It was found that they had mixed feelings about the courses. On the one hand, the teachers appreciated that they were able to select their own teaching approach. However, one teacher expressed her confusion in regard to the aim of the course, or the way that ICC should be assessed. This result suggests that teachers of ICC should be knowledgeable on the subject and should receive adequate training if they lack such knowledge. This finding was confirmed by Larzén-Östermark (2008), who maintained that an essential criterion to teaching ICC in the wider context was the development of teachers’ ICC.

Lázár (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study with two Hungarian pre-service teachers. Before their teaching practice, the participants took a course on the teaching of ICC, which served as an opportunity to develop their cultural awareness and equip them with knowledge on how to implement ICC development in their own courses. During their teaching practice, they attempted to incorporate the intercultural dimension into EFL teaching. Although one participant developed and incorporated many ICC activities into her teaching practice, she criticised the teacher education programme for not raising their intercultural awareness sooner. This response can be explained by the fact that the pre-service teacher was not aware of the possibility to develop students’ ICC attitudes and skills in ELT. Therefore, Lázár recommends that ICC courses should be implemented in the teacher education programme in the first year of students’ university studies in order to develop teacher trainees’ knowledge about new methods for incorporating ICC in language teaching, promoting openness, challenging stereotypes, and developing their teaching skills. Teacher trainees were also exposed to a wide selection of teaching materials about cultural diversity as well as cultural values and practices.

Baltacı and Tanis (2018) investigated 40 Turkish EFL pre-service and in-service teachers’ perceptions of teaching culture through a mixed-method study. 90% of the teachers highlighted that they integrated cultural aspects into their teaching practice, showing that both

pre-service and in-service teachers share the same overall views regarding the teaching of culture. However, differences between the two groups in terms of how culture was taught were noted in their actual practice. The researchers found that in-service teachers mainly used course books, while pre-service teachers relied on authentic materials to teach culture. Moreover, in-service teachers taught practical cultural aspects that could be found in textbooks, such as traditions, food, and clothes, while pre-service teachers were more focused on communication-oriented aspects of culture. This discrepancy was explained by the fact that the former group may be more focused on the theoretical aspects of culture, whereas the latter may be motivated by a more goal-oriented approach to teaching culture.

The findings of Baltaci and Tanis (2018) supported Lázár's (2011) argument regarding the introduction of cultural training for pre-service teachers. Both studies found that the ICC courses that pre-service teachers took developed their intercultural awareness, making them more aware of the relationship between culture and language. When the teachers were asked to identify the aim of teaching the target culture, they stressed the development of students' intercultural awareness rather than their rote knowledge of cultural information.

Önalán (2005) conducted a mixed-methods study in which 40 Turkish EFL university teachers responded to a questionnaire and eight were selected for interviews. The findings of the questionnaire showed that 95.8% of the teachers considered cultural aspects to be important to the teaching of language, as they believed it would enhance their students' English language proficiency. It can therefore be assumed that the teachers possessed positive attitudes towards teaching cultural information as an integral aspect of learning English, rather than an isolated component that needs to be taught and learned. It was also found that although the teachers defined culture from a sociological point of view, that is, in terms of values and beliefs, they tended to put more emphasis on the superficial aspects of culture such as food and non-verbal language in their teaching practices. The researcher explained this finding by highlighting the

fact that such an approach is easier to teach and also is in line with the teachers' aims, which include the development of learners' awareness of cultural diversity as well as their intellectual development. He also reported that teachers regarded reading and vocabulary as more critical aspects of language learning, although they also believed that teaching culture was useful for the students. This finding suggests that teachers did not view culture as a distinct learning goal, but rather as a means to motivate students to learn the target language.

Salem (2012) included intercultural aspects in the Intensive English Programme at an English-medium Lebanese university as an intervention for the purposes of the study and conducted an interview study with two teachers at the institution. It was found that teachers were in favour of adopting IC, particularly to develop students' intercultural attitudes, if the students were interested in pursuing a professional life abroad. However, they expressed their disagreement with the cultural content of the course, as they felt it might trigger conflicts and lead to the development of negative feelings towards cultural differences. At the end of the experience, the two teachers revealed that such a course was much needed.

Aleksandrowicz-Pędich and her colleagues (2003) conducted a questionnaire study with 62 secondary school French and English language teachers in 10 countries. The teachers acknowledged the importance of integrating culture into language learning; however, the results suggested that the participants were divided when asked to compare the teaching of ICC with grammar teaching. Some teachers believed that ICC was more important than grammar, whereas others thought that it was equally important or less important than grammar instruction. The researchers revealed that the teachers who attached great importance to ICC over grammar teaching expressed that their idealistic views could not be met in their actual practice in the classroom. When the teachers were asked to introduce cultural aspects in the language classroom, they mentioned traditions, beliefs, history, and popular culture. They justified their

choices by maintaining that these aspects would help the students navigate intercultural interactions and by highlighting that the students enjoyed such topics.

In the Chinese context, Han and Song (2011) carried out a small-scale pilot study to examine the ways in which 30 in-service English language teachers at a university conceptualised and perceived the role of ICC in ELT. Another aim of the study was the extent to which such perceptions were realised in their teaching practices. In this quantitative study, the researchers adapted a questionnaire designed by Sercu et al. and her colleagues (2005) to investigate foreign language teachers' beliefs and the impact of these beliefs on their teaching practices. The findings revealed that English language teachers agreed that teaching culture is just as important as teaching the target language and that it is crucial for students to acquire ICC. The authors maintained that ELT should deepen students' knowledge of their own culture as well as others. Nevertheless, these perceptions were not reflected in the teaching practice observed by the authors. The teachers recognised the development of students' language proficiency as the primary teaching objective in ELT; however, a few of them considered dealing with language problems plays an important role in raising students' awareness about intercultural misunderstandings. Consequently, the majority of teachers devoted more time to language teaching, while very few taught both language and culture. It was claimed that the subject content forced teachers to prioritize one aspect over the other. For example, one teacher who taught History of Western Civilisations provided students with a considerable amount of cultural knowledge. If more details had been gathered, a deeper understanding could have been gained regarding the teachers' attitudes towards whether or not they believed teaching culture involves the mere transmission factual knowledge about the target culture. In contrast, another teacher who taught English grammar stated that the course aimed at improving students' proficiency. This finding reinforces Lázár's (2011) recommendation about introducing ICC in

the first year of university learning to help future teachers understand the possible ways to promote ICC in their language teaching.

A mixed-methods study was carried out by Young and Sachdev (2011) in different national contexts but yielded similar findings. The authors investigated the views of 105 EFL teachers in the USA, UK, and France. There was a general agreement that ICC was not supported by the curriculum, as culture and interculturality are not part of the students' exams. Some of these examinations include the TOEFL and IELTS exams that test students' language skills. The teachers were aware of the importance of ICC development in the classroom, and for this reason they integrated implicit intercultural content in their courses. Interestingly, the teachers were not motivated to teach critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997) as they sought to avoid potentially controversial issues. The findings suggested that there was a gap between the teachers' practices and beliefs, which mirrored the findings of the study by Sercu et al and her colleagues (2005). The teachers voiced the importance of integrating ICC, but they seemed unable to achieve it in their teaching practice. Some of the reasons mentioned included a lack of student motivation to learn about culture and the lack of suitable textbooks.

Atay and her colleagues (2009) undertook a questionnaire study that investigated the opinions of 503 EFL teachers in Turkey regarding the integration of ICC. It also aimed at examining the extent to which their attitudes were incorporated into their teaching practice. The teachers favoured the teaching of skills related to ICC and did not show interest in teaching factual information about the target culture in question. Interestingly, the teachers expressed a willingness to teach students about their own culture in English.

Many of the studies mentioned above revealed that most teachers highlighted the importance of developing IC; however, it could also be seen that their teaching practices did not reflect their beliefs, as they aimed to develop students' language proficiency and allocated more time to teaching grammar than culture. Yet, they believed that students should become



interculturally competent (Sercu et al., 2005). This can be explained by a lack of a clear conceptualisation of IC. According to the literature, to effectively integrate IC development into language teaching, teachers need to receive training which helps them to better understand what IC is and how to incorporate it into their teaching practice. This is further confirmed by the views of students which are provided in some of the literature on the topic. For example, in Chinh's (2013) study, a student who participated in the research commented on their teachers' teaching practice in Vietnam: "they lack cultural experience and sensitivity to multiple cultures. This makes lessons boring, theoretical and demotivates students" (p. 5).

One of the stated reasons above for not developing students' IC was a lack of materials. Interestingly, the participants in Han and Song's (2011) study overcame this issue through the use of additional materials, as the cultural content in the textbooks they used was usually ignored since the books were designed to teach and assess language proficiency. Some of the extra materials used included audio-visual materials, which were used to attract the students' attention and enrich their knowledge about the target culture. Other impeding factors that prevented teachers from developing students' IC were a lack of time, a lack of knowledge of how to teach culture, class size, student motivation, the teaching workload, school facilities, and a focus on developing their teacher persona (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al., 2003; Amery, 2021; Baltacı & Tanis, 2018; Chinh, 2013; Holló & Lázár, 1999; Kahraman, 2016; Lázár, 2011; Sercu et al., 2005). Another obstacle that has the potential to impede the teaching of cultural aspects was the heterogeneity of the classroom. Due to differences in English language proficiency among students, teachers may be discouraged to teach cultural aspects as some teachers believe that learning about culture requires a certain level of language mastery (Larzén-Östermark, 2008).

### **2.3.3 Programme leaders' attitudes towards developing IC in English language programmes**

This section sheds light on programme leaders' attitudes towards the inclusion of IC in language courses. Various studies are reviewed, which were conducted in different contexts, such as Lebanon, Hungary, and Tunisia, to name some.

In her doctoral dissertation, Salem (2012) examined the integration of intercultural content in English language courses in the Lebanese context through an action research project. In addition to the intervention which lasted for three semesters, by conducting interviews Salem also investigated the views of two stakeholders, namely the head of the division of the English programme at the university and the course coordinator of the university's intensive English programme, on the implementation of intercultural content in EFL courses. It was found that they believed that the ultimate objective of ELT was for learners to attain a level of proficiency that is native or near-native. This contradicts the aims of the promotion of IC, which focuses on developing both the language and intercultural skills of a learner. Before implementing an integrated English language and ICC course, the administrators showed different attitudes towards the integration of intercultural content into language teaching. The stakeholders were against the inclusion of such courses at the foundation level, and one of them disagreed with its implementation in general. They raised doubts as to whether a course with intercultural content was useful for the students, believing that it would not develop the language skills of the students and could lead to potential conflicts. However, these findings have to be viewed cautiously as only two participants were involved in the study. Deeper and perhaps more generalizable insights could have been gained if more participants had been included.

Bachner (2001) recalled his experience as a Dean of Global Studies and as project director at the Hartwick faculty which offered intercultural programmes to first-year students. The curriculum was infused with intercultural content, and the courses were based on several

prerequisites aimed at the development of students' ICC. For example, before going abroad on an off-campus trip, the students took part in intercultural learning, which according to Bachner,

would develop students' capacities to learn from experience, reduce distortions and superficial stereotypes of their own as well as of the other culture, and encourage more knowledgeable and respectful intercultural perspectives. Perhaps most importantly, it would provide a formal, faculty-assisted opportunity for students to explore the possible connections between the experience and their ongoing study, career, and other life choices. (pp. 29–30)

Another prerequisite was related to the development of students' general skills. Although the importance of developing culture-specific skills and knowledge was voiced, a greater emphasis was placed on developing students' skills to discover, learn, and reply effectively to people from any cultures. This assumption aligns with the view that IC is a fundamental component of effective communication between individuals from different cultures. By prioritizing the promotion of general IC skills, students can interact successfully with people from any culture.

Holló (2017) maintains that the most useful goal for language learners, in general, is not only to master the target language but also to acquire intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills to effectively and appropriately interact with people from different cultures. She examined the views of four educational managers in the BA and MA programmes for English language majors and teacher trainees at a Hungarian university. Three participants stated that there was no particular need for intercultural education; however, they nonetheless presented interculturality implicitly in their classes. They suggested that interculturality was not related to ELT and teacher training but is instead part of socialization, and therefore should not be included in the educational curriculum. One of the reasons they rejected the inclusion of ICC into English language programmes was that they considered it more important to experience ICC rather than explicitly learn about it. They also mentioned that the university had many international students, and as students mingled inside and outside classes, such interactions would develop their ICC. The participants did not provide answers in regard to what aspects of

their ICC students need to develop, which Holló attributed to their disinterest in teaching ICC. Only one participant supported the inclusion of ICC development in the programmes, suggesting that ICC is only present in the courses of committed language teachers who are keen to develop their students' ICC. He emphasized that students should take at least one compulsory course which includes intercultural content. It was also mentioned that experiential learning can be useful in the development of students' ICC, particularly for future English language teachers considering "their responsibility in forming their future students' views of the world" (p. 78).

Another study examining the attitudes of programme leaders was conducted by Amery (2021), who explored the challenges faced by programme administrators in teaching ICC in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada programmes. The Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada funds language classes for people coming to Canada to help them learn the two official languages, namely English and French. This programme aims to help immigrants integrate into the Canadian community and interact with Canadian people by developing their ICC. Amery conducted semi-structured interviews with three programme directors; these revealed the importance that the participants placed on developing ICC. They believed that respect and the willingness to adapt and reflect on one's own culture are crucial aspects for fostering ICC. Nevertheless, they expressed that ICC development can be impeded by certain factors such as lack of language proficiency, time, and knowledge. For example, a programme director stressed the difficulty of integrating ICC in lower-level classes due to students' limited comprehension of concepts related to ICC and their lack of proficiency in the target language. The second factor that could hinder the development of students' ICC was time, as most of the programme administrators interviewed revealed that the time allocated to teach ICC was limited. Lastly, that the participants also highlighted the difficulties associated with the assessment of ICC. To overcome these challenges, Amery argued that professional development was crucial, as it provides programme administrators with opportunities to

develop their own ICC and thus learn how to communicate with students from different cultures.

In the Tunisian context, Hermessi (2017) found that language policy-makers and curriculum designers in Tunisia ideologically accepted the implementation of cultural content in ELT in order to prepare students for intercultural encounters. However, they did not regularly include this content in their language teaching curricula.

#### **2.3.4 Students' attitudes towards developing IC**

There is a dearth of research examining students' opinions regarding the teaching of IC (Brooks-Lewis, 2014). This section deals with studies that examined the attitudes of EFL students towards the integration of IC in their language courses. The students involved in these research studies were from the following countries: Mexico, Hungary, Lebanon, Indonesia, Algeria, Turkey, Vietnam, Pakistan, and China.

In Mexico, Brooks-Lewis (2014), an EFL teacher, decided to incorporate culture into EFL teaching at two state-funded universities. She conducted her research with Spanish-speaking students with different levels of English using questionnaires, diaries, and essays. The course included specific concepts that the researcher thought would be relevant to the Mexican students, such as the history of the USA, American values and concepts of time and space in American and Mexican cultures. The students found the course helpful as it encouraged them to think about their own culture, as well. For instance, it was found that comparing and contrasting the students' own cultures with others was able to develop students' awareness about their own. Furthermore, the students criticised the way that their previous EFL courses put emphasis on vocabulary and grammar while overlooking the cultural aspect of the language.

Menyhei (2016) examined the attitudes of 16 second- and third-year Hungarian BA students of English studies towards an ICC course entitled "Introduction to intercultural

communication". The results reflected the students' positive views towards the seminar, specifically in terms of the teachers' personality and the group discussions that took place in the course. Moreover, they found the topics examined (e.g., cultural differences) to be interesting, which made them enthusiastic about the course. However, there were also aspects that the students viewed negatively, such as the lack of PowerPoint presentations, and the presence of too many students in the case of some classes, and too few students in the case of others. They also referred to the usefulness of the course for their academic studies, as some students were conducting their thesis research on cultural topics. On a more personal level, they believed that this course would help them in their future intercultural interactions, in which they could apply knowledge that they gained from the course, including topics such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, otherisation, and intercultural understanding.

Investigations into teachers' attitudes towards IC instruction also indirectly revealed students' views about courses with cultural and intercultural content. Teachers in Larzén-Östermark's (2008) study revealed that students held positive attitudes towards different cultures and traditions, and it was concluded that they enjoyed engaging with ICC content. Similarly, teachers in Önalán's (2015) study reflected on students' attitudes, claiming that they expressed interest in drawing comparisons between their cultures and the target culture, which reflected positive attitudes towards the culture course. To build on these findings, the researcher recommended conducting empirical research on students' perceptions of intercultural teaching to gain further insight.

Salem (2012) conducted an interview study with 24 Lebanese EFL students who were enrolled in an "Reading Skills 003" course. The students found the implementation of ICC in the course useful as they examined issues which were relevant to their lives. In the course, they were encouraged to reflect on their culture and discuss sensitive or taboo topics while avoiding clashes, developed openness towards other cultures, specifically Western cultures. They

expressed the need to develop and introduce more courses with intercultural content in schools, both for different teaching programmes as well as at an early age because of the positive effects and significance to their lives. The students reported that the course had a considerable impact on their ICC and believed that those who took part in such a course would be better prepared to deal with cultural differences. To highlight the value of the course, they compared it with other courses that they had taken part in which were based on the communicative approach. One participant expressed that “language is more than subject-verb-object” (p. 207), showing that the participants possessed an understanding that ELT has a wider scope than simply enhancing grammatical competence.

Another study examining the students’ attitudes towards the implementation of ICC development was conducted by Morganna and his colleagues (2020) in the Indonesian setting. Adopting Eagly and Chaiken’s (2007) Affection, Behaviour, and Cognition (ABC) model of attitude, the authors used a mixed-methods approach study to analyse the attitudes of 31 students, with six of them purposefully chosen to be interviewed. Most of the participants who answered the questionnaire expressed positive attitudes towards integrating ICC in English language classes. The findings reflect support for the aspects of the ABC model,

[...] positioning English as the world lingua franca, making intelligibility and comprehensibility the yardsticks of linguistic competence in English learning, making intercultural communicative competence (ICC) the framework of English communication, promoting students to be the competent intercultural English users, making the intercultural and competent non-native English users the model in EFL learning, active construction principle of ILL (intercultural language learning), making connection principle of ILL, interaction principle of ILL, reflection principle of ILL, and responsibility principle of ILL. (p. 660)

The results of the interviews further confirmed the findings suggested by the questionnaire. The participants voiced their readiness to integrate interculturality into their language courses as future professional teachers of the English language. However, Morganna and his colleagues

(2020) indicated that teachers' efforts to implement ICC development may not prove effective if they are not supported by an EFL curriculum designed for such aspirations.

In Algeria, Addar and Bagui (2020) conducted a more focused study in which they used both quantitative and qualitative instruments to examine EFL students' views on learning about English culture from literary texts. 41 MA students of English and 12 EFL teachers of literature at Tlemcen University participated in the study. 63% of the respondents thought that literary texts would help them to develop their awareness about different cultures; the reasons below were provided to justify their views:

- Literary texts help us to know more about the cultural background of each era we deal with [...] it is the vivid representation of culture.
- They really provide a strong basis for various ideologies for different cultures.
- They help a lot because they represent a specific vision and image about specific areas and specific group of people. (p. 89)

This finding was supported by the data from teachers who indicated that their students showed interest in learning about most of the aspects of the target culture with the exception of the elements that did not match their own cultural beliefs and values. For example, they expressed negative attitudes when analysing literary works that discussed topics such as the LGBT community, negative views towards women from the 16th to 18th century, and religious topics.

Another study focusing on students' attitudes was carried out by Mutlu and Dollar (2017) in the Turkish context. Drawing data from three universities, they explored the attitudes of 93 students using surveys and 20 students using interviews in connection with the implementation of ICC development in their EFL courses. The students were in a preparatory programme called "The English Preparatory Program" which aimed to develop their language skills and promote their English proficiency. Interestingly, 73.1% of the students pointed out that they were interested in learning about the cultures of native English language speakers.



Several reasons behind this interest were mentioned, such as preparation for prospective interactions with native speakers. At the same time, only 22% of them reported that they want to be exposed to various cultures in their EFL courses, including their own culture. Those who expressed a preference for learning about other cultures recognised the spread of English and the increased number of English language speakers. The majority of the participants voiced the importance of implementing the development of ICC in language classrooms as they believed it would promote tolerance, openness towards those from different cultures, and improved communication. While the participants showed awareness of the importance of ICC, their desire to be only exposed to English language speakers' culture could limit their ICC development and their ability to interact with people from other cultural backgrounds. The authors recommended that teachers should promote students' awareness of the impact of ICC on their communication and interaction.

Another study in the Turkish context was conducted by Kahraman (2016), who undertook a large-scale research study by collecting survey data from 310 students about their attitudes to intercultural integration in English language teaching. The results revealed that they had positive views regarding the implementation of ICC in the classroom. However, some also argued that students should possess a high level of proficiency in the target language to be able to learn about its culture; this was not supported by the teachers who believed that culture and language are inseparable and should be taught in an integrated manner.

Describing the Vietnamese context, Chinh (2013) maintained that although English language teachers used to prioritise language skills development in the past, lately there has been an attempt to integrate the teaching of culture into EFL classrooms. To examine this new phenomenon, Chinh conducted research on 20 students to examine their views on cultural integration using data from reflective journals. The researcher provided the students with the following topics to facilitate reflection on their learning experience: 1.) how culture was studied

in the classroom, 2.) their attitudes towards learning about different cultures, and 3.) difficulties they faced while learning cultural content. The results showed that the participants had positive attitudes towards learning about various cultures, including their own. They also believed that focusing on multiple cultures would encourage their comparison, which would help to develop their intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They used a number of adjectives to support their experiences, such as “interesting, knowledgeable, useful, necessary, enthusiastic, inspiring and encouraged” (p. 3). However, inconsistency was noted between the actual teaching practice and students’ attitudes: although students expressed a desire to learn about a variety of cultures, EFL teachers focused mainly on British culture in their English classes. The participants suggested that different approaches could be included for cultural learning; for example, the application of an interactive approach through “debate, discussion, critical reading and writing, media and text analysis” (p. 5) was suggested to make the class more enjoyable, interesting, and engaging for the students. They also rejected textbooks as being the only source of information for developing students’ ICC. Alternative ways of learning about other cultures were mentioned such as “field trips” and “studying overseas” (p. 5).

Jabeen and Shah (2011) carried out a questionnaire study to investigate the views of 94 Pakistani students towards the teaching of target culture. Contrary to the studies mentioned above, the findings showed that the majority (87%) of the participants had unfavourable attitudes towards the implementation of ICC development in the EFL classroom. However, they nonetheless supported the teaching of cultural beliefs and social organisation. This result was explained by the fact that the students in question studied in governmental institutions where ICC development and critical thinking were neglected in language teaching. They concluded that the students, as such, could not be expected to possess high levels of enthusiasm towards integrating ICC in EFL classrooms.

The study by Xiao and Petraki (2007) examined Chinese students studying at an Australian university in connection with their interest in engaging in intercultural interactions and the difficulties they face in doing so. The data was collected through surveying 32 students and carrying out semi-structured interviews with 10 of them. Like many other universities around the world, those in Australia welcome people from different countries, but Chinese students represent the largest international student group. The participants reported limited knowledge about the different cultures, and this made them reluctant to discuss topics with Australians beyond basic topics such as the weather, movies, or cooking. In addition, they avoided interaction with Middle Eastern students because they knew little about their culture. The authors explained the limited conversational capabilities of the Chinese students with the lack of ICC training in the schools and colleges of their home country. This was supported by the interviewees, who expressed that the cultural content is often overlooked in EFL classes in China. Some of the cultural difficulties the students experienced were culture shock, misinterpretation of non-verbal behaviour, and politeness issues. Based on their experience as Chinese students in Australia, they acknowledged the need to incorporate ICC in the EFL classroom, highlighting its benefits such as raising students' knowledge about the target culture, avoiding culture shock, and promoting students' ICC, which therefore increases their confidence when interacting with people from other cultures.

This chapter has described the key concepts related to the integration of IC in English language programmes. In order to gain an understanding of the importance of developing students' IC in EFL courses as well as in English-language classes of other majors, different research studies have been reviewed. The first section presented studies of IC teaching materials, while the next part aimed to review empirical studies investigating teacher attitudes to the development of their students' IC and examine the challenges they face. This chapter also presented studies about programme leaders' and students' attitudes towards the integration of

IC development in English language programmes. Together these studies provide important insights into the implementation of activities to develop students' IC. Therefore, in this research I seek to find and identify good practices related to the development of IC in English major programmes and investigate materials which can be used to promote students' IC. Considering these two objectives, I conducted an exploratory case study to examine how the IC of English major students is developed at a Hungarian university. The details of the research are explained in the next chapter.

### 3 Research design and methods

This chapter presents an overview of the methods used in this research<sup>2</sup>. The research questions are followed by the research design, which includes a summary of the six studies. Then, the methods of data collection are described: instruments and the procedures used for each of the six studies are explained in detail. The last part of this chapter presents the methods used to analyse the results.

#### 3.1 Research questions

In order to examine how the IC of future English language professionals is developed and what good practices are utilized to promote students' IC in BA, MA, PhD and teacher training programmes at a prominent Hungarian university, this research was guided by the following questions (RQs):

RQ1 How is intercultural competence development present in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university?

RQ2 What are the considerations behind the inclusion of intercultural competence development in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university?

RQ3 How do the tutors<sup>3</sup> involved in the intercultural competence development of English major students at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses?

RQ4 How do English major students participating in courses developing intercultural competence at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses?

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<sup>2</sup> When I refer to my own work, I use the word study to refer to the individual studies and research to refer to the ensemble of the studies.

<sup>3</sup> The word tutor is used for the teachers who teach university courses and who took part in this research, in order to differentiate them from teachers in other contexts.

RQ5 How does intercultural competence development in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university contribute to the professional competence of future English language professionals?

For the sake of precision, it has to be noted that the terms ‘English major programmes’ and ‘English major students’ are used as umbrella terms for English major BA, MA and teacher training programmes and the students enrolled in these programmes, including PhD students in the PhD programme in language education at the same institution. The working language of all these programmes is English.

RQ1 aims to investigate the way IC is taught in the different English major programmes at a prestigious university in Budapest. The goal of RQ2 is to identify the motives of the programme leaders and tutors regarding the inclusion of cultural and intercultural courses in the English major programmes. RQ3 intends to provide information about the way English language tutors view the value of their cultural and intercultural courses, while RQ4 reveals the students’ views of their cultural and intercultural courses. The aim of RQ5 is to gain knowledge about the influence that the inclusion of cultural and intercultural courses has on students’ IC from the perspectives of programme leaders, tutors, and students.

In order to answer the research questions and to understand the practices of integrating the teaching of culture and interculturality with other content in the programmes of an English and American Studies institute at a prestigious university in Budapest, an exploratory case study was conducted that focused on courses taught at the institute which feature cultural and intercultural content. Classroom observations formed the basis of the investigation into the approaches and methods used in these courses. Also, educational documents relating to the above-mentioned courses and their associated teaching materials were examined. Lastly, these were supplemented by interviews with course tutors and students as well as the programme leaders responsible for designing and running the various programmes that offer these courses.

### 3.2 Research design: a case study

This research utilizes an exploratory research design with qualitative methods. Its aim is to analyse how the IC of EFL-speaking English major students is developed at the BA and MA levels, as well as in the teacher training programme at a Hungarian university. Relevant courses from the institute's PhD programme in language education are also included. To reach this purpose, qualitative data were collected by “examining documents, observing behaviours, or interviewing participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 185).

To gain deep insight into the integration of culture and interculturality into other content areas at the institution in question, the case study approach was deemed the most fitting. Although there is no single definition of case study that is shared among researchers, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) defined it as “an instance, incident, or unit of something, and can be anything – a person, an organization, an event, a decision, an action, a location like a neighborhood, or a nation-state” (p. 600). Although the main focus of a case study is on a single entity, it is also characterized by a reliance on multiple interpretations and views (Cohen et al., 2018), which is achieved through triangulation (McDonough & McDonough, 2014). According to Cohen and his colleagues (2018), a case study is “any research in social science... [that] uses multiple methods for data collection and analysis” (p. 375). This allows the researcher to carry out an in-depth examination into a specific case, programme, or activity (Creswell, 2014).

The present research thus adopts case study methodology to investigate the teaching of IC at an English and American Studies institute of a university in Budapest. The case itself is defined as the practices for developing students' IC in the different programmes offered by the institute. The case constitutes the courses which aim to develop IC or the elements thereof, as well as the tutors, students and programme leaders involved.

The present research consists of five studies:

Study 1 is an analysis of documents related to the courses such as course descriptions, syllabi, and department and school websites (e.g., course catalogues) to contribute to answering RQ1, which investigates how IC is developed in the English major programmes of the institute.

Study 2 relies on classroom observations of courses featuring cultural or intercultural content to answer RQ1 which aims to investigate the way IC is taught in the different English major programmes.

Study 3 is an analysis of the materials used by the course tutors (e.g., films, videos, book chapters, or articles). Presentations designed by students were also examined. Similarly to the previous two sub-studies, this study also provides answers to RQ1.

Study 4 consists of a series of interviews with the tutors of the observed courses, to answer RQs 2, 3, and 5, which investigate the motivations for teaching courses with cultural and intercultural content, the views of the tutors regarding the value of their courses, and the impact of the courses on students' professional competence, respectively.

Study 5 is also an interview study. Interviews were carried out with the leaders of the various teaching programmes within the institute to answer RQs 2 and 5, which seek to understand the leaders' motives for including cultural and intercultural courses in the programmes and to examine their impact on the students, respectively.

Study 6 also consisted of a series of interviews, this time with groups of students who participated in the courses in question, to answer RQs 4 and 5; these aim to examine how the students view their courses which feature cultural and intercultural content as well as the influence of these courses on their IC development.



Table 3.1 provides an overview of the research questions and research methods, while Table 3.2 describes the studies that were conducted to answer the RQs. The methods are discussed more in detail in the next section.

**Table 3.1**

*A Summary of the Research Questions and Research Methods*

Research questions	Data sources/ methods of data collection	Methods of data analysis
1., How is intercultural competence development present in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university?	- Class observations - Course documents (course catalogue, course descriptions and syllabi) for analysis - Course materials to be analysed	Thematic analysis
2., What are the considerations behind the inclusion of intercultural competence development in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university?	- Interviews with the course tutors - Interviews with the programme leaders	Thematic analysis
3., How do the tutors involved in the intercultural competence development of English major students at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses?	- Interviews with the course tutors	Thematic analysis
4., How do English major students participating in courses developing intercultural competence at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses?	- Group interviews with the students	Thematic analysis
5., How does intercultural competence development in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university contribute to the professional competence of future English language professionals?	- Group interviews with the students - Interviews with the course tutors - Interviews with the programme leaders	Thematic analysis

**Table 3.2***A Summary of the Studies Conducted*

	To answer	Purpose	Data sources/ Methods of data collection
Study 1	RQ1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to investigate the way IC development is present in the different English major programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Course documents (course catalogue, course descriptions and syllabi) for analysis</li> </ul>
Study 2			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Class observations</li> </ul>
Study 3			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Course materials to be analysed</li> </ul>
Study 4	RQ2, RQ3, RQ5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to identify the considerations behind the inclusion of IC development in the English major programmes</li> <li>- to examine how tutors involved in IC development at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses</li> <li>- to gain knowledge about the influence of the inclusion of cultural and intercultural courses on the students' IC.</li> </ul>	Interviews with the course tutors
Study 5	RQ2, RQ5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to investigate the programme leaders' rationale for the implementation of cultural and IC courses in the English major programmes,</li> <li>- to examine the impact of the implementation of cultural and intercultural courses on students' IC from the perspectives of programme leaders.</li> </ul>	Interviews with the programme leaders
Study 6	RQ4, RQ5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to examine how the students in question view their courses which feature cultural and intercultural content,</li> <li>- to scrutinise the influence of cultural and intercultural courses on students' IC from the perspectives of the students.</li> </ul>	Group interviews with the students

### **3.3 Methods of data collection**

This section describes the methods of data collection by first providing a general account of the research setting and the participants, then by detailing the research instruments used in each study. A more detailed profile of the participants in the different studies is also provided.

#### **3.3.1 Setting and participants**

This research is conducted at a Hungarian university in Budapest with an internationally recognized institute for English and American Studies. The institute offers a wide range of programmes at different levels for international students. This includes BA programme in English and American studies that takes three years in which the students develop their English language proficiency, learn about the British and American political systems, linguistics (including phonology and syntax), American and British literature, and the history of Great Britain and the US. BA students also have to take lectures on cultural studies, which are part of a series and are taught by different tutors. Several themes are addressed in these lectures, such as how to examine national cultures, the relationship between language and culture, and IC. These themes are discussed in relation to the English-speaking world. However, there are specific modules for both American and British specializations. Apart from their compulsory subjects, the students can also choose from a wide range of elective courses. Among these is the English-speaking cultures specialisation subject group, which offers an elective lecture series and a variety of seminars from which the students can choose. To graduate with a BA degree, the students must also write and defend a thesis.

The MA degree programmes offered by the institution are two -years -long and also require the students to write and defend a thesis. Students enrolled in the MA in American studies study mandatory subjects like visual culture, the political system, and media and communication in the US, as well as American literature, history, and features of American

English. The MA in English studies consists of courses on British literature and culture, intercultural communication studies, linguistics (including English applied linguistics), varieties of English and the history of English. Furthermore, the students can choose their specialisations track, which gives them the chance to follow their interests; these tracks include English applied linguistics, English theoretical linguistics, English literature, British cultural studies, or Postcolonial studies. The courses are designed as a series of lectures and seminars.

The institute also offers a training programme for future teachers. Students in this programme take language development courses along with subjects in literature, history, and linguistics. The focus of their programme is learning about methods and processes related to teaching and learning EFL. The students also have courses related to culture as the majority of them will become teachers of English language and culture.

Various four-year PhD programmes are offered, including PhDs in American Studies, Cultural Linguistics, Theoretical Linguistics, as well as Modern English and American Literature and Culture, and also Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Culture. Furthermore, a PhD programme in Language Pedagogy is also offered. The compulsory courses therein address topics related to learners and tutors as well as research methods, while the optional courses chosen based on the interests of the students. The elective courses cover a wide range of subjects in applied linguistics and language pedagogy, including courses with a focus on the role of culture and interculturality. For example, in the academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, there were two courses about IC.

The participants in this study are the EFL tutors and students of courses with cultural and intercultural content in the BA, MA and Teacher Training programmes as well as EFL students and tutors in the PhD programme on Language Education; the study also includes the leaders of the various training programmes.

Sampling multiple participant levels, including tutors, programme leaders, and students can be justified in several ways. Firstly, such a sample provides a better representation of the different perspectives and experiences related to IC. Participants at the different levels have unique experiences and responsibilities that could impact their IC practices. Therefore, incorporating all three groups allows for a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Secondly, it seems that, considering the roles of the participants, different institutional levels are associated with varying types of influence on interculturality within the English language programmes. Students, for example, may engage in more direct contact with people from different cultures, so their participation in the research is important in order to collect information on their perspectives and experiences in this regard. The tutors can provide insights into their students' intercultural experiences, while programme leaders, as they establish policies that shape the programmes can explain the programme's aims in relation to IC development.

### **3.3.2 Ethical issues**

Dörnyei (2007) emphasises the importance of ethical considerations in educational research, highlighting that “social research – including research in education – concerns people's lives in the social world and therefore it inevitably involves ethical issues” (p. 63). Therefore, in the present research several ethical aspects were thoroughly considered, including informed consent and confidentiality as mentioned by Padgett (2016). All of the interviewees were informed about the overall aim of the research, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time was also clearly stated. In addition to that, they were informed that codes would be used to ensure that their answers would remain anonymous. Therefore, in the three interview studies, I implemented the following measures:

- The respondents were informed about the aims of the study. They were ensured that their participation was voluntary and that pseudonyms would be used in published materials to protect their anonymity.
- The interviewees were asked to sign a consent form when the interviews were held face-to-face. In online interviews, they orally expressed their approval regarding the recording of the interviews.

### 3.3.3 Research instruments

In this section, the instruments and procedures are described for

Study 1: document analysis,

Study 2: classroom observations,

Study 3: course materials analysis,

Study 4: semi-structured interviews with the course tutors,

Study 5: semi-structured interviews with the programme leaders,

Study 6: group interviews with the students.

Table 3.3 illustrates the methods and the research instruments used in each study to examine the development of students' IC.

**Table 3.3**

*An Overview of the Methods of Data Collection and Research Instruments*

Study	Methods of data collection	Data sources / Data collection instrument
1	Course document to be analysed	Course catalogue, course descriptions and syllabi
2	Classroom observations	Observation sheet
3	Course materials analysis	Readings, course books
4	Interviews with the course tutors	Interview questions
5	Interviews with the programme leaders	Interviews questions
6	Interviews with students	Group interview questions

### **3.3.3.1 Study 1: Document analysis**

Document analysis was used to collect data in the form of document contents related to the relevant courses and course materials. The document analysis was used to supplement the other instruments and ensure triangulation. The documents concerned include the programme curricula, course descriptions, and course syllabi used in the courses mentioned in this research and were held in academic year 2019-2020. To analyse these documents, the following questions were formulated: What were the documents analysed? Who were these intended for? How were they accessed? How detailed were they? What aims did they express in regard to culture and interculturality?

### **3.3.3.2 Study 2: Classroom observation**

Cohen and his colleagues (2018) state that observation is an effective tool for collecting authentic data. With these uses in mind, many research studies examining cultural and intercultural teaching have relied on classroom observations. Even though Sercu and her colleagues (2005) used a questionnaire to investigate tutors' views on the integration of ICC in language courses and their actual teaching practices, they admitted that it would be helpful in future studies to include other data sources such as classroom observation to help confirm their results.

The observations in the present research focused on courses containing intercultural or culture related content. The course catalogue was consulted, and the courses were chosen for observation based on the course description. Receiving permission from the tutor to conduct observations in the classroom was also a necessary factor in the selection process. All the classes at the institute are held in English. It is worth mentioning that not every course could be observed but the course materials could be analysed for all.

In the spring of 2019 and from September 2019 to May 2020, I observed 14 courses which included cultural and intercultural content. Originally, one more class was to be observed; however, in the Spring term of 2019-2020, all of the courses were held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the tutors used synchronous platforms, while a few of them relied on a non-synchronous approach. As a result, I could not observe the ‘American popular culture A’ course which took place asynchronously: students were given access to the readings and instructions for the course and according to their own schedules. However, the courses ‘Specialisation in English-speaking cultures’ and ‘Cultural studies: English-speaking Cultures’, were conducted online in real-time. I had access to the recordings and documents which I used for document analysis, classroom observations, and materials analysis. Table 3.4 provides further information about the courses examined in the present research.

**Table 3.4**

*Information about the Courses Examined*

Programme	Course	Compulsory Or Elective	Observation	Course material analysis
BA in English and American Studies	Communicating across cultures	Elective	+	+
	Intercultural communication	Elective	+	+
	American popular culture A <sup>4</sup>	Elective	-	+
	American popular culture B	Elective	+	+
	Australian Aboriginal issues	Elective	+	+
	Australia through documentaries	Elective	+	+
	Cultural studies: English-speaking Cultures	Compulsory	+	+
	Specialisation in English-speaking cultures	Elective	+	+

<sup>4</sup> ‘American popular culture’ and ‘American popular culture’ are two different courses taught by two tutors. The content of the courses is also different, as will be discussed in the course materials analysis section. I added A and B to the titles for the purpose of differentiation between the two of them.



MA in English Studies	Skills for intercultural communication	Elective	+	+
	Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories and research	Compulsory	-	+
Teacher Training	American culture	Elective	+	+
	Challenging stereotypes	Elective	+	+
	British culture	Elective	+	+
	Cultural studies: English-speaking Cultures <sup>5</sup>	Elective	+	+
	Specialisation in English-speaking cultures <sup>6</sup>	Elective	+	+
	EFL for intercultural competence	Elective	+	+
PhD in Language Education	Language education for intercultural competence development	Elective	+	+
	Teaching culture through language	Elective	+	+

The courses all consisted of weekly classes of 90 minutes with the exception of the MA course ‘Skills for intercultural communication’, which involved two weekly classes of 90 minutes. All of the classes were held in English and featured both international and Hungarian students. With the exception of two courses, I conducted eight classroom observations for each course out of the 12-13 sessions that took place throughout the term.

Apart from observing courses with cultural and intercultural content, I would have also liked to observe language development classes to determine whether or not cultural content appeared in these courses as well, but the tutors’ busy schedules and technical issues related to the use of online classes prevented me from gaining access to these courses.

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<sup>5</sup> The same course as in the BA programme.

<sup>6</sup> The same course as in the BA programme.

Along with other researchers, McDonough and McDonough (2014) recommend the use of observation sheets. However, as every observational context is different, I did not use a previously published observation sheet but rather created my own (see Appendix A). I relied on a pilot study that was conducted in the context of an IC development course at the same institute in February 2019. At that time, I did not use an observation sheet, relying solely on the notetaking process. I chose this method as I initially felt that I would have been restricted by the criteria examined through observation guide. However, at the end of the pilot observations I realized that an observation sheet was needed to produce more systematic results in order to yield richer data. The pilot study helped me become more familiar with the content and processes implemented in the observed courses and made me realise that using a prepared observation sheet (Cohen et al., 2018) would be more efficient as it enables better note-taking (McDonough & McDonough, 2014). I reviewed the relevant literature to become thoroughly familiar with the components of IC in order to create the observation criteria. To validate the observation sheet, I relied on my own experiences from the class observations which took place in the Spring of 2019 (concerning the types of activities used to teach IC and the lesson content); in addition, I also carried out practice observations using the observation sheet. Consultation with my supervisor took place and her comments were taken into consideration to produce the final version of the instrument.

The final version of the observation schedule was composed of four main sections: intercultural content, the description of the lesson, the tutor's role, and students' engagement. Background knowledge related to the course was also collected, such as the aim of the lesson, the name of the tutor, and the title of the course book, if used. Besides using of the observation sheet, I also took notes about the content of the lesson and the interactions between the students and the tutor. The notes were useful as they provided additional details related to the categories included in the observation sheet. After each classroom observation, I noted down my

reflections and wrote bits of information including terms and ideas to help me recall events that I would like to elaborate on, as recommended by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). I did not use technical equipment for my observations as it would have disturbed the class. I observed both face-to-face classes and online classes, the latter allowing me special access to better observe pair and group work during the online synchronous courses. For the face-to-face courses, I was only able to observe one or two groups during pair and group work; however, in the online classes I joined and observed almost every group during their activities.

I preferred to observe without participating in the activities (Creswell, 2014) so that taking notes and filling in the observation sheet would not be negatively affected. According to Cohen and his colleagues (2018), the observer is someone who observes what is taking place in the classroom and remains separate from the group. Therefore, in the face-to-face lessons, I sat in such a way so as not to disturb the students, but at the same time I sat close enough to them so that I was able to listen to their interactions, as group discussions were used in most of the observed classes. However, in the two PhD courses entitled ‘Language education for intercultural competence development’ and ‘Teaching culture through language’, I was a participant-observer as these courses were part of my PhD studies. During online synchronous classes, I similarly did not participate in class discussions; however, I could join all of the group channels to observe the students during their group work.

### **3.3.3.3 Study 3: Course materials analysis**

Course materials analysis is another research method that has been used to investigate how IC development is incorporated into the content of English major courses. The course materials varied from course to course, included items such as course books, the set readings, and also materials produced by students, such as presentation. The content of the documents and course materials was systematically reviewed based on the research questions and to

determine 1.) whether they matched the aims of the courses for which they were being used and 2.) the aspects of IC that could be developed through their use.

To accomplish the purpose of the study, the following questions served as the criteria of analysis for the readings, which mainly included course books:

1. Who is the target audience of the book according to the authors, and what are the aims set out by them? How do these aims relate to the purposes of the course and the course tutor?
2. Did the book play a central role in the course or was it just used as supplementary material?
3. Did the book provide “only” culture and intercultural-related content or also hints on language use?
4. What elements of IC did the book help develop in the students?

The real practical value of course materials can only be assessed from the tutors’ and students’ perspectives. Although these views on course materials cannot be obtained through materials analysis, they are nonetheless an important aspect of the study which is relevant to the courses. For this reason, data from the observations and the interviews with students and tutors were used to supplement the course materials analysis to uncover how effective they found these materials to be, and what they appreciated or disliked about them.

#### **3.3.3.4 Study 4: Semi-structured interviews with the course tutors**

Interviews are considered to be a powerful tool for learning about participants’ views and opinions (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al., 2003; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2014; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). Moreover, the semi-structured interview is one of the most widely used instruments for qualitative data collection. Researchers have used it extensively to examine

tutors' and students' perceptions on incorporating culture and interculturality into language courses, such as in the studies of Larzén-Östermark (2008) and Menyhei (2016). Semi-structured interviews are characterized by a more flexible and dynamic phrasing and sequencing of questions which may change depending on what the interviewee has to say (Cohen et al., 2018; McDonough & McDonough, 2014). All the questions included in such interviews are open-ended to encourage participants to share information more freely and to provide more in-depth details about the issues discussed (Cohen et al., 2018).

In this dissertation, I interviewed the tutors of the courses included in the research. All of them had been teaching these specific courses for at least one year at the time of the study. The interview guide used for the tutor interviews is composed of 25 carefully worded questions (see Appendix B). The questions are grouped according to five themes: background information on the course, the course contents, teaching approaches, students' attitudes towards the course, and the tutor's evaluation of the course. However, considering the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews, other questions were added according to the specific content of their course and the activities that their students carried out in class. Table 3.5 presents an overview of the participating tutors. In order to maintain their anonymity, the participants were assigned codes. T stands for "tutor" and is followed by a number which is used for identification.

The main questions emerged based on the classroom observation conducted from February 2019 to May 2019 and were validated through an extensive review of the literature. For example, the semi-structured interview schedule used in Menyhei's (2016) study was consulted. Prescott (2011) highlights the importance of reflection during the process of designing interview questions; therefore, in this study I created themes based on my own reflections on the question "how and why does a tutor implement IC development in their course?". This helped me identify the relevant categories and develop questions that would produce fruitful discussion. I also adjusted the interview guide to the context of the study and

consulted my supervisor who provided useful comments on the first draft of the questions. For instance, the question “Can you see the growth in the students’ IC as a result of the course?” was added based on her feedback in order to evaluate whether or not the course achieved its planned objective of contributing to the development of students’ IC. The interview guide was then piloted in May 2019 with an EFL tutor who delivered a course on IC. Some modifications were made on the basis of the results as there were some recurrent questions.

For the present research, the interviews with the tutors were conducted between December 2019 and July 2020. Most of the interviews were held face-to-face, but during the pandemic some of them were conducted using online platforms. The interviewees signed a consent form (see Appendix C) allowing the recording of the interview. The time of the interviews varied, lasting between 20 and 50 minutes. After the transcription of the interviews, the transcripts were sent to the interviewees for member checking. The transcripts were reviewed, and no comments were received about their accuracy.

**Table 3.5**

*An Overview of the Course Tutors and their Courses*

Interviewees	Gender	Number of years teaching the course	The name of the course	Level
T1	Female	10 years	Australia through documentaries	BA
		10 years	Intercultural communication	BA
		5 years	Skills for intercultural communication	MA
		23 years	Teaching culture through language	PhD
T2	Female	10 years	Australian Aboriginal issues	BA
T3	Male	8 years or more	Communicating across cultures	BA
T4	Male	2 years	British culture	Teacher training
T5	Female	8-10 years	EFL for intercultural competence	Teacher training
		1 year	(Hungarian-Israeli online collaboration)	Teacher training
		5-6 years		PhD

			Language education for intercultural competence development	
T6	Male	3 years	American popular culture B	BA
T7	Male	1 year	American culture	Teacher training
T8	Female	3 years	American popular culture A	BA
T9	Male	5 years	Challenging stereotypes	Teacher training

### 3.3.3.5 Study 5: Semi-structured interviews with the programme leaders

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with programme leaders in order to understand their motives for including cultural and intercultural courses in the different programmes. The participants included 12 programme leaders; this included the head of school and director of studies as well as the department heads and coordinators of the curricular groups. Their years of experience as programme leaders ranges from 6 months to 20 years. The programme leader interview guide is composed of 6 to 8 carefully worded questions, depending on the administrative role the programme leader has (see Appendix D). However, all of them were asked about integrating culture, interculturality, and IC into the different programmes at the school. Table 3.6 provides information about the programme leaders interviewed. The participants were assigned codes: PL refers to “programme leader” and is followed by a number for identification.

**Table 3.6**

*An Overview of the Programme Leaders Interviewed*

Interviewee	Gender	Administrative role	Number of years in this position
PL1	Female	The coordinator of the teacher training programme	6 years
PL2	Female	The vice head of the Department of English Language Education	3 years
PL3	Female	Director of Studies of the PhD in Language Education and coordinator of the culture courses at the Department of English Language Education	20 years/16 years

PL4	Female	Deputy head of the Department of English Language Education	3 years
PL5	Female	The director of studies at the institute	2.5 years
PL6	Male	The head of the Department of English Studies	6 months
PL7	Male	The head of the Department of English Linguistics	9 years
PL8	Male	The Dean's Commissioner for international students	1 year
PL9	Female	Deputy head of the Department of American Studies	6 years
PL10	Male	Head of school	6 years
PL11	Female	The programme coordinator of the English language instruction MA programme	1.5 years
PL12	Female	Deputy head of the school	2 years

The questions crafted for the interview guide were developed based on a broad understanding of the roles of programme leaders at an Institute of English and American Studies. The interview schedule was validated by my supervisor, based on her recommendations some modifications were made, such as creating specific questions for different roles. For instance, the head of an Institute of English and American Studies and the director of studies were asked the following question: “do the School or the Departments have policies or guidelines concerning the content of the courses?” This question aimed to gain an understanding of the guidelines regarding the development of students’ IC provided by the school or the departments. Another comment was about focusing on IC rather than on the role of culture and interculturality in the different programmes. Therefore, I changed the questions and added ones that inquired as to whether culture and interculturality were implemented in the programmes. For example, the question “do any aspects of culture or interculturality have a role in your department?” was added. The interview questions were then piloted in 2020 with a stakeholder at a Hungarian university. The items appeared relevant as they elicited insightful data from the participants.

For the present study, the interviews with the programme leaders were individually conducted in November 2020. They were carried out online due to the COVID-19 pandemic



measures and lasted approximately 20 minutes each. The interviewees signed a consent form (see Appendix E) and allowed for the interviews to be recorded. Member checking was used in this study to check the accuracy of the data. To do so, the transcripts were sent to the programme leaders to verify their answers.

### **3.3.3.6 Study 6: Group interviews with the students**

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) define a group interview as a conversation among a small group to achieve an aim. Conducting group interviews can be useful to researchers as they provide opportunities to elicit more information in less time (Hua & Gibson, 2016). They are also insightful, as they bring together people who may have different opinions (Cohen et al., 2018), which leads to more complex output. Furthermore, ideas that may not be expressed in an individual interview can arise in group interviews (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), as some participants may be inspired by the ideas mentioned by other participants.

In this study, group interviews were conducted with EFL students taking part in the courses observed at the BA, MA and PhD levels, and in the Teacher Training programme between December 2019 and July 2020. The students included Hungarians as well as international students. Some students were taking cultural or intercultural courses for the first time while others had already taken such courses in previous semesters. For the majority of the courses, four students were interviewed. They were selected according to their nationality and their engagement in the class based on the classroom observations. When an observed class was multicultural, I invited students from different cultures to participate in the study. Moreover, both active and shy students were asked to be interviewees. Although the participants were selected based on these criteria, their participation in the present research was voluntary. Not all of the selected students accepted to be interviewed, but the majority of them did; as such only eleven group interviews were conducted from the fourteen observed courses. However, in

the ‘American popular culture A’ course, only one student volunteered for the interview. Table 3.7 gives an overview of the students interviewed. The participants were given a pseudonym reflecting their nationality and gender as well as a code. As for the code, Gint stands for “group interview” and is followed by a number which shows the number of the group; the S in the code stands for “student” and is followed by a number for identifying the students in the groups.

The students’ biodata was not considered relevant in this study as the focus is on understanding their views and examining their experiences related to attending courses with cultural and intercultural content at the university examined. The reason is that students are from a wide variety of backgrounds, but these are unknown to the course tutors and do not affect how the courses are designed. Therefore, the personal information of the participants such as age, gender, and social background were not considered in this research.

**Table 3.7**

*An Overview of the Students Interviewed*

Interviewee	Code	Gender	Nationality	Course	Programme
Luca	Gint1S1	Female	Hungarian	Australia through documentaries	BA
Anna	Gint1S2	Female	Hungarian		
Sarolta	Gint1S3	Female	Hungarian		
Kata	Gint2S1	Female	Hungarian	American culture	Teacher Training
Blanka	Gint2S2	Female	Hungarian		
Aicha	Gint3S1	Female	Turkish	Language education for intercultural competence development	PhD
Pedro	Gint3S2	Male	Brazilian		
Anna	Gint4S1	Female	Hungarian	Australian Aboriginal issues	BA
Kassie	Gint4S2	Female	Chinese		
Manchu	Gint4S3	Female	Chinese		
Nazem	Gint4S4	Female	Kazakh		
János	Gint5S1	Male	Hungarian	Communicating across Cultures	BA
Gábor	Gint5S2	Male	Hungarian		
Lee	Gint5S3	Male	Chinese		
Hu	Gint5S4	Male	Chinese		
Khadija	Gint5S5	Female	Libyan		
Zsuzsa	Gint6S1	Female	Hungarian	American popular culture	BA
Andrea	Gint7S1	Female	Hungarian	Challenging stereotypes	Teacher Training
Anna	Gint7S2	Female	Hungarian		

Flora	Gint7S3	Female	Hungarian		
Kinga Maria Emese Katalin	Gint8S1 Gint8S2 Gint8S3 Gint8S4	Female Female Female Female	Hungarian Hungarian Hungarian Hungarian	British culture	Teacher Training
Ani Robi Daria Eléni	Gint9S1 Gint9S2 Gint9S3 Gint9S4	Female Male Female Female	Indonesian Hungarian Russian Greek	Skills for intercultural communication	MA
Miho Aru Era Aya	Gint10S1 Gint10S2 Gint10S3 Gint10S4	Female Female Female Female	Japanese Kazakh Albania Japanese	Intercultural communication	BA
Marie Hanna Eleni Christina	Gint11S1 Gint11S2 Gint11S3 Gint11S4	Female Female Female Female	French Hungarian Cypriot Cypriot	American popular culture	BA

The interview schedule contains 16 carefully designed questions (see Appendix F). Since the interviews were semi-structured, some questions were added during the interviews while others were ignored. The decision to add or ignore questions was based on the classroom observations. One of the questions that was largely dependent on the observation was the following “I noticed that the majority of students did not participate in class. Is this because you are not interested in the content, you do not like the tutor’s way of teaching, you feel shy, or something else?” This question was only asked when students were observed to be inactive in class. 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 experiences in connection with cultural learning.

The interview questions were created based on an extensive review of the literature on student attitudes towards the development of IC. As Menyhei (2016) conducted research which was fairly similar to my own, I drew ideas from the feedback sheet she composed to examine students’ views when deciding on the main themes for my investigation. For example, in her study participants were asked to mention three reasons why they like/dislike the course. In the

present study, I reformulated this question in a more detailed way, asking the participants about their opinions on the topics, the course materials, and teaching methods in the courses they attended. I also consulted with my supervisor and some modifications were made to the instrument such as adding “what were its best features?” to question 6.4 to elicit more information from the participants about whether the course met their expectations.

The interview schedule was piloted in October 2019 with an MA student who participated in an intercultural communication course. The data was not as rich as expected, which was likely due to the use of the individual interview format. Therefore, I decided to conduct group interviews with 4 interviewees instead. The number of interviewees was kept small in order to ensure that all of the participants contributed to the discussion. However, due to the voluntary nature of the research the number of interviewees was sometimes lower than four.

Before the group interviews, the participants were informed of the aim of the study and the expected length of the interview. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted for approximately an hour and a half. The students had to sign a consent form (see Appendix G) so that the interview could be recorded. They were also invited to choose a pseudonym that reflected their nationality and gender to ensure anonymity. Note-taking did not take place to avoid disturbing the interviewees and to ensure better interaction between the researcher and the participants, as suggested by McDonough and McDonough (2014). After the transcriptions of the interviews, Member checking was established. The interviewees revised the transcripts, and no comments were received regarding the accuracy of their statements.

### **3.4 Methods of data analysis**

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe the process of analysing qualitative data as follows:

The process of qualitative data analysis is one of culling for meaning from the words and actions of the participants in the study, framed by the researcher's focus of inquiry. This search for meaning is accomplished by first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data, which will later serve as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning. (p. 118)

In this research, thematic analysis was carried out to analyse the data collected from the classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of documents and course materials. 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). The emerging themes identified through thematic analysis in this research aided the interpretation of the data.

The observations provided me with a large amount of information regarding the content of the courses as well as the students' attitudes towards the courses based on their behaviour. Some initial categories were defined, such as which IC components are taught, the content of the course, the tutors' role, and the students' engagement. The interviews were transcribed and coded immediately after data collection. As mentioned by Cohen and his colleagues (2018), "the researcher reads, re-reads, reflects on, infers from and interprets the raw data" (p. 645). Although it is time-consuming (Creswell, 2014), I decided to hand-code the data instead of using a qualitative computer data analysis programme. 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. I went through and reflected on the data several times and made note of possible themes. Then I looked for recurrent themes which were later used to group the data. The documents and course materials were also analysed according to the questions presented in section 3.3.3.3, and these were also matched against the aims of the courses.

Co-coding is considered a crucial factor in thematic analysis as it contributes to the quality control. Padgett (2016) describes the process as follows: "co-coding, or the independent coding of the same data by two or more researchers, is valuable, as leaving this important task

to one person runs the risks of veering off course or getting stale after a while” (p. 241). When looking for patterns, I asked a co-coder to check the already created codes from a sample which represented about 40% of the total data. The co-coding was time-consuming as we discussed areas of discrepancy to try to reach an agreement, but at the same time it helped to improve the credibility of the codes by drawing from different interpretive perspectives.

Overall, the use of thematic analysis, co-coding, and the careful consideration of different data sources enabled the identification and interpretation of patterns within the data. This helped contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the incorporation of IC development in English major programmes.

This chapter explained the design of this exploratory research aimed at gaining insight into and understanding of how English major students’ IC is developed in the various programmes of the institute in question. The section on the methods of data collection described the participants and the five studies which make up the overall research; in addition, the section on data analysis methods was included to ensure that ethical issues were also taken into consideration and that rigorous analytical procedures were carried out. The following chapter presents and discusses the results of the six studies.

## 4 Results and discussion

The results and discussion section is organized according to the six studies. The overall aim is to examine the ways in which the development of IC is integrated into the courses that English major students enrol in as part of their study programmes, while also considering the attitudes of tutors, programme leaders', and students towards the courses. Although the results are presented individually by study, wherever it is deemed relevant, results from other studies are brought in to highlight different perspectives on particular issues. For example, the results of the interviews with tutors are occasionally complemented by student views or the results of the classroom observations drawn from other studies.

### 4.1 Study 1: Document analysis

The analysed documents included the course catalogue, course descriptions, and course syllabi which were crucial for the evaluation of the cultural and intercultural content in the courses offered by the school. The course catalogue, which is easily accessible on the university website has data stored on courses and provides relevant pieces of information about them, such as the course tutor, course code, description of the readings and requirements, and assessment approach. Although the information presented in the catalogue is not very detailed, the descriptions provide students with an overview of the major aims of the courses. The findings suggested that the course catalogue explicitly reflected the cultural content of the courses either in the course titles or in the brief course descriptions.

The website shows that a total of 14,016 courses were offered from 2003 to 2022 to EFL students in the different English language programmes. Only 1,867 courses explicitly address cultural and intercultural content, which represents 13.32% of all the courses. This percentage is relatively low. Even though it is challenging to establish an ideal percentage, the literature reflected the importance of including cultural and intercultural content in language courses to

better prepare students for successful intercultural interaction. Therefore, the low percentage indicated that greater attention should be paid to the incorporation of cultural and intercultural content into EFL courses.

Some of the courses that were identified in the course catalogue as having cultural and intercultural content, including the observed courses are “American civilization”, “English-speaking cultures”, “US culture and society”, “United States food culture”, “Intercultural pragmatics in business”, and “Chapters from British literature and culture”. In relation to the courses examined in this research (except for the course Specialisation in English-speaking cultures as it does not appear in the online catalogue), aspects of big C and small c culture, and concepts related to IC were mentioned in the aims of the courses (see Table 4.1). This result indicates the tutors’ conscious effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of culture and IC to their students.

**Table 4.1**

*An Overview of the Course Aims as Illustrated in the Course Catalogue*

Programme	The course	The aims as they appeared in the course catalogue
BA	Australia through documentaries	“The aim of gaining an insight into Australian society”.
	Australian Aboriginal issues	“Familiarize students with the culture, history, politics, literature and art of the Australian natives”.
	Communicating across cultures	“This course will explore, in theory and practice, the nature of cross-cultural communication. It is meant to develop a better understanding of the factors that influence our ability to communicate effectively across cultures, with special emphasis on the cultures of Anglo-Saxon countries”.
	American popular culture A	“Look at contemporary American popular culture. [...] cover different topics including, reality TV, sports, memes, and iconic movies amongst other topics”.
	Intercultural communication	“Familiar with different aspects of intercultural communication”.
	American popular culture B	“Examining the impact popular culture has on our cultural consumption patterns in a globalized context”.



	Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures	“Familiarise the audience with important concepts of cultural studies in the context of English-speaking cultures. Understanding issues of identity, core values, difference, social change, and the connections of language and social issues helps to raise awareness of interculturality and thus to develop IC”.
MA	Skills for intercultural communication	“To develop the participants’ skills of intercultural communication; to develop the participants’ English language proficiency in order for them to become better communicators”.
	Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories and research	“To review the basic research methods used in research focusing on language and communication in intercultural situations, and to get acquainted with the basic requirements of and practical issues concerning writing a research paper”.
Teacher Training	American culture	“The students will learn about the ethnic and racial diversity of America, its government and political system [...]. By studying the values and beliefs of American society [...], we will better understand contemporary American culture and how Americans see the world”.
	British culture	“To develop [students’] knowledge of various aspects of British culture”.
	EFL for intercultural competence.	“To raise trainees’ awareness of the importance of intercultural communication and cooperative learning and to reflect on ways of incorporating these in EFL classes”.
	Challenging stereotypes	[Familiarise students with] “popular cultural stereotypes about the British”.
	Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures	The same course as in the BA programme
PhD	Teaching culture through language	“Aims to get participants engaged in a wide range of topics related to the function of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language”.
	Language education for intercultural competence development	“Aims to familiarize participants with the theoretical background and the researchable aspects of the development of intercultural competence through education”.

In the course descriptions, some of the expressed aims were fairly general such as in the case of “American popular culture A”, in which the aspects of American popular culture that were intended to be discussed in the class were not mentioned. However, other courses had more specific objectives which mentioned particular cultural aspects such as history, literature,

stereotypes, values, and cultural practices. Considering these aims and based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the courses in question sought to promote students' knowledge of cultural practices, products and the underlying values. Enhancing students' knowledge about cultural diversity was also targeted through learning, for example, about racial diversity in the US. Furthermore, other courses aimed at developing students' intercultural attitudes and challenging stereotypes through activities such as exploring and discussing stereotypes about British people. The course entitled "Australian Aboriginal issues" also aimed to develop students' intercultural attitudes: by learning the history, literature, and art of Aboriginal people, the course sought to foster students' open-mindedness and curiosity towards learning about indigenous people's cultures. However, the aims mentioned overlooked the inclusion of the students' own culture, even though this aspect was included in the courses of many tutors as shown in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) and 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors). A few courses explicitly aimed at developing students' IC skills; for example, in the course "Skills for intercultural communication", it was clearly stated that the objective was to foster the participants' intercultural communication skills.

A few of the course descriptions included the following anti-discrimination statement:

*The staff of the Department of English Language Pedagogy are fully committed both to promoting freedom of expression and to respecting the rights and dignity of all people regardless of their ethnic or socio-cultural background, gender, religion, beliefs or sexual orientation. As we consider diversity beneficial, and respectful communication essential, we expect the same commitment from our students in their discourse and behaviour.*

This further showed the commitment of the course tutors to promote human rights (i.e., the freedom of expression) and value cultural diversity. The inclusion of this statement reflected the course tutors' awareness of the importance of creating an inclusive learning atmosphere that would foster respect and willingness to learn about diverse cultures.

The course syllabi were also examined as they presented more detailed information than the course descriptions regarding the tasks and materials used to achieve the course aims. After obtaining them from the course tutors, it was noted that all of the course syllabi followed the same approach as they include the course aims, requirements, timeline, and readings for the course. In the courses examined, the materials were carefully chosen to support the course objectives and were presented in a detailed manner (i.e., containing the theme, the title of the reading, the author, and the page numbers). For instance, the tutor of the “American culture” course presented the themes to be covered during the term and specified the materials that would be used to discuss that theme (e.g., The frontier heritage; (Sep. 30); the book: Datesman et al. (2014): American Ways: An introduction to American culture; Reading: Chapter 4, pages 80-86). In the course entitled “Australia through documentaries”, the tutor listed the themes to be discussed which matched the overall objective of the course. These themes included identity, colonisation, language, Aboriginal Australians, immigration and multiculturalism, and climate. Based on the themes presented in the course syllabi, it can be said that the course covered aspects of both big C and small c culture.

The cultural and intercultural content was explicitly stated in the course syllabi of the courses observed. As shown in Table 4.2, various themes were included that aimed to develop the students’ intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

**Table 4.2**

*The Cultural and Intercultural Content of the Courses Based on the Syllabus*

The programme	The course	The cultural and intercultural content
BA	Australia through documentaries	Identity. Colonisation. Language. Aboriginal Australians. Immigration/Multiculturalism. Climate
	Australian Aboriginal issues	Myths and legends, traditional society. Voyages of exploration, settlement, white point of view. Black and white conflict. History (Aboriginal point of view). Stolen Generations. War, apology. Aboriginal music, art and poetry. Aboriginal women’s

		autobiography. Aboriginal politics and land rights issues
	Communicating across cultures	The cross-cultural experience. Language and culture. Approaching national cultures. Moving between cultures. Cross-cultural communication skills.
	American popular culture A	What is popular culture? What is TV? The Daytime Soap Opera. Reality TV. Sports and stars. Pop Music. Race in Pop culture. Advertisements. Cartoons for adults. Youtube
	Intercultural communication	Culture and cultural awareness. Aspects of culture. Culture and communication. Dimensions of culture. Understanding national cultures. Culture learning and acculturation. Culture, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Non-verbal culture. Language and culture. Discourse and culture. Intercultural communication and competence. Researching culture and intercultural communication.
	American popular culture B	What is Culture? What is Popular Culture? Twentieth-Century History of Pop Culture. Counter Culture I: The 60's and the 70's. Counter Culture II: The Glamorous 80's. The Aftermath of the 80's. Dystopian and Apocalyptic Popular Culture
	Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures	From England to the Commonwealth of nations. UK: Geography. UK: Identity. US: American culture and American regionalism. US: Core values. US: A changing culture: Patterns and challenges of US immigration. AUS: Nature and people. AUS: Social issues, language and arts. Canada: Profiles of a country. Canada: Multicultural Canada: Negotiating identities. Intercultural communication.
	Specialisation in English-speaking cultures	What is culture? Cultural Identities. Exploring national cultures. Cultural learning. Understanding cultures. Language and culture. Culture and pragmatics. Discourse and translation. Perceptions of culture. IC.
MA	Skills for intercultural communication	Communicating for international business. Relationship-building. Working in international teams. Leading internationally.
	Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories and research	Culture and cultural awareness. Aspects of culture. Culture and communication. Dimensions of culture. Understanding national cultures. Culture learning and acculturation. Culture, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. Non-verbal culture. Language and culture. Discourse and culture. ICC. Researching culture and intercultural communication.
Teacher training	American culture	Understanding the culture of the United States. Traditional American values and beliefs. The American religious heritage. The frontier heritage. The heritage of abundance. The world of American business. Government and Politics. Ethnic and racial diversity. Education. Leisure time. The American Family.

	British culture	What is culture? Englishness. Stereotypes. Romantic hero? Dialect/Slang. New words.
	EFL for intercultural competence.	Background to EFL and intercultural dimension. Key issues and concepts in Barrett et al (2014). Analyze course books and lessons from an intercultural perspective. Design and facilitate in-class and online activities with an (inter)cultural focus.
	Challenging stereotypes	National identities in Britain. Britishness vs. Englishness. Self-perception on traditional grounds. British society. Attitudes. Manners.
	Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures	The same course as in the BA programme
	Specialisation in English-speaking cultures	The same course as in the BA programme
PhD	Teaching culture through language	What is culture? Aspects and dimensions of culture. Culture learning. Verbal and non-verbal culture. Teacher roles and education. Culture and English as a lingua franca. Culture and literature through language. Testing cultural learning.
	Language education for intercultural competence development	Definitions, models and policy papers. Models and components. Textbooks, ICT and the media for ICC. Assessment of ICC. Materials and assessment.

As seen in Table 4.2, the course tutors focused on specific IC aspects in the courses from each programme. For instance, in the courses included in the doctoral programme, the content is more theoretical with the intention of familiarizing students with IC research and with the different models that scholars have proposed to examine IC. However, this was not noted in the courses in the BA or MA programmes. Based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the MA courses that were observed seemed to help students gain a better understanding of different cultural norms, beliefs, and communication styles as; for example, they learned about the impact of culture on language. Meanwhile, the aim of the courses in the BA programme, which were included in this research, were to raise students' awareness of cultural diversity through learning about the different cultures (e.g., Australian, Britain, or American). According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the courses examined in the BA programme contributed to the development of students' intercultural attitudes. For example, themes such

as colonization, the Stolen Generation, and black and white conflict may promote empathy towards indigenous people. Furthermore, the courses also aimed to develop the IC skills of the students. For example, in the course “Intercultural communication”, the analysis of the topics in the syllabus showed that it was sought to improve students’ ability to navigate between cultures by providing a comprehensive overview of important concepts related to culture and communication. Regarding the courses examined in the teacher training programme and as mentioned in Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors), one of key objectives mentioned in the “EFL for intercultural competence” course was to raise pre-service tutors’ awareness of the importance of IC and reflect on ways to promote it in their future EFL classes through analysing lessons from an intercultural perspective. The findings also suggested an aim to improve future teachers’ knowledge about the target culture(s). For example, the students learned about British manners, American values, and stereotypes among other topics. The inclusion of such content can have a positive impact on the development of their cultural awareness and cultural preconceptions.

#### 4.1.1 Summary

This study examined how the promotion of IC was present in courses offered by the different English major programmes based on the analysis of the course catalogue, course descriptions, and course syllabi. The findings of this study partially answer to RQ 1.

RQ1: How is intercultural competence development present in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university?

The findings suggest that at the time of the data collection the institute offered a relatively low percentage of the courses with explicit cultural and intercultural content. Since it is important to prepare students to live in a globalized world and interact effectively with people from

various cultures, more emphasis should be placed on including cultural and intercultural content in the courses offered by the English language programmes.

Based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model of IC, the courses in question aimed to broaden students' knowledge about specific cultures and their understanding of the beliefs, practices, and values of those cultures as they learned, for example, about American values or the cultural products of Australian Aborigines. The results also suggest that by learning about British stereotypes, students could develop intercultural attitudes of challenging their stereotypes. Furthermore, other courses aimed to develop students' intercultural communication skills. It is worth mentioning that not all courses explicitly presented the aspects of IC that they aimed to address.

The examination of the syllabi of the courses examined showed that the tutors used certain themes to make the aims of the courses more concrete. The analysis of the detailed descriptions showed that the tutors were very much aware of what they wanted to achieve in the courses as well as how they wanted to achieve it. The results suggested that the courses had very specific aims which were achieved by focusing on different facets of culture. It was found that courses in each programme had a different focus regarding the development of the students' IC. Courses in the BA programme that were examined in this research presented an introduction to IC by familiarizing students with English-speaking culture(s). In the second phase, which is the MA programme, it was hoped that students who attended the course "Skills for intercultural communication" could develop an understanding of the impact of culture on communication and question their own communicative behaviours by learning about intercultural communication in business settings. The course entitled "Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories and research" aims to have a positive impact on fostering students' theoretical knowledge about IC as well as their verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures. The courses examined in the doctoral programme explored research approaches for

investigating IC in different contexts. Based on the themes presented in the course syllabi, the course “EFL for intercultural competence” in the teacher training programme aimed to provide pre-service teachers with knowledge on how to include aspects of IC in their teaching practice. The results also suggested an aim to improve future teachers’ knowledge about the target culture(s). For example, by learning about British stereotypes students were encouraged to challenge their own assumptions. Even though the scope of each programme is different, the course tutors took the students’ IC development into consideration.

## **4.2 Study 2: Classroom observations**

In this section, the results of the classroom observations are presented and discussed individually by course, which are classified according to the different levels of study examined. Although I observed the courses over the course of one semester, I cannot provide a comprehensive description due to length constraints. Hence, the findings from the classroom observations are mainly presented through discussing sample activities and by highlighting certain features of the courses.

### **4.2.1 BA courses**

#### **4.2.1.1 Communicating across cultures**

The BA course “Communicating across cultures” aimed at exploring both theoretical and practical issues related to communication across cultures. Another objective of the course was to develop the students’ understanding of the aspects that influence the ability to communicate with people from other cultures, with a special focus on Anglo-Saxon cultures. The analysis of the intercultural content from the course entitled “Communicating across cultures” showed that the focus of the course was on English-speaking cultures, which represented the students’ target cultures. For example, the students reflected on British and 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 and American speakers use it to mean that they do not like something. According to Barrett and his colleagues (2014), these types of examples and their related activities can be used to raise students’ awareness of verbal communication in the target language cultures and to help them avoid misinterpretations when communicating with people from these cultures. Additionally, other activities were aimed at promoting students’ intercultural attitudes, such as open-mindedness and appreciation of cultural diversity. One such activity involved comparing Hungarian and American cultural phenomena. In terms of greeting, for example, when American people are asked “*how are you*” they respond with simple, short statements, while in Hungary people are likely to explain how they feel at length. Another IC aspect that can be fostered through this activity is students’ knowledge of the different interpretations of greetings, which has the potential to enhance their cognitive flexibility. 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 IC.

Another way that the course tutor aimed to raise the students’ awareness of their own cultures was by constantly asking them about aspects of their own cultures. For example, students took part in an activity in which they had to think of a movement or gesture that would be understood in their culture. One Japanese student bowed, and another student raised her thumb. Activities such as this can enhance students’ awareness of cultural diversity. In another activity, students had to evaluate communication in their cultures in terms of how direct and indirect it is. It was found that Hungary was the most direct when compared to Germany, Kazakhstan, China, Syria, and Japan, reflecting the tendency of Hungarians to express their needs more explicitly. The Chinese student, Gint5S4, commented that China was the least direct country among those mentioned, showing that he was aware of the prevalence of indirectness in his discourse. To provide a further example he shared his experience of emailing his

supervisor: after writing an entire paragraph of formalities, at the end of the email the student added one sentence expressing what he actually wanted. This finding showed that although the student was aware that Chinese people are indirect compared to Europeans, he still was unable to negotiate a mode of intercultural interaction. In this way, this activity was able to promote the actions component proposed by Barrett and his colleagues (2014). More specifically, it seemed to encourage the students to reflect on their own behaviour and discuss differences between cultures in relation to directness and indirectness.

The tutor's behaviour was also examined in the course and reflected a high level of IC. Apart from the course materials, their approaches and input were crucial aspects of the course. Both the stories they told in class and their actions were geared towards fulfilling the aims of the course. For instance, at one point in the semester they went to China and brought back some Chinese food for their students, which was an effective way to improve the students' knowledge of a particular culture that might be unfamiliar to them. It was also an opportunity to raise their awareness of cultural and religious diversity. On this occasion, there were two Chinese students in the group, and the tutor asked them to explain to the other students what the food contained, since the group also had Muslim students<sup>7</sup>. This revealed a high level of awareness of their students' cultures on the part of the tutor. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, their behaviour demonstrated an intercultural attitude of respect for cultural differences. This finding is in line with Larzén-Östermark's (2008) claim that tutors must possess IC in order to teach it. Observing the IC of the tutor may implicitly motivate the learner to be more accepting of people from different cultures and to value cultural diversity.

The observations also revealed cooperation among the students. For instance, the Chinese students were very keen to help their classmates and recommended foods that did not

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<sup>7</sup> According to Islam, Muslim people are prohibited from eating pork and drinking alcohol.

contain meat or alcohol to the Muslim students. This activity was an opportunity for the students to cooperate, learn more about each other's cultures and demonstrate an attitude of respect for different cultures. An appropriate and respectful interaction took place as the Chinese students translated and explained the Chinese ingredients to the other students.

Group and pair activities were utilized which encouraged cooperation among the students. In one of the group activities, the tutor handed out cards of different colours (i.e., 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 and 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 based on these parameters. This role-play gave rise to intercultural interactions among the students and probably some intercultural misunderstandings as well. One student complained that their interlocutor did not look at them, which they interpreted as being disrespectful. Another student recalled that they had encountered someone who was loud and easy-going. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the above activity can promote students' knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity by exposing them to the behaviours of White-land, Red-land, and Blue-land. The activity can also highlight the significance of maintaining eye contact in some cultures and how it was as a sign of impoliteness in others. Furthermore, this activity seemed to develop students' positive attitudes towards cultural differences through exposing them to numerous cultural perspectives. By learning about the practices of another culture, students may be more open to and tolerant of cultural differences. Furthermore, this task can foster students' intercultural skills by providing them with opportunities for intercultural interactions. For instance, the activity aimed to help students interpret non-verbal behaviour and communicate successfully

with people from other cultures. Moreover, it was a good opportunity to foster students' understanding of the challenges that could arise in intercultural interactions.

#### **4.2.1.2 Intercultural communication**

The objective of the BA course "Intercultural communication" was to familiarize students with different aspects of intercultural communication. The group in this course was multicultural, including Chinese, Japanese, Kazakh, Hungarian, and Turkish students, among many others. The focus of the course was not placed on English-speaking cultures; on the contrary, students' own cultures and cultural behaviours were highlighted and discussed. The students were also asked to report intercultural clashes that they had experienced in real life. For instance, one student shared that they had discovered that it is unacceptable to blow one's nose around others when they went to Japan, but sniffing was okay. In Hungary, however, blowing one's nose is acceptable while sniffing is not. This incident provided an opportunity to inform the students about cultural differences while also promoting their awareness of practices in various cultures. It also had the potential to motivate them to tolerate uncertainties and question their own behaviour.

Another requirement of the course was to prepare a presentation. There was an overall agreement among the students to present on an object that represented their own cultures. This activity was eye-opening to many students for two reasons: it facilitated learning about new cultures and the discovery of similarities between cultures. A Turkish student, for instance, brought traditional cologne that is used to clean hands. It was surprising for the rest of the students to discover that Albanians use the same type of cologne in the same way. Moments such as these appeared to promote students' awareness of aspects that are shared between their own culture and others, which highlights the enriching nature of these tasks. Based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, this course intended to promote positive attitudes towards

cultural diversity. By presenting and highlighting their own cultures, students were encouraged to appreciate their culture while also showing respect to those of others. Furthermore, the activities provided an opportunity for students from various cultures to communicate and learn from each other, which had the potential to foster the actions component of the model.

The results of the observations revealed that the students were particularly excited to share information about their cultures, yet also showed interest in learning about different cultures as well. They seemed to be aware of cultural diversity and the importance of being interculturally competent when dealing with others. In one of the activities, the tutor asked them to share what they would be interested in when visiting a new country. The answers were as follows: taboo topics, table manners, local cuisine, the relationship between men and women in terms of equality, and dress codes. The students showed awareness of the possible factors that could lead to misunderstandings, while another student referred to the appropriateness of physical distance. The findings indicated that this student was aware of the importance of nonverbal communication when dealing with people from different cultures.

#### **4.2.1.3 Australian Aboriginal issues**

The course “Australian Aboriginal issues” aimed to raise the students’ awareness of the culture of the Australian Aborigines. As such, the course content included myths, legends, ways of exchanging gifts, the colonization of Australia, the Australian constitution, the black and white conflict, and the Aboriginal system of marriage. Gender roles in Aboriginal society were also described: women were expected to do the gathering while men were tasked with hunting. The tutor also discussed the topic of Stolen Generations, which refers to the practice of removing Aboriginal children and putting them in foster homes in order to eradicate Aboriginal culture. Based on the model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), the course content suitable for fostering students’ intercultural attitudes. By learning about the myths and legends of

Aborigines, attitudes of respect towards customs and value systems could be developed. This course also seemed to foster students' knowledge about the customs and history of the Australian Aborigines. The exposure to materials and activities on black and white conflict, the colonization of Australia, the Australian constitution and the Stolen Generations seemed to help students gain deeper knowledge and awareness of the issues faced by the Aboriginal people and the negative impact that colonisation had on them. It is important to note that the information presented in this course mostly focused on big C culture, which is not enough to develop all the aspects of IC.

The tutor utilized video materials in most of the lessons, playing short clips which described the customs, dress, and appearance of the Australian Aborigines. During another lesson, the students watched a clip about a massacre that occurred in Tasmania. The video was important as it presented the Aborigines' point of view about the British settlers. As found in study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students), such materials were able to teach various aspects of culture. In fact, compared to listening to lectures, watching videos could be an even more efficient method for helping students to learn about and engage with a given issue. In addition, the students watched Episode 7 in the series entitled "first Australians" (Cole et al., 2018). In pairs, they were asked to recall the restrictions that were placed on the Aboriginal people. The answers, which were unequal wages, segregation on public means of transports, and limited access to accommodations, potentially resulted in raising students' awareness about discrimination against Australian Aborigines. This could help them to become more aware about and to better identify racist actions taking place around the world.

The tutor also brought authentic Aboriginal materials, which showed their enthusiasm toward teaching this subject. This appeared to increase students' motivations towards learning about the Aboriginal people. Bringing authentic cultural materials made the students more enthusiastic and curious to learn about the target culture.

The students also enjoyed taking part in role-plays. In one class, the tutor told the group that many Aboriginal heads were sent to Britain for scientific inquiry and that some of them were buried while others were put in museums. The tutor asked the students to form two groups: the first group represented Australians who supported the return of the heads to Australia while the second group represented British scientists who would like to keep the heads in Britain. The role-play was enjoyable to both the students and the tutor, and each group managed to defend and present their arguments. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, this activity aimed to promote students' intercultural attitudes. The activity gives students the opportunity to adopt more open-minded views towards different cultural experiences and to develop their intercultural knowledge. The particular activity mentioned above can foster a deeper understanding of the impact that colonial history had on Australian Aboriginals' experiences through engaging with a sensitive and controversial topic. This role play could also enhance their ability to imagine other cultural perspectives and understand different points of view. Furthermore, students' intercultural actions could be fostered as this activity provided them with the opportunity to challenge actions that violate human rights and defend marginalized people.

#### **4.2.1.4 American popular culture (B)**

The BA course "American popular culture (B)" aimed to boost students' knowledge about American culture; this aim was partially achieved through assigning student presentations. The presentations had to be about particular eras in American history; for instance, one student did a presentation about American popular culture in the 1940s, in which they described the means of entertainment (i.e., radio) and the type of music people used to listen to (i.e., jazz and swing). They also presented the impact of World War II on leisure activities. All of the presentations presented information which was found on the Internet (particularly Wikipedia) and did not include any analysis from the students themselves. When

the topic of music in the 1970s, the tutor asked a few questions to help the students think critically: What do you think of the presentation? Would you say that hip hop culture is innate in African Americans and not related to white people? However, the students were reluctant to answer despite the tutor's apparent aim to make the lesson more fruitful through encouraging them to think critically rather than simply reporting the information that they found. As an observer, I had the impression that the presentations did not effectively contribute to the development of students' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and actions, as they focused only on the surface level without examining the cultural context; this was supported by the results of Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students).

While the tutor made efforts to encourage student initiative in the course, the group interview with the students made it clear that they were not entirely happy with the course. The students expressed that they expected more input in terms of cultural content from the tutor. It is difficult to decide if the students' passivity reflected their educational cultural background or if it was due to other factors, as they did not elaborate on this.

#### **4.2.1.5 Australia through documentaries**

The BA course "Australia through documentaries" was aimed at helping students gain insight into Australian society. The content of the course centred around Aboriginals, multiculturalism, history, climate, and immigration, and each lesson consisted of the viewing of a documentary and followed by a discussion of the topic (e.g., the Stolen Generation). In an attempt to present the perspectives of the Aboriginal people, the tutor showed the documentary "*Go back to where you came from*" (Cordell & Murray, 2011-2018), which portrayed true events and reported on how Australian Aborigines felt in regard to the discrimination and injustice they faced. The choice of material sought to motivate the students to challenge the behaviours of the white settlers which violated human rights. The topic of immigration and



multiculturalism in Australia was also approached in the course; specifically, the course tutor asked about the situation of refugees in Malaysia, which the Malaysian student in the class depicted it as “*inhumane*”. As this class included students from many cultures, the tutor considered this an opportunity for them to discuss and compare different cultures. This cultural comparison, especially in regard to the topic of refugees, highlighted that many people are still suffering from racism in countries around the world. Referring back to Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, it seemed that the students’ knowledge about their own culture and other cultures was enhanced, for instance, when discussing the topic of refugees in Malaysia. The students also seemed to gain an understanding of the challenges faced by Australian Aborigines and refugees through learning about their experiences, which could promote their cultural sensitivity. The course content also seemed to foster students’ intercultural attitudes: the exposure to the experiences of refugees and indigenous Australians can develop students’ appreciation of cultural diversity and curiosity about those from other cultures. In addition, the activities potentially fostered intercultural actions: through their exposure to the experiences of the Stolen Generations, students may have become more aware of the injustices that occurred, which may encourage them to express disapproval of acts of discrimination that they themselves witness and take actions to foster equality.

Role-plays were also used during the “Australia through documentaries” course. The students were asked to imagine that they were politicians and examine the pros and cons of having refugees in their country. One student stated that they “*would educate children about multiculturalism*”. Considering the model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), this activity has the potential to promote the students’ respect for various cultures. Furthermore, playing the roles of politicians was likely to promote empathy to different perspectives and to promote awareness of the difficulties faced by refugees. The task of examining and discussing the

advantages and disadvantages of having refugees in their country appeared to promote their awareness about issues related to migration, fostering the students' intercultural knowledge.

Similarly to the previously discussed course, the students in this course were also tasked with giving presentations. The topics varied but were all related to the history of Australian Aboriginals in some way. The presented and discussed topics were the following: child removal, anti-racism policies of Australia, the Australian identity, Aboriginal rights based on the constitution of 1901, and the social problems faced by Australian Aboriginals, among many others. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model of IC, this activity can foster students' intercultural attitudes of empathy and acceptance of Australian Aboriginal culture by presenting complex topics on the subject. Moreover, it can increase their knowledge about the culture and history of Australian Aboriginals. Students, for instance, had the opportunity to gain knowledge about the challenges faced by indigenous Australians such as anti-racism policies and child removal.

#### **4.2.1.6 Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures**

The BA lecture series aimed to provide students with a theoretical background on concepts related to the cultures of English-speaking countries. The tutors also presented practical examples so that the students could develop their intercultural communication skills. These lecture series were conducted online; although some of them were synchronous and conducted on MS Teams, most of the lectures were asynchronous and pre-recorded for the students and uploaded on the Canvas platform. It was noted that the tutors' interactions with the students (e.g., asking questions or facilitating pair and group activities) only occurred in a few lectures. The students were sometimes asked to answer questions at the beginning of the lecture or in the middle of it. For instance, at the beginning of the lecture about UK identity, the lecturer asked the students to write down their existing knowledge about famous British people.

On another occasion, they were asked to list American values that they were aware of. Since many of the lectures were pre-recorded, students' answers were not checked.

The lectures included a diverse range of topics connected with English-speaking countries (e.g., the UK, US, Australia, and Canada). The tutors presented a thorough discussion of the topics; for example, when elaborating on concepts related to the US, the tutors analysed American regionalism, core values, and current trends in US immigration. All of these lectures touched upon individual cultural aspects, which could help students gain a better understanding of the target cultures.

Big C and small c aspects of the cultures of English-speaking countries were also discussed. The students learned about important US symbols, such as the US flag and the statue of liberty. It was mentioned that the American flag contains 50 stars representing the current 50 states as well as 13 stripes representing the 13 original states. The significance of the statue of liberty was also discussed, specifically its importance as a symbol for new life in a new country. As for small c culture, the students learned about basic American values (e.g., competitiveness, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, work and achievement, and time consciousness). Stereotypes were also discussed; for example, although Americans may be described as restless by some, their behaviour was explained by the fact that they often desire to complete tasks as efficiently as possible. The students also learned about Australia, including its history and the conflict between the Europeans and Aborigines. Passages from Captain Cook's journal were used to present an overview of the conflict and show how both sides perceived each other. The Aborigines were described as savages, while the whites were perceived as ghosts. The students also learned about the injustice and discrimination perpetrated against the Aborigines, who were deprived of a number of rights, such as the right to vote. Moreover, the shift of attitudes towards the natives from racism towards tolerance and acceptance was also depicted. One of the lecturers gave an overview of Canadian culture which focused on big C culture. They learned

about the symbols that represent Canada such as the maple tree, moose, and ice hockey. Furthermore, Canada's multiculturalism was examined in the course, such as the Canadian Multicultural Act (1988), which declares the rights of the indigenous peoples of Canada and the multilingual nature of the country (i.e., French, English, and other languages). Based on Barrett and his colleagues (2014), learning about the different cultures of English-speaking countries can enhance students' knowledge about cultural diversity. Examining the difficulties faced by Native Canadians and Native Australians gave students an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of these cultures. This can also lead students to develop empathy towards those dealing with similar challenging situations. By being exposed to the underlying values of the American people, students could obtain a better understanding of their behaviours, and consequently, be able to challenge their own existing stereotypes.

One lecture focussed on intercultural communication and discussed possible reasons for miscommunication across cultures, including limited knowledge of the target culture(s), previous expectations, and a lack of tolerance. By examining reasons such as these, students were given the chance to become more mindful of the potential reasons behind intercultural conflict. This could encourage them to be more open-minded and show more tolerance towards unfamiliar practices and behaviours.

#### **4.2.1.7 Specialisation in English-speaking cultures**

Students are offered another series of BA lectures aimed at familiarizing them with tools to interpret English language texts and interactions. The lectures in question were conducted online through synchronous and asynchronous platforms. To encourage interactions among students and with the teachers, especially when the lecture was pre-recorded, a forum was created in the online platform Canvas which gave students the opportunity to share ideas and ask follow-up questions.

The courses appeared to develop the students' knowledge about the theoretical background by teaching them about various concepts including culture and its elements. Based on Holló's (2019) model, culture is made up of three elements: civilisation, behaviour and speech patterns, and text/discourse structure. Civilization represents the institutional aspects of a culture such as practices and values, while behaviour and speech patterns refer to the behaviour and language that are accepted in a given culture. The text/discourse structures and skills are the features of written and oral documents and the skills needed to produce such texts.

To develop their intercultural skills seemed, students were given a list, based on Archer (1986), on how to successfully deal with cultural conflicts. The steps included the identification of the situation, listing the behaviour and feelings of the other person as well as oneself, listing the expected behaviours that could occur in such a situation, examining and openly discussing the potential problems with the other person, and understanding the values behind their expectations. Through discussing differences between their cultures, students could learn how to negotiate interaction with interlocutors from other cultures. This process might also help students move beyond their ethnocentric attitudes and evaluate a given situation objectively without making presumptions. It also helps them to recognize the importance of understanding one's own culture and those of others.

The students also learned about the impact that culture has on verbal communication in terms of the amount and volume of speech as well as turn taking. For example, in some cultures silence may be considered as a sign of a lack of knowledge or boredom while in other cultures it is regarded as a sign of thoughtfulness. Regarding turn-taking, in some cultures interlocutors are allowed to interrupt other speakers, whereas in other cultures it is more acceptable to remain silent for long period. The difference between oral and written communication in terms of the degree of directness was also highlighted; for example, in some cultures people prefer to communicate directly, leading to faster relaying of information, while in other cultures people

may adopt a more indirect style, and may be less likely to express their opinions. The students' awareness of cultural differences had the chance to develop as they were familiarized with these differences in communication. This could also promote students' attitudes of respect towards people from other cultures and their ways of communicating.

One tutor explained the significant impact of culture on writing, referring to Kaplan's (1966) conception of the rhetorical conventions of languages. It was mentioned that Anglo-European writing is characterized by linear development, while in Oriental languages the writing approach is more indirect, and the message is expressed at the end of the text. The tutor showed an example of linear paragraph development: the topic sentence "Smoking cigarettes can be an expensive habit" was followed by supporting arguments and details, such as "people who smoke two packs of cigarettes a day spend \$2.00 per day on their habit", "At the end of one year, these smokers have spent at least \$730.00", and "Since cigarette smoke has an offensive odour that permeates clothing, stuffed furniture, and carpet, smokers often find that these items must be cleaned more frequently than non-smokers do". Contrastive rhetoric in other languages was also examined and discussed; for example, in Arabic there is a preference for coordination and repetition at all levels of language. Developing students' knowledge about contrastive rhetoric could raise non-native English language students' awareness of the structure of their writing, which could consequently encourage them to adapt their writing style to the target language. The impact of culture on translation was also examined, and the tutor highlighted that translated texts should match the expectations of readers from the target language and culture.

The students learned about stereotypes associated with different cultures and the reasons for these preconceptions. For example, British people are usually described as loud. It was explained by the fact that many British young people spend their holidays drinking and partying. Another stereotype that was examined was that all Asians perform well in math and

science. The tutor clarified the source for this stereotype, highlighting that many children of Asian immigrants are pressured by their parents to pursue STEM majors. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, by exploring stereotypes and their causes, the observed students were able to arrive at a better understanding of the underlying values and behaviours behind the given assumptions. This may lead them to challenge their own preconceptions. Moreover, it can promote the development of empathy and open-mindedness in intercultural interactions.

There were also some activities which were included in the lectures, but due to the fact that the course was conducted online, the activities were not interactive and were done individually. For example, the students were given a list of cultural elements and were asked to choose some items from the list; afterwards, they had to decide whether the chosen cultural features were visible or invisible. Some of these elements included architecture, food, and attitudes towards animals. This activity aimed to show the students that culture has many facets that may or may not be superficially perceptible. Such activities could contribute to raising students' awareness of the important role that cultural values play in shaping cultural products and practices. On another occasion, the students were asked about the generalizations that they held in regard to other cultures and the reasons given to justify these generalizations. Based on Barrett and his colleagues (2014), this activity appeared to raise students' awareness about the stereotypes that they themselves held. This could result in enhancing their understanding of the impact that their own cultures have on the way they view others. Another interesting activity was conducted in the lecture on intercultural communication; the students were asked to provide feedback to some statements by indicating their agreement on a scale of 1 (i.e., strongly disagree) to 5 (i.e., strongly agree) in order to examine their experiences with intercultural encounters and how well they cope in given situations. Some of these statements include the following: "I have had a lot of experience with people from other cultures", "I am alert to the

ways in which misunderstandings between people might arise through differences in speech, gestures, etc”, “I find it difficult to see a situation through another person’s eyes”, “I am happy to learn about and make friends with people from any culture without exception”. By reflecting on their intercultural interactions, this activity seemed to help students examine their own IC and recognize aspects that needed to be developed.

## **4.2.2 MA programme**

### **4.2.2.1 Skills for intercultural communication**

The main objective of the MA course “Skills for intercultural communication” was to enhance students’ intercultural communication skills; in addition, the course also aimed to develop their English language proficiency. On one occasion, the students had to read the chapter entitled “*Getting your message across successfully*” from the course book “*Intercultural skills in English*” (Dignen & Chamberlain, 2009), which discussed ways to engage in direct communication without hurting people. The text also underlined the importance of positivity when interacting with people: the tutor elaborated on the term positivity, maintaining that if there is a lack of language proficiency among the interlocutors, being positive, encouraging, and reassuring could help to achieve successful interaction. This potentially raised students’ awareness of the significance of positivity in intercultural interactions, which may motivate them to display their openness towards learning and interacting with others, as well as tolerating ambiguity in order to ensure successful communication with people from other cultures.

The students were also introduced to the KISSSSS acronym (=Keep it Short, Simple, Structured, Slow, and the Same) which highlights that communication should be based on these five notions. The course tutor challenged them to examine communication in their own culture by asking them which aspect out of the five would be the most difficult to achieve. One student said that keeping their message short was difficult to achieve, which they explained as an effect



of their mother tongue, Arabic<sup>8</sup>. This suggests that the activity helped contribute to their knowledge of their own verbal communicative conventions as well as the communicative conventions of other students. After informing the students about different types of communication styles (i.e., analytical, personal, intuitive, and functional communication), the tutor highlighted the importance of being aware of the communication style of one's conversation partner as well as oneself. This is particularly important in intercultural contexts in order to be able to adapt to the communication style of those in the target culture.

The students shared their personal intercultural clashes, some of which were religion related. For example, a Muslim student recounted a story involving a Christian girl who refused to be in a relationship with him because they do not share the same religion. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, simulating intercultural clashes appeared to develop students' knowledge about their own culture and those of their classmates. This activity seemed to develop students' empathy and openness towards people from other cultures. By sharing and hearing stories, students were more likely to develop respect for cultural differences. Furthermore, such activities can promote a tolerance for uncertainty through questioning students' prejudices about those from different cultures. This activity may have also helped to foster students' intercultural skills of multiperspectivity as they learned to consider the perspectives of their interlocutors and decentre their own viewpoints.

The students in this course delivered thorough presentations on topics related to intercultural skills. One of these presentations compared Japanese and Arab forms of greetings. The presenter offered guidelines on how to achieve successful interactions; for example, they suggested to learn and act according to the rules of nonverbal behaviour, which may have increased the other students' willingness to alter their behaviour to meet communicative

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<sup>8</sup> In Arabic, speakers do not usually speak in short sentences. If they do, they are likely tired, angry, or sick.

conventions of other cultures. Another presentation discussed ways to successfully manage conflict in a multicultural team. Among other suggestions, the students recommended being open to other ways of thinking and adjusting one's communication style, strategies which promote students' intercultural skills. Considering Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, these presentations may have proved useful in promoting the students' intercultural attitudes as they covered the topic of stereotypes. It was mentioned by the students that to challenge one's stereotypes, the following questions must be asked: "Why do I believe the stereotype is accurate? What is the source of my stereotype? How much actual contact do I have with the target people?" Such approaches can encourage students to question the accuracy and sources of their prejudices. Overall, the different presentation topics offered students an opportunity to cultivate their critical thinking skills, communicative awareness, and knowledge about other cultures.

### **4.2.3 Teacher training programme**

#### **4.2.3.1 British culture**

In the teacher training programme, the main focus of the course "British culture" was to develop students' cultural awareness of the UK. This is supported by the results of Study 3 (i.e., course materials analysis), as the topics discussed covered British stereotypes, and famous singers such as Freddie Mercury. The students also learned about the life of Agatha Christie. On many occasions students also learned about characteristic behaviours of British people, such as not speaking to strangers. Although it did not appear that the tutor covered cultural aspects to the extent needed to develop students into interculturally competent pre-service teachers, promoting students' knowledge about the behaviours, products, and practices of British people was still seen as crucial. However, raising the awareness of learners in regard to underlying British values could be a more effective approach to train students for successful intercultural interactions.

The tutor also aimed to increase the British vocabulary of the students by introducing new words such as brittle, Pimm's, abridged, quintessentially, blowhard, and hot-headed. Considering Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, this aimed to boost students' awareness about the vocabulary used solely by the target culture (i.e., British speakers). The students could thus be encouraged to use their newly acquired vocabulary with native speakers of the target language. In another activity, students were required to match new Oxford English Dictionary words (e.g., masstige, binge-watch, and mansplaining) with their definitions. This activity had the potential to expand their vocabulary and consequently promote their communication skills, as they acquired a large number of words that they could use to paraphrase in case of communication breakdowns during intercultural interactions.

In one of the activities, students learned about the stereotypes that British people held toward other cultures. The instructor stated that the British describe the French as hot-headed, Scots as thrifty, and Australians as simple. However, the tutor did not examine the reasons behind these stereotypes. Based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, although this activity was aimed at raising the students' awareness of the stereotypes that British people have about other nationalities, it could have a negative impact on the development of their IC. Students might end up adopting the stereotypes themselves which might reinforce their prejudices and consequently cause them to overgeneralize these ideas.

In addition, the course tutor compared British culture with Hungarian culture. For instance, he compared Hungarian singers with Freddie Mercury, who faced issues related to his identity and sexual orientation. One student referred to German or American people's openness, highlighting how they tend to show respect to people who are different from them. Another student mentioned that today Hungarians are more open and talk about such issues more freely. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the examination of these topics from different perspectives may have fostered students' skills in evaluating different practices. It also

suggests that they have respect for cultural diversity, as they discussed this issue from various points of view.

#### **4.2.3.2 Challenging stereotypes**

The course “Challenging stereotypes” also aimed to familiarize students’ with aspects of British culture; however, the course content and the activities were somewhat different from the previously discussed “British culture” course. During the first lesson, the content was rather theoretical, and involved defining terms which were relevant to the course content. For example, culture was defined in the following way: “[it is] less obvious, it includes customs, way of life, beliefs, and values”. Although this exercise was not aimed at fostering students’ IC, it reflects the importance that the tutor placed on pre-service teachers’ knowledge of the theories behind concepts related to culture and interculturality in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topics.

The students were not always willing to participate in class. Furthermore, at the end of most of the lessons, the tutor read poems from a book, during which most of the students seemed to be disengaged. Familiarizing students with British literature was considered an important means of developing their knowledge about the products of the target culture. However, the way it is implemented may need further examination in order to encourage students’ active engagement in the lessons. As suggested in Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors) and 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students), the use of PPTs and role plays might be more engaging to the students.

In this course, the students were required to conduct peer teaching by making presentations supplemented with activities. For instance, two students delivered a presentation and designed interactive activities. They distributed pictures, asking their classmates to guess the names of the people in the pictures and their origins. The pictures were of John Lennon,

Alex Ferguson, Prince Philip, and the Queen Elizabeth. The students actively participated in this task, which suggested that the students enjoyed activities such as these. Another peer teaching session dealt with the social class system in Britain and explained the different classes. However, the presenter failed to examine the relationship between the classes and the reasons that such social classes have formed in the UK in recent years. As such, the cultural element in the focus of the presentation was always related to aspects of big C culture. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, it can be said that the activity did not aim to enhance students' intercultural skills, actions, or even knowledge of underlying values. This may lead pre-service teachers to overlook aspects of small c in their future classes. Another peer teaching session was about the stereotypes associated with British people. It was mentioned that English people are often described as enjoying football and drink a lot of tea. They also highlighted the stereotype that Scots consume large amounts of alcohol and all know one another, while the Welsh are characterized by names of places that are unpronounceable, all own sheep, and are patient. The teacher trainee did not encourage the students to challenge these stereotypes, and the way they were presented could result in them being reinforced, as the presenters did not explain the underlying reasons behind these stereotypes. Other peer teaching sessions were mainly descriptive and lacked in-depth analysis. This was also noted in the presentations about British etiquette, manners in meetings, and non-verbal behaviours. Overlooking underlying values in activities such as these might be a possible cause of intercultural misunderstandings.

In the peer teaching sessions, the teacher trainees also designed role-plays. For example, one presenter included a tea party, and the students were required to introduce each other in an appropriate manner. A student asked if they needed to stand up for the activity, and the others confirmed that they did, stating "of course, it is a high tea". A student delivered their lines:

*This is my dear friend Zeta; we are going to the same university. She is a tutor, and she sings in a choir. My name is Petra, I teach at secondary school, and I like reading classical English books.*

The fact that a student asked about the protocol that should be followed while having tea suggested that this activity seemed to foster the students' awareness about acceptable behaviours during specific cultural activities.

#### **4.2.3.3 American culture**

The last course that was observed from the teacher training programme was “American culture” which, as the title of the course suggests, aimed to introduce aspects of American culture. Topics such as politics, education, religion, the role of American presidents in protecting the environment, and American business were explained. For instance, the tutor mentioned that there are around 230 religions in the USA, and that the vast majority of Americans are a part of a religious community, while 20% are not affiliated with one. The course tutor also extensively explored small c culture and explained underlying values such as the American dream, acceptance, self-reliance, and competition for success. He explained the relationship between religion and work, stating that in the USA, it is believed that those who work hard will become wealthy and blessed by God. Another American value, the equality of opportunity, was discussed in connection with sports, as people from different racial and economic backgrounds have an equal chance to excel. Referring to the model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), it seemed that examining the different practices promoted students' appreciation for cultural multiplicity as well as their tolerance. Moreover, learning about the underlying values mentioned above provided students with an opportunity to cultivate empathy. It may have also raised the students' awareness of the American mentality, as well as American values, beliefs, and practices, which could contribute to improving their ability to understand and respond to such beliefs. In addition, students' knowledge about diversity in American society also had the potential to be enhanced, as they learned about the various religious communities that exist in the USA.

It was noted that the students in this course were reluctant to participate as well. Therefore, the tutor used PPT materials and videos to complement the course book and motivate students to participate. As a way to encourage them to be more active in class, the students were required to create and deliver a presentation. The different presentations were informative and provided extensive data concerning topics including racism in the USA, sports, education, and American series, among others. For instance, they discussed the low acceptance rate at Ivy League universities, underscoring how only 5% of applicants are accepted to study at Harvard. The presentations were also an opportunity for the students to practice their speaking and listening skills, as they were encouraged to use correct structures and deliver their messages using appropriate pronunciation and intonation. Furthermore, students' discourse skills could also be developed through the use of appropriate discourse linkers to express their ideas. Overall, the presentations seemed to develop the students' linguistic and discourse skills, which are both important for developing their IC.

#### **4.2.4 PhD Programme**

##### **4.2.4.1 Teaching culture through language**

The doctoral course "Teaching culture through language" was created specifically for doctoral students whose dissertations centred around culture and IC. This course aimed to develop students' awareness of theories related to the significance of culture in FLT. Another objective of the course was to familiarize students with the various application of verbal and non-verbal cultural aspects in teaching. The course included students from three different nationalities (i.e., Hungarian, Turkish, and Tunisian), which created an opportunity for intercultural interaction. However, this aspect was somewhat neglected in this course, as the students' cultures were not considered as an effective learning resource. This was understandable, as developing students' IC was not explicitly expressed as a course aim.

In each lesson, the students discussed varied readings on IC content. IC aspects were examined such as verbal and non-verbal behaviour, how to test cultural learning, and how culture and literature are reflected in language. These topics did not directly aim at enhancing the students' IC, but nonetheless seemed to develop their awareness of cultural diversity. It also contributed to their skills development as novice researchers in the field of intercultural communication. They were also familiarised with different definitions and models of IC and the aspects of IC that can be researched.

The students were also required to create presentations. In each lesson, a presenter summarised a reading and led a discussion on the topics it covered. For instance, one of the students delivered a presentation about how to avoid being a fluent fool (Bennett, 1993) and underlined the importance of culture when using the target language. This activity exemplifies how students' IC can be developed implicitly, as many of the texts used in the course described the need to be interculturally competent. The presentations appeared to be an effective activity for enhancing the students' speaking and presentation skills, although this was not clearly mentioned in the course description. This course also contributed to the development of the students' ability to critically analyse the readings, as they read articles that addressed the topic of IC from different perspectives in different contexts. Consequently, they were able to learn how to evaluate the information discussed in academic textbooks and articles.

#### **4.2.4.2 Language education for intercultural competence development**

The doctoral course “Language education for intercultural competence development” aimed to familiarize students with the theoretical background and research aspects of IC development. Similarly to the other PhD course, students were required to read an article and discuss it in class with the aim enhancing students' ability to critically analyse the texts and reflect on their quality. For example, on one occasion a student criticized an article and indicated



the weaknesses which were overlooked by the author of the paper. This potentially helped students learn how to distinguish between IC articles of varying quality, an important skill for PhD students when choosing readings to include in their dissertations. The intercultural content in this course was both theoretical and practical: many readings dealt with IC definitions and models, while other texts were more empirical and discussed the results of implementing IC development in different contexts. The course was also characterized by group discussions with the course tutor and with the classmates about the readings. However, since these courses did not primarily aim to promote students' IC, the students appeared to mainly learn about how to research IC and how articles and books about IC are written.

Compared to the others, this course placed more focus on the students' own culture. In each lesson, the students shared and examined cultural topics such as racism, politics, as well as history in their countries. This was an enriching experience for the students, as they were able to learn about Turkey, Brazil, Tunisia, and Hungary. In this way, the course aimed to develop students' knowledge about their own culture as well as those of the other students. The students appeared to enjoy learning about each other's cultures, which is supported by the results of Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students).

#### **4.2.5 Summary**

Based on the classroom observations, Study 2 provided answers to RQ1: How is intercultural competence development present in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university?

The findings of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that the intercultural content of the observed courses centred around English-speaking cultures such as the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia. The topics included myths, the colonization of Australia, British stereotypes, British and American beliefs, verbal communication, values of English-speaking

cultures, and multiculturalism in Australia and how it is viewed by Australians, among many others. It was found that the courses aimed to develop students' IC by comparing their own cultures and the target cultures. In some courses, the tutor focused on the students' home culture by asking them, for example, to create presentations about their country of origin. As a result, students were able to learn about unfamiliar cultures and discover similarities between their own culture and others, thus developing their cultural knowledge. This also gave students the chance to challenge and question their existing stereotypes.

The activities were mainly group and pair activities which took place in face-to-face courses that stimulated cooperation among the students. Some activities were aimed at helping students experience cultural diversity, which can contribute to enhancing their interpretive skills and attitudes of acceptance. Another activity that encouraged students to ask questions was reflecting on their intercultural misunderstandings. This likely helped students to reflect on their behaviour, question their taken-for-granted actions, and understand other's points of view. Role-plays were also used in most of the observed courses which appeared to be engaging as well as enjoyable to the students. Such activities seemed to foster students' ability to adopt the perspectives of others. In addition, role plays were used in one of the observed courses to examine and challenge behaviours that violate human rights. This aimed to raise the students' awareness of racism in their own country as well as others. In the courses in the teacher training programme, the teacher trainees were required to take part in peer teaching sessions and design activities in the form of role plays and presentations. However, these student presentations covered only the surface level of culture, for example by describing social classes in Britain without explaining their significance; such activities did not offer students an opportunity to develop their intercultural skills, actions, or knowledge of the underlying values. Although the students' IC did not seem to have been fostered in such cases, these experiences may have proved useful as they encouraged students to include aspects of culture and IC into their

teaching practice. The role plays provided students with an opportunity to experience other cultures. It was also found that during role plays, students at times asked how they should behave in certain settings, which suggested the development of students' awareness of acceptable behaviours in specific situations.

### **4.3 Study 3: Course materials analysis**

Along with the document analysis and classroom observations, an analysis of the materials used in the various courses was also carried out. The student presentations are also considered as course materials as they all included cultural and intercultural content. The results of the analysis are presented individually below by course.

#### **4.3.1 BA programme**

##### **4.3.1.1 Communicating across cultures**

The “communicating across cultures” course explicitly aimed to promote students' understanding of the factors that influence the ability to communicate effectively across cultures in order to develop their IC. The tutor did not include the development of the students' English language proficiency among the course aim but did mention that it goes hand in hand with the development of their IC. To attain these objectives, the students were assigned six passages to read.

The first article, entitled “*More than please and thank you*” (Hancock, 2010), discusses politeness strategies. Then they were asked to read the chapter “*The many faces of polite: Evaluating performance and providing negative feedback*” (Meyer, 2014), which compares politeness strategies in France and the Netherlands in the field of management. These two readings have the potential to promote students' communicative consciousness of the politeness conventions in the given countries. Another reading, the book chapter “*Transitions shock: Putting culture shock in perspective*” (Bennett, 1998), defines culture shock, and explains the

stages of transition shock. The text appeared to inform students on how to deal with cultural shock by developing their intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills, for instance, raising awareness of their own culture. This reading could be useful to the students, particularly international students who are living in a new country for the first time and are experiencing culture shock arising from cultural differences.

The next reading examined was an extract from “*Popular culture: An introductory text*” (Lause & Nachbar, 1992). This text presents the definition of stereotypes in popular culture and their significance. The examination of the impact of stereotypes on intercultural interactions may have helped enhance students’ attitudes by encouraging them to question their existing preconceptions. In addition, by highlighting cultural diversity, the text potentially encouraged them to appreciate the perspectives of others, which can lead to the development of a greater understanding of different cultural practices. The fifth text, “*How do cultural learnings affect the perception of other people?*” (Nemetz-Robinson, 1986), examines the influence of cultural experience on social perception in relation to cues and schemas. Based on Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, this reading can lead students to not only challenge their own stereotypes but also critically evaluate those from different cultures. For instance, discovering that non-verbal cues can have different meanings and interpretations may enhance students’ ability to question their preconceived notions about people’s behaviours. The last chapter read in the course was “*Empathy as part of cultural mediation*” by Irishkanova et al. (2004), which analyses empathy and highlights its significance as a form of cultural mediation in intercultural encounters. This text may have boosted students’ ability to interact with culturally diverse people by enhancing their skills in understanding and responding to them.

Each of the readings above were the basis of discussion in a different lesson. However, the only reading that the tutor explained in detail was the text “*How do cultural learnings affect the perception of other people?*” (Nemetz-Robinson, 1986), as they believed the concepts that

the chapter presented were too complex for the students to understand. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees, who recalled that they did not like this reading as it was “*too theoretical*”.

#### **4.3.1.2 Intercultural communication**

The objective of the BA course entitled “intercultural communication” was to familiarize students with various aspects of communicating across cultures. To achieve this aim, the tutor relied on the coursebook “*Intercultural resource pack: Intercultural communication*” (Utley, 2004) to develop the students’ intercultural and communication skills. This book was intended for teachers and teacher trainers with a focus on developing students’ and future teachers’ IC. As mentioned in the foreword of the book, it is recommended to be used in seminars about IC, which precisely matched the topic of the observed course. The book comprises six main themes that centre around the following topics: the definition of culture, stereotypes, national and corporate cultures, group culture, and culture and communication. The topics served to develop various aspects of the students’ IC. For instance, while discussing stereotypes in class the students completed an activity from the book which required matching nationalities with their corresponding stereotypes. This activity was aimed at facilitating a discussion on the danger of stereotyping. Studying stereotypes held towards people of different cultures potentially contributed to their awareness of their own cultural assumptions as well as those of others; in addition, students could challenge and question these stereotypes. Although it may be difficult to change students’ attitudes towards other cultures in one course, tutors can nonetheless make the efforts to raise awareness of intercultural attitudes through including readings and activities about stereotypes. Materials such as the textbook mentioned above can be effective in showing students how issues can be looked at from multiple perspectives.

Each theme in the Utley (2004) textbook includes various subsections which contain one or two tasks each. The tasks aim to develop students' cultural awareness and knowledge about other cultures. For instance, in one of the activities the readers must decide the factors that shape both their own national or regional culture, as well as another culture that they are familiar with. This can raise students' awareness of their own culture and others. In many tasks students were asked to talk about experiences related to their own cultures; sharing aspects of their own culture was a useful practice as it seemed to raise the students' awareness of their own culture and facilitated the sharing of knowledge about various cultures for the class as a whole, as mentioned in Holló and Lázár (1999).

According to Utley (2004), the activities should be followed by pair or group discussions. The textbook also includes useful phrases and expressions that students can use in their discussions, such as ways to agree and disagree, make suggestions, summarise, ask questions, and challenge claims, along with other types of speech acts. This suggests that the textbook also identifies language development as a goal, even though it is not explicitly stated in the book. As it could be used to develop students' English language proficiency and enrich their English vocabulary, the coursebook was in line with the tutor's main objective: the development of students' English communication skills.

The Utley (2004) textbook has two main objectives, namely the development of theoretical and practical knowledge. On the one hand, the students were able to learn about the definition of culture and some of the well-known cultural models such as Hall (1976) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). This helped to familiarise them with the complexity of the concept and the different components of culture that have been proposed by scholars. On the other hand, as in the case of the book's cultural dilemma section, one of the activities drew attention to ways that a student might respond or behave in certain intercultural situations; practical activities such as these can improve students' cognitive flexibility. By examining the

various communication styles and learning how to respond to them, students can develop a deeper understanding of cultural diversity.

When addressing the different topics, it was noted that the book was not aimed at solely developing students' awareness and knowledge about English-speaking countries. Other countries and cultures were also included, such as Italy, Sweden, and Germany. In other activities, students could choose the cultures that they discussed. This presented an opportunity to develop students' awareness about other cultures. This could explain the selection of this book by the tutor, as one of the stated aims of the course – as described in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) and Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors) – was to enhance students' intercultural skills to enable them to communicate with others regardless of their culture.

#### **4.3.1.3 American popular culture (A)**

This course was different in its approach from the other courses in the BA track as the classes were asynchronous, and therefore I only had access to the course materials. The objective of the course was to explore American popular culture both in theory and in practice. To achieve this aim, the students were assigned ten chapters from different books to read. The chapter entitled "*What is popular culture?*" (Storey, 2009) attempts to familiarise the readers with different definitions of popular culture. This chapter was used as an introduction to aid in the discussion of the different aspects of culture. The second reading was the chapter "*Reading television*" from a book of the same title (Fiske & Hartley, 2003) which examined television programming and compared it to literature. The text explicitly stated that critics should analyse and criticise television objectively, using different techniques from those used in theatre. In addition, the chapter "*Introduction: the crisis of daytime drama and what it means for the future of television*" from the book "*The Survival of soap opera: Transformations for a new media*

era” (Ford et al., 2011) was included, which underscores the fact that despite the central role that soap operas play in American culture, their number of viewers has been decreasing. The chapter also offers strategies on how to revive daytime soap opera ratings, such as engaging with different target audiences. This particular reading aimed to enhance students’ knowledge of big C culture (e.g., the different American soap operas). It also talks about the impact that daytime soap opera has made on giving women more rights in the media industry or in society in general. Another reading entitled “*Introduction: Keeping it real: Reality TV’s evolution*” (Edwards, 2013) highlights the popularity of reality TV in American society. This text was clearly chosen to advance students’ knowledge of American cultural products; such knowledge is particularly important considering that many cultural and intercultural skills (e.g., multiperspectivity and interpretation) can only be developed if speakers possess adequate cultural knowledge.

Another reading for the course was a chapter entitled “*Why we overly value organised, competitive team sport*” (Anderson & White, 2017) which investigates the stereotypes associated with American football and cheerleading, namely that heterosexuality is associated with male football players, while male cheerleaders are assumed to be homosexuals. This reading not only examined stereotypes but also investigated their causes. By exploring these causes, the text may arise students’ awareness of the American stereotypes towards certain sports and potentially lead them to understand how stereotypes are formed. Small c culture was highlighted to explain the origins of sports stereotypes in the USA. This showcases the usefulness of the text in developing students’ IC; as stated by tutors in Young and Sachdev’s study (2011), learning solely about big C culture is insufficient to guarantee successful intercultural interaction. These results further reinforced the significance of the readings as a cornerstone in developing students’ IC, as supported by various studies (e.g., Lázár, 2011; Önalán, 2005; Sercu et al., 2005).



The students were also given the reading “*Economy*” (Kortoba, 2017), which examines the connection between music and the economy. This article was particularly insightful as it did not only present music as a cultural product, but also connected it with corporate culture. It was interesting to note that the course tutor chose readings which explained aspects of big C culture in a complex way by relating it to other cultural elements. Another book chapter which was assigned in the course was “*The hidden truths in Black sitcoms*” (Coleman & McIlwain, 2005), which looks at the different ways that African Americans have been stereotypically portrayed in television sitcoms and comedies from the mid-20th century until today. This text seemed to raise students’ awareness about how blacks have been perceived by American society over time and how this is reflected in media. Another book chapter entitled “*Advertising in American society*” (Rowman, 2015) was included which discusses the role of advertising in American culture, and the text “*Taking South Park seriously*” (Weinstock, 2008) was assigned which examines contradictory views surrounding the popular cartoon *South Park*, describing how students were banned from watching it in some American schools because of its anti-Christian themes. The work also presents controversial topics such as gay marriage and celebrity worship. According to Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, learning about controversial topics such as same-sex relations can help students understand and challenge viewpoints which oppose human rights. Lastly, the book chapter “*Pre-roll*” (Allocca, 2018) describes the viral effect of YouTube on American society. Generally speaking, all the texts led students to question aspects of American culture that are presented in the media or through the Internet.

The readings were central to every task the students completed, as they required them to answer reading-related questions. The course tutor did not supplement the texts with other materials, and it did not appear that language development was considered among the aims of the course. This was further supported by the analysis of the course aims, which clearly revealed

that the overall goal was to examine American popular culture in theory and practice, which was fulfilled by investigating a number of contemporary topics from practical and theoretical perspectives.

#### **4.3.1.4 American popular culture (B)**

The objective of the course “American popular culture (B)” was to examine the influence of American popular culture on the consumption of cultural products. Based on the readings and activities discussed in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), the tutor presented a different perspective from that observed in “American popular culture (A)” as the focus was largely placed on different eras in US history, such as the ‘80s and ‘90s. The students in this course were assigned 11 readings. One of the first readings in this course – just as in the case of American pop culture (A) – was the chapter “*What is popular culture?*” (Storey, 2009) which examines different definitions of popular culture and analyses how certain ideologies determine the production of popular culture. The first chapter “*Culture at home*” from the book “*Cultural globalization: A user’s guide*” (Wise, 2008) reviews definitions of terms related to popular culture, such as identity and culture. These texts were used to familiarise the students with concepts that are important for examining popular culture.

In order to provide them with an overview of popular culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the students read “*A history of popular culture: More of everything, faster and brighter*” (Raymond, 2004), which covers the main aspects of popular culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The text presents the main technological inventions that were developed during this period, such as the use of industrial processes in the film-making sector. It also examines the advent of television. This reading seemed to develop students’ knowledge about American history in relation to a specific period of time. Another reading from the course “*Hinduism and the 1960s: The Rise of a Counter-Culture*” (Oliver, 2014), examines the philosophies and

cultural factors that led to the counterculture movement of the 1960s. The text included details about protests at the time which were organised by young people seeking equal rights, such as gender and racial equality. The text appeared useful for enhancing students' knowledge about discrimination in the US against specific groups of people. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, through engaging with such texts students might become more willing to challenge behaviours which violate human rights. In addition, this could foster students' attitudes of empathy towards those who share similar experiences.

Two other readings were also included: the online article "*It is 2016. Why are we still obsessed with the '80s?*" (Chaney, 2016) depicts the popular culture of the '80s and its long-lasting impact through film, while the introductory chapter of book "*The art of self-invention: Image and identity in popular visual culture*" (Finkelstein, 2007) examines the role of popular culture in shaping identity. For example, in mainstream films, particular tropes have been reiterated to the point that they are standardized (i.e., "blonde women are beautiful" or "young people are honest"). The text seemed to raise students' awareness of how their stereotypes are reinforced by media. This understanding could enhance their willingness to question their stereotypes and withhold prejudgments.

The students were also assigned an online article entitled "*A brief history of copyright*" (Intellectual Property Rights Office, 2006), which presents information related to the history of copyright from the first copyright act in the world to the Berne convention, which provided mutual acknowledgment of copyright between states. This text could provide students with knowledge about American copyright history. Another online article entitled "*Early writings and the beginning of book printings*" (History of Copyright, 2005) presents the early laws related to printing. This text gives insight into the history of printing and has the potential to raise students' understanding of the evolving process of the printing industry. It also discusses the suppression of literature through censorship; since at the time literature was more strictly

controlled, writers had to deliver their messages implicitly. Through the text's review of the historical context of American literature, students could develop an appreciation of the role of books in challenging norms established by authority. This reading could also encourage them to resist actions such as the suppression of free of speech and expression which transgress basic human rights. The book "*The social contract*" (Rousseau, 1762/2017) was also included, which defines government and its various forms, namely democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. Highlights that societies tend to corrupt individuals who were originally innocent, the author suggests that to end corruption, common good should be emphasized. The use of this book aimed to help students understand societal interaction in the US by examining the cultural and social factors that impact people's behaviour.

The next reading was the introductory chapter in the book "*The left land of darkness*" (Le Guin, 1969), in which the author attempts to define science fiction, claiming that the genre is not predictive but rather descriptive of the present. The book "*Conversations on the edge of the Apocalypse*" (Brown, 2005) was also included which describes the future of human beings and attempts to examine the question of consciousness from different perspectives. Discussing the same idea from different points of views seemed to raise students' awareness of how one's culture can influence their view of the world. Although this text only underlined the perspectives of people from different fields, it nonetheless shows the importance of respecting a diversity of opinions.

The readings above formed the core content of the course "American popular culture (B)" and were a basis for class discussion. In addition to the readings the students were required to deliver presentations. Each presenter was required to share information about an era starting from the 1920s up until the present day. All of the presentations listed facts related to the chosen period and focused on big C culture. For instance, one of the presentations was about the USA in the 1950s; the presenters talked about the products that were produced at the time, such as

colour TVs and credit cards. They also mentioned some events that characterised the period, such as the Cold War as well as famous actors including Marlon Brando and Marilyn Monroe. As will be discussed again in regard to Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students), these presentations were criticised by the interviewees as, among several reasons, the presenters failed to examine small c culture. As a result, it appeared that the presentations seemed to fail to foster students' awareness about certain aspects of American culture.

#### **4.3.1.5 Australian Aboriginal issues**

The aim of the BA course “Australian Aboriginal issues” was to familiarize students with the culture, history, politics, and literature of the Australian Aborigines. The course tutor utilized a variety of materials including videos and book chapters to achieve this aim. In order to discuss the traditional Aboriginal society, the students read two chapters. The first chapter was “*Traditional life*” from the book “*Aboriginal Australians: Black responses to white dominance 1788-1994*” (Broome, 1982), which familiarized students with the life of Australian Aborigines. The second chapter was titled “*Relating to the past*” and was taken from the book “*An introduction to Aboriginal societies*” (Edwards, 1988), which was used as a course book in Australian universities to help students gain knowledge about Aboriginal culture. This book chapter examines the origins of Aborigines, relying on studies about race, blood groups, and language similarities to better understand where they came from. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, these readings were used to improve students' knowledge of the history of the Australian Aborigines through learning about the historical events. By the end of this course, the students showed more understanding of Australian natives' beliefs and practices. By learning about Australian Aborigines, the students could develop openness and curiosity towards the history of other cultures. It is conceivable that they may even seek out opportunities to interact with Aboriginal Australians to learn more about their struggle.

The students were also assigned the reading entitled “*A new voyage around the world: 1688*” (Dampier, 1999). In this text the author reflects on his trip around the world and described the plants, animals, and the physical appearance of the early inhabitants of Australia. Following the same vein of exploration and description of Aborigines and their lives from the point of view of white Europeans, the subsequent readings included extracts from “*An account of round voyage of the endeavour in the year MDCCLXX along the East coast of Australia*” (Cook, 1969) as well as “*The Settlement at Port Jackson*” by Watkin Tench (1973). These readings are mostly diaries that depict the way the Aborigines dressed, the weapons they used, and the way they lived from the perspective of white Europeans. Such accounts appeared to raise students’ awareness of the life of Aboriginal people, but from the British settlers’ point of view.

The students were also asked to examine a play which explores the clash between blacks and whites in Australia entitled “*Kullark (Home)/ The dreamers*” (Davis, 1982). As author of this text is an Aboriginal, the play authentically describes the Aborigines’ point of view and presents their suffering. To further explore Australian history from an Aboriginal perspective, the students read the chapter “*Resisting the invaders*” from the book “*Aboriginal Australians: Black response to white dominance* (Broome, 1982). This reading explains the reasons behind the conflict between the two parties and discusses the institutionalisation of violence. In addition, the course includes the play “*No sugar*” written by Davis (1986), which reflects the struggle of an Aboriginal family for justice and equality in 1930. This play was important for Aboriginal Australians as it expressed their voice regarding the repressive conditions they faced. It was useful to introduce readings from the point of views of both settlers and Australian Aborigines, as it helped the students to critically analyse both perspectives. This could familiarise the students with a multiplicity of views and consequently promote their ability to understand and objectively judge the various facets of cultural events and practices.

Next, the students watched the movie and read the book *“Follow the rabbit proof fence”* (Pilkington, 1996), which are both based on the true story of three girls who escaped from an Australian mission school. The works examine the lives and problems face by members of the Stolen Generation, the Aboriginal children in Australia who were forcibly removed from their homes to foster families and institutions. This action was implemented by the government at the time for the purpose of assimilating Aboriginals into white culture; however, the children became victims of sexual and physical abuse in the process. The text *“The stolen generations”* (Manne, 1999) provides additional information on the Stolen Generation, revealing that children were taken from their families and put into settlements and foster homes where they faced humiliation and mistreatment. The actions surrounding the Stolen Generation were an attempt to diminish the population of full-blood Aborigines in the country; therefore, many children had white fathers and Aboriginal mothers. The article *“Rabbit-proof fence: A true story?”* (Windshuttle, 2003) reviews the movie *“Rabbit-proof fence”* and criticizes the film director for demanding the government to apologize. The use of this article in the class provided valuable insight, as it showcased an example of political controversy on differing political views of a historical event. By being shown different perspectives, the students were given the opportunity to learn about the issue through the controversy reflected in the article rather than by simply learning about facts related to the event, allowing them to cultivate a better understanding of the issue itself. Most of the chosen readings were effective in their aim to broaden the students’ knowledge about the acts of discrimination committed against indigenous Australians. The students also read the play *“Stolen”* (Harrison, 2019) which describes the traumatic events experienced by Aboriginal children. In addition to plays and books, Aborigines have also written about their history in the form of poetry. Some of these poems were assigned to the students as readings in the course. The students also read *“My place”* (Morgan, 1987), an autobiography in which the author narrates her journey to learn about her family’s past.

Videos were also included as course materials; for example, the final episode “*We Are No Longer Shadows*” from the series “*First Australians*” (Dale & Perkins, 2008) was shown which examines the period from 1967-1993, during which the indigenous people of Australia asked for the right to have their lands returned.

The inclusion of texts written both by white Europeans and native people stood out during the analysis: not only it did reflect the aim of the course, but it also seemed to help students better understand the Aboriginal perspective. This contributed to the development of a more objective knowledge of history among the students. All the materials thoroughly presented the life of Aborigines which, expectedly, seemed to develop students’ knowledge about Aboriginal culture in terms of the way they dressed as well as their gender roles, history, and conflicts, among many other cultural aspects.

Some poems included Aboriginal languages which the students were not familiar with. However, Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that by the end of the term, the students had become familiar with some expressions and could successfully read some of the poems without checking the English language versions. According to the model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), this material was aimed at broadening the students’ linguistic competence in Indigenous languages.

#### **4.3.1.6 Australia through documentaries**

The objective of the BA course entitled “Australia through documentaries” was to familiarize students with a number of Australian social issues explored in documentaries. It also aimed to raise their awareness of using documentary techniques to present such issues. As stated in the course syllabus, the course tutor relied on two types of materials: written texts and visual materials. To discuss the first theme of the course (i.e., identity) the students watched the video “*We are Australian*” (Hamlyn et al., 1999). The video presents characteristic features of Aussie



culture by focusing, for example, on slang and word play. Activities such as these could familiarise the students with the language used by the Aboriginals which formed an important part of their identity. The students also watched the video “*Tony Robinson: Against the Odds*” (Talbot & Gilmartin, 2011) which depicts the challenges the white settlers faced to survive when they arrived on the continent, while also describing their relationship with the indigenous people. The students were also shown Episode 7 of “*The story of English*” (Cran, 1986), which explains how cockney English, spoken by the working class in London’s East End, contributed to the formation of Australian English from the 18th to the 20th century. It also showcased different varieties of modern Australian English. The documentary helped students learn about social perceptions of language and how language can become the grounds for discrimination. Through the viewing, students seemed to develop knowledge about the different ways that discrimination can be manifested, which may have encouraged the students to recognize and challenge various forms of discrimination.

The students were also required to view Episode 23 of the series “*Our century*” (Hamlyn et al., 1999). The video explores the suffering that Australian Aboriginals faced due to food shortages and the forced seizure of their children, who were sent to foster homes. This video aimed to evoke feelings of sadness and frustration through highlighting the challenges faced by Aboriginal people, and these emotions could foster empathy toward indigenous communities in general. Developing empathetic attitudes toward such communities might result in an active of opposition towards acts of discrimination and injustice. In addition, the students watched the first episode from the series “*First contact*” (Perkins, 2014), which presented the story of a group of non-Aboriginals who had no prior contact with indigenous people. They were then taken to spend some time together with Aboriginals and experience lifestyles which were unfamiliar to them. Through experiencing new routines and activities, the participants seemed to develop a tolerance for ambiguity and to question what is considered normal in their

culture. Based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, this video could help students gain understanding of cultural differences through exposure to different behaviours and customs. In addition, such materials could trigger students to experience their own ambiguous and unfamiliar situations. The course also included a documentary entitled "*Our generation*" (Saban, 2010) portraying the conflict between Aborigines and the Australian government and describing the struggle of the Aborigines to gain their rights in a society that generally promotes equal rights and opportunities. Learning about this topic seemed to develop students' knowledge of the social position of Aborigines as a marginalized group. This issue was also extensively discussed in the course "Australian Aboriginal issues", in which the importance of learning about Aboriginal history was underscored as a means of understanding the problems they suffered from in the present. In this way, the students could learn to withhold or question their own stereotypes and prejudgments and show a greater openness to learning more about the lives of Aborigines.

Students also read the online article "*Australia urges Europe to copy multiculturalism model*" (Harris, 2011), which describes the positive views of the Australian Immigration Minister Chris Bowen on multiculturalism and included his comments which encouraged European countries to adopt the Australian model of multiculturalism. This positive depiction of the prime minister's stance could cultivate students' own attitudes towards cultural plurality and stimulate them to accept and respect others. The tutor also found it important to include the documentary "*Punished not protected*" (Rymer, 2004) that discusses the racist actions and speeches towards asylum seekers as well as the policies that placed them in detention camps for extensive periods. This video was complemented by the documentary "*Go back to where you came from*" (Cordell & Murray, 2011–2018), which presents the varying opinions of six Australians on asylum seekers after they are given the opportunity to travel to the home countries of the asylum seekers. Through their journey and experiences, they came to a better

understanding of what the refugees lived through prior to arriving in Australia. Under the same theme of immigration and multiculturalism, the students read a blog post entitled “*Big W follows Aldi in pulling ‘racist’ T-shirt from shelves following online outcry*” (Anderson, 2014). The blog post described a situation in which the supermarket Aldi was criticized for promoting shirts that read “AUSTRALIA EST 1788”. This message was considered racist towards Aboriginals who inhabited Australia before the arrival of white settlers in 1788. Another blog post, “*Woman launches racist tirade on packed train*” (Kembrey, 2014), shows a woman’s racist actions on a train and the public’s rejection of her behaviour. The students also watched the documentary “*Marrickville*” (Zubrycki, 1989) in the course which showcases the diversity of a suburb of the same name in Sydney. The materials above presented different views towards multiculturalism with the aim of raising students’ awareness of racism and motivating them to express opposition to the racist actions highlighted in the materials in order to encourage intercultural collaboration and openness. Furthermore, the fact that the materials discussed the issue of multiculturalism and immigration from different perspectives could motivate the students to objectively evaluate the varied opinions presented.

The last online article assigned to the students was “*Australia is committing climate suicide*” (Flanagan, 2020). The piece describes climate issues in Australia and was included in order to raise students’ awareness about environmental issues, specifically the harmful consequences that wildfires can have on nature, animals, and people. The “Australia through documentaries” and “Australian Aboriginal issues” courses mainly addressed big C culture through examining the cultural products, practices, and history of Aboriginals. This focus could be expected as the students tasked with learning about a culture that they were likely not familiar with. At the same time, issues related to small c culture were also raised when discussing the values and behaviours of different social groups as well as the different perspectives that these aspects of culture can be viewed from.

The chapter “*Culture(s) through films: Learning opportunities*” (Holló, 2016) was also required reading for the course and explores approaches to analysing documentaries. Although the article was not used to develop students’ IC, since the course was based on documentaries learning about how to analyse them was important in order to be able to effectively examine the video materials that were included as part of the students’ homework. A similar reading, “*How can we write effectively about documentary?*” (Nichols, 2010), was also used to familiarize readers with writing about film. By learning about the different components of documentaries, the students’ knowledge of analysing and writing about documentaries appeared to be broadened.

#### **4.3.1.7 Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures**

The aim of the lecture series “Cultural studies: English-speaking cultures” was to familiarize students with concepts such as identity, fundamental values, cultural differences, and social change in relation to English-speaking cultures. The group of instructors teaching the series also aimed to develop students’ theoretical knowledge and provide practical examples to help improve their intercultural communication skills. The first reading that was assigned was “*Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*” (Williams, 1983), which explains how the meaning of words (e.g., culture) had changed over time. He also gives an overview on the influence the changing meaning had on people’s attitudes to culture. By examining the evolution of word meanings and their influence on culture, students’ awareness of the interrelation between culture and language appeared to be enhanced. The students were also introduced to Kellner’s (n.d.) text “*Cultural Studies and Ethics*” which explores the development of British Cultural Studies and the topics examined in this field of study. The author provides an outline of how the field has changed over time. The students were also assigned the chapter entitled “*Defining culture*” from the book “*Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice*”. In this text, Moran (2001) defines culture in terms of the following

dimensions: products (e.g., clothes or food), practices (e.g., taboos or verbal and non-verbal communication), perspectives (e.g., beliefs), communities (e.g., religion or gender), and persons. These readings, which were all addressed in the first introductory lecture, seemed to develop students' knowledge about the definition of culture and its components. By learning about the interrelatedness of culture and language, students' awareness of the dynamic nature of culture and cultural studies could be enhanced.

The book chapter "*Legacy*" (Jackson, 2013) was another assigned reading that explores the influence of the British Empire on the world. The author gives an overview of the three main facets of the Empire, namely its legacy in the international community, its legacy in Great Britain, and its legacy in the former British colonies. By examining the positive and negative impacts of the British empire (e.g., colonialism or the spread of the English language), the students were encouraged to make their own judgment on the legacy of the British empire. In the lecture that discussed the geography of the UK, the chapter "*Geography*" (O'Driscoll, 1995) was used to provide a full overview of issues related to climate and pollution in Great Britain. The text also presented the geography of London, southern England, northern England, Scotland, and Wales, which seemed to broaden students' understanding of the environmental diversity among these regions.

Two readings were assigned for the lecture on UK identity. The chapter "*National identity*" from the book "*Contemporary Britain: A Survey with Texts*" (Oakland, 2001) examines British national identity and also delves into the tensions between national and regional identities. The other reading, the online article "*Grenfell: the 72 victims, their lives, loves and losses*" (Rice-Oxley, 2018) focuses on the Grenfell Tower incident which was on fire for 60 hours. It reports on the tragic deaths of 72 individuals from different cultural backgrounds and the reasons they came to Britain. The victims presented minority ethnic communities (e.g., Italians, Egyptians, Sudanese, Moroccans, Lebanese, and Afghans). According to Barrett and

his colleagues' (2014) model, by learning about the ethnic minorities living in the UK, the students seemed to gain an understanding into the internal diversity of British society.

In the session covering the topic of American regionalism, the students were assigned the reading "*Cultural Regions of America*" (Gastil, 1990), which examines 13 different regions of the US. According to Gastil, each region has distinctive elements such as geography, history, economy, climate, and politics. The descriptions highlighting the uniqueness of each region seemed to develop students' awareness of the diversity and complexity of the US; this understanding has the potential to encourage students to respect the unique characteristics and history of different regions. Also in connection with the US, the chapter "*American values and assumptions*" from the book "*American ways – A cultural guide to the United States*" (Althen & Bennett, 2011) provides a detailed account of core American values such as individualism, time consciousness, directness, and assertiveness. According to Barrett and his colleagues' model (2014), by learning about such values students can become more tolerant towards different cultures. Furthermore, engaging with the text gave students the opportunity to challenge their internalized assumptions and stereotypes about Americans based on the understanding gained about the values underlying American cultural practices. This could result in developing skills such as multiperspectivity and the ability to explain the practices of a culture in question. To gain knowledge on the changes in immigrant settlement patterns in the US, the students read a book chapter entitled "*Twenty-first century gateways: An introduction*" (Singer, 2008). This text discusses the factors behind the emergence of new immigrant destinations and explores the economic and social impacts of immigration waves. By reading about immigration and its impact on the US, the students appeared to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of American cultural diversity.

To examine Australian culture, the students read a chapter from the book "*The original Australians – Story of the Aboriginal people*" (Flood, 2006) which summarizes the history of

the Aborigines and shows how attitudes towards Aboriginal people have changed over time. The chapter also highlights the challenges that the Aboriginal people face as well as the progress that they have made. The chapter “*What was it all for? The reshaping of Australia*” (Aitkin, 2005) was also included in the course which examines the changes that occurred in Australia in the last 50 years. The text underscores the major events that shaped Australian national identity. According to Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, these readings could develop students’ respect for cultural diversity through learning about the history, practices, and customs of Aboriginal people through the materials provided. Furthermore, by examining the changes that led to the Australian national identity as it is today, such as shifting to a more diverse society, students were able to develop the skills needed to interpret practices and behaviours from different perspectives and analyse them critically. This also had the potential to enhance their understanding of the complexity of Australian culture.

In regard to the class on Canadian culture, the text entitled “*A commentary on some aspects of Canadian culture*” (Kuffert, 2003) provides a full overview of Canadian culture. The text was chosen to familiarize students with the history, language, multiculturalism, and politics of Canada. Another reading, “*A Canadian what the hell it’s all about*” (Cardinal, 1992), was included which explores the experiences and challenges of Indigenous Canadians, such as colonization. An additional reading, “*We are all in the Ojibway circle*” (Kelly, 1990), was also included which more specifically focuses on the Ojibway, a Native American tribe living in Canada. The text provides insights into the values and practices of this tribe and also examines the challenges they faced during colonialization. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, learning about Indigenous Canadians seemed to develop students’ knowledge about their culture as well as their skills in interpreting indigenous practices and relating them to their own. Through being exposed to the challenging experiences of Canadian Aboriginals, students were also given the opportunity to cultivate empathy towards them. The last reading used in the

course was the book “*Developing intercultural competence through education*” (Barrett et al., 2014), which offers a framework for IC development. The text also suggests specific teaching approaches that can enhance students’ IC, such as experiential and co-operative learning. Tasks for developing students’ IC are also proposed, which include activities involving role plays, films, and social media.

There were occasions during the course during which students were asked to watch videos. For instance, the students watched a scene from the film “*The joy luck club-meet the parents*” (Wang, 1993), a film which depicts the lives of four Chinese women who had lived in the USA since the 1940s and their daughters who were raised in the USA. The scene features an American man meeting the family of his Chinese girlfriend for the first time. The scene contains an exaggerated intercultural misunderstanding between the Chinese mother and the boyfriend. For example, the mother criticized her own cooking which is a typical act of Chinese women to complain about their special dish, however, the boyfriend agreed with her self-critique. This scene reflects the complexity of intercultural interaction: although the girlfriend tried to familiarize her boyfriend with certain Chinese customs, it was impossible to be fully prepared for a real time interaction. This scene seemed to relay to the students that self-awareness and positive attitudes can help to overcome unfamiliar cultural situations. In another lecture about UK identity, the students were required to watch three YouTube videos (BBC, 2011; Smashing English, 2020; Stromzy, 2017) and were asked to determine the variety of English spoken in the videos (e.g., the Birmingham Accent). The videos provided students with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the English used in Yorkshire and expressions used to greet people such as “Ey oop” and “Alreet”. By developing their knowledge about characteristic vocabulary used in Yorkshire, the students’ awareness about the diversity of British culture could be further strengthened. This could have a positive impact on their attitudes by enabling them to appreciate the richness of the given culture.



#### 4.3.1.8 Specialisation in English-speaking cultures

The main objective of the BA lecture series “Specialisation in English-speaking cultures” was to develop students’ skills to interpret English language texts and interactions in their cultural context. The lectures also aimed at fostering students’ background knowledge and providing practical applications of the topics related to English-speaking cultures. One of the texts used to help achieve these objectives was “*Defining culture*” (Moran, 2001), which offers a definition of culture. According to Moran, culture is defined in terms of products, practices, perspectives, communities, and individuals. In another reading, “*Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*”, Williams (1983) summarizes how the word meaning has changed and how this change influences people’s attitudes to culture. In addition, the reading “*Cross-cultural communication*” (Polyák, 2004) was included, which defines culture and depicts its various elements and levels. The texts could familiarize the students with the definitions of different elements of culture; by examining the evolution of word meanings throughout the centuries, students’ awareness of the connections between language and culture could be enhanced.

To explore the theme of cultural identity, the book chapter “*Beyond cultural identity: Reflections on cultural and multicultural man*” (Adler, 1976) was included in the lecture series; the text considers the experience of a multicultural person, a self-conscious individual who adopts characteristics of adaptability to mediate across cultures. By challenging the notion of fixed cultural identity, the students’ awareness of the dynamic nature of identity could be raised. The article entitled “*Culture shock in the classroom*” (Enyedi, 2000) was also included, which investigates how culture is learned and discusses the challenges experienced by NNS of English. The author provides examples of how cultural differences might impact the classroom, highlighting issues such as expectations about class participation or different communication styles. By examining cultural differences, the international students could reach a better

understanding of their learning experience. Furthermore, they were able to learn that the cultural and linguistic background of the writer can have an impact on their writing skills, as people from different cultures have different writing conventions. Another reading assigned to the students was “*Cross-cultural understanding: Processes and approaches for foreign language ESL and bilingual educators*” (Nemetz-Robinson, 1985), which showcases the importance of cross-cultural understanding in FLT. The text also discusses the roles that cues and schemas play in intercultural experiences. Cues includes perceptions of others’ appearances, behaviours, languages, and other elements, while schemas are described as mental structures pertaining to a person or event through which information is analysed. By examining the interpretation of cues and schemas, students could form a better understanding of the factors that influence behaviours and practices.

The students were assigned two further texts to read. The first was the chapter “*Cultural signified*” from the book “*Language shock. Understanding the culture of conversation*” (Agar, 1994). Agar presents the notion of the “cultural signified”, referring to the hidden cultural meanings of words. It was highlighted that a cultural signified can influence the way in which individuals understand and explain language. The other reading was the chapter “*Language and cultural identity*” from the book “*Language and culture*” (Kramsch, 1998), which discusses the interrelatedness of language and identity, examining how language forms and is formed by cultural identity. According to Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, by learning about the cultural significance of language, students could make steps towards developing attitudes of tolerance. Furthermore, their understanding of the beliefs of different cultures was able to be deepened through learning about the cultural meanings of words. By examining the notion of cultural signified, the students’ ability to interpret the beliefs and practices of different cultures was potentially fostered.

The introductory chapter of the book *“Intercultural pragmatics”* (Kecskes, 2014) was used in the course to give students an overview of intercultural pragmatics and highlight its role in comprehending language use during intercultural interactions. The chapter also examines problems that may arise during intercultural communication, such as tension between different communication styles. Referring to the model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), by exploring challenges that may occur in intercultural experiences, the students’ skills of interpreting the practices of other cultures could be enhanced, leading to the development of the skills needed to mediate during intercultural exchanges. To examine the interrelation between culture, discourse, and analysis, two chapters from the influential reading *“Contrastive rhetoric”* (Connor, 1996) were also assigned to the students. The chapter *“Historical evolution of contrastive rhetoric: from Kaplan’s 1966 study to diversification in languages, genres, and authors”* provides an overview of the challenges encountered in intercultural communication, focusing specifically on composition and writing. The text highlights the impact of cultural differences on rhetorical practices. The other chapter, *“Contrastive rhetoric and translation studies”*, discusses the challenges that cultural and rhetorical differences can create in the translation process. By learning about the impact of cultural differences on rhetorical practices, students’ awareness of their own biases could potentially be increased, leading to a better understanding of the perspectives of other cultures. A further reading, the chapter *“Culture: A perceptual approach”* from the book *“Basic concepts of intercultural communication”* (Singer, 1998), was included in the course and explains the impact of culture on the way people perceive the world. By including this reading, the tutors may have aimed to encourage students’ appreciation of cultural diversity and their understanding that linguistic and cultural orientations can influence the way that one perceives the world. Lastly, the book *“Developing intercultural competence through education”* (Barrett et al., 2014) was used in the course; the work offers a framework for the development of IC and explains its components. In addition, the book

highlights the approaches and activities that can be used in the classroom to develop students' IC.

### **4.3.2 MA programme**

#### **4.3.2.1 Skills for intercultural communication**

The course entitled "Skills for intercultural communication" had three objectives. In addition to promoting students' intercultural skills and enhancing their English language proficiency, another aim of the course was to help students identify researchable aspects of IC, as they had to submit their thesis in the second year of the MA programme. The book used in this course was "*50 Ways to improve your intercultural skills in English*" (Dignen & Chamberlain, 2009). The target audience of the text is businesspeople who speak English as a second language or use it as a medium of communication with people from various cultures, and the chapters discuss topics including cultural understanding, the dimensions of national cultures, and values, as well as a variety of other topics related to professional and business communication. These topics were able to enhance students' knowledge of cultural differences between individuals; for instance, by learning about different meanings associated with the concept of hierarchy, the students could develop their skills of interpreting the expectations and behaviours of those from different cultures in professional settings. Through materials such as these, the course addressed corporate cultures which could help students learn how to function in the international business settings that some students will likely work at in the future.

This course book also focused on language development, which aligned with one of the tutors' main aims. In most modules, expressions were introduced which students could incorporate into their vocabulary. For instance, in Module (3), the textbook suggested ways to formulate questions that could be used for clarification (e.g., Do you mean that...? So just to summarize...) or confirmation (e.g., Why do you say that? So your main concern is...;) (p. 52). Learning about these expressions contributed to the development of students' linguistic

competence. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, learning clarification expressions provided students with an opportunity to improve their ability to overcome breakdowns in communication. This activity could also foster students' language skills, as many of the expressions included in the text could be used to facilitate appropriate and effective communication. Moreover, the book aimed to develop students' intercultural attitudes; for instance, the text mentions that during negotiations, it is important to remain open and be respectful to those who have different values. Aspects such as these reflect the book's practical uses, as it can be used to help students become familiar with appropriate behaviour to better ensure successful intercultural interactions. The text also includes sections which encourage students to reflect and draw comparisons between their own culture and others. Such comparisons could raise students' awareness of cultural diversity and develop their skills of multiperspectivity.

In this course, the students were required to deliver presentations related to intercultural skills. One of the presentations discussed how to manage conflicts within a multicultural team. The possible causes of such conflicts were discussed, including differences in cultural values, different expectations regarding cooperation and poor communication. To overcome intercultural problems in the workplace, the presenter suggested being more open to other ways of thinking and adjusting one's communication style. Another presentation explored the essential skills needed for effective leadership in a diverse workplace environment. The presenters stated that leaders of international teams should develop self-awareness, understand cultural stereotypes, and build effective communication skills. Another presentation addressed the role of managers across cultures, referring to cultural dimensions such as power distance and the avoidance of uncertainty in France, China, Great Britain, Germany, and the US. These presentations were closely related to communication in business settings, and those students aimed to pursue careers in business seemed to learn the possible causes of conflicts as well as

how to be a leader in an international company. These topics could promote students' knowledge of what to expect at multicultural workplaces and consequently foster their skills of interpreting behaviours. By learning how to manage conflicts, the students could gain a deeper understanding of the possible factors which can lead to cultural misunderstandings and the potential strategies that can be used during intercultural interactions.

Other presentations were delivered which were not business-related. One student's presentation explained stereotypes and prejudices, and appeared to encourage the other students to question and challenge their internalized stereotypes by asking some questions such as "Why do I believe the stereotype is accurate?" and "How much actual contact do I have with the target people?". Another student talked about the ways different cultures perceive time. The presentation topics that were chosen could encourage students to challenge stereotypes and be aware of cultural diversity.

#### **4.3.2.2 Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories, and research**

The MA course "Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories, and research" aimed to promote students' theoretical and practical knowledge about various aspects of culture, language, and communication. The first reading that was assigned to the students was "*How not to be a fluent fool: Understanding the cultural dimension of language*" (Bennett, 1997). The text highlights the importance of understanding the cultural aspects of language during intercultural communication. The author describes how learning a foreign language without awareness of the cultural context can lead to issues when interacting with people from different cultures. The chapter "*Culture*" from the book "*Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*" (Williams, 1983) was also included in the course and explores how the meaning of the word "culture" has changed over time and how it varies between different areas of study. The students were asked to read the introduction of the book "*Cultural awareness*" (Tomalin

& Stempleski, 1993), which highlights the importance of cultural awareness in promoting understanding in today's world. Furthermore, the text includes suggestions for materials (e.g., course books, radio broadcasts, or British and American textbooks) that can be used in the classroom to develop cultural awareness. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, these readings seemed to increase students' willingness to learn from and about people of different cultural backgrounds as they became familiarized with the tools that could be used to develop their cultural knowledge. By coming to the understanding that language is affected by culture, students' tolerance of ambiguity could be increased.

In the same theme of culture and cultural awareness, another introduction was used in the course, this time from the book *“Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence”* (Byram, 1997). The text highlights the importance of assessing ICC and claims that successful communication should not only be evaluated according to the effectiveness of information exchange, but also according to the ability of the speaker to maintain a relationship with the interlocutors. To discuss aspects of culture, the students read the first chapter of *“Cross-cultural communication”* (Polyák, 2004), which provides a definition of culture and a breakdown of its different elements. Students were also assigned the book chapter *“Culture bump and beyond”* (Archer, 1986) that defines the term cultural bump and proposes strategies to overcome intercultural misunderstandings. These strategies include pinpointing and defining the situation and listing the behaviours of the other interlocutor as well as one's own. These strategies could help students learn how to address breakdowns in communication. The course also included a number of excerpts from the book *“Cross-cultural communication”* (Polyák, 2004). The first reading examines the relationship between language and culture and also addresses the impact of cultural differences in intercultural communication. The second text explores the effect of culture on various types of non-verbal communication. By understanding the impact of culture on verbal and non-verbal communication, students' tolerance of

unfamiliar behaviours could be enhanced. Furthermore, raising students' awareness of cultural differences could help them avoid potential cultural misunderstandings in the future. Another chapter from the book "*Cross-cultural communication*" (Polyák, 2004) was included which outlines different cultural dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance and power distance. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, by learning about these cultural dimensions and how they shape cultural practices, students could become more tolerant and appreciative of cultural diversity. Learning about cultural dimensions also appeared to enhance students' understanding that people from different cultural background have different verbal and non-verbal communicative behaviours. This knowledge may encourage the students to question their prejudices regarding people from other cultures. Since the students were familiarized with the underlying values behind cultural practices, their cognitive flexibility and ability to change their ways of thinking according to the communicative context could be enhanced.

To explore the topic of national cultures, the course teacher selected three readings. The first "*Understanding cultural differences*" (Hall & Hall, 1990), which reviews varying attitudes towards concepts such as space, time, and the flow of information; these attitudes can influence people's behaviours and ways of thinking. The second reading, "*How to compare two cultures*" (Lado, 1986), provides a practical guide to comparing cultures, including methods for collecting information about cultures and analysing the similarities and differences. The third reading was entitled "... *So near the United States*" (Condon, 1986), and discusses cultural differences between the USA and Mexico. Referring to the IC model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), understanding how different cultures perceive time, space, and communication seemed to cultivate students' attitudes of tolerance towards ambiguity. In addition, the three readings discussed cultural diversity, which could result in a better understanding of different cultures, such as the USA and Mexico. Moreover, students' skills of interpreting and critically analysing



cultural practices and behaviours seemed to be developed by learning about how to methodically compare cultures.

To examine culture learning and acculturation, the tutor included an article by Enyedi (2000) entitled "*Culture shock in the classroom*", which discusses the challenges experienced by NNSs in the classroom, such as their expectations about class participation. By learning about the difficulties encountered by NNSs, students had the potential to develop their empathy. Another reading, the book chapter "*Learning a second culture*" (Brown, 1986), defines the terms acculturation, culture shock, and social distance. It highlights that learning about a culture does not only involve acquiring its language, but also requires an understanding of the cultural context of a language. Through understanding the ideas of the text, students' knowledge about the process of cultural learning could be enhanced. The course also included a thematic unit on culture, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. For this, students had to read three chapters of the book "*Language and communication*" (Kramsch, 1998). The author discusses the ways that spoken and written forms of language convey social meaning, and also explains the factors that influence the construction of meaning, such as the cultural context and communicative expectations. The chapter "*Compliment in cross-cultural perspective*" (Wolfson, 1986) examines cultural differences in how compliments are used, illustrating examples from different cultures. By highlighting the impact of culture on language and meaning, students had the opportunity to question their assumptions about other cultures, resulting in increased empathy. Furthermore, students' skills, including multiperspectivity and the ability to interpret the practices of different cultures, could be developed in the course by promoting an understanding of the importance of cultural differences in communication.

The course also featured the reading "*Kinesics and cross-cultural understanding*" (Morain, 1986), which examines the role of body language in intercultural communication. This text includes examples of non-verbal communication such as facial expression, gestures, and

proxemics that are used in the UK, USA, and Mexico, among other cultural contexts. The students' knowledge about non-verbal communication in specific countries could be improved using the reading, which may result in improving their skills in interpreting body language and relating it to their own. By gaining a better understanding of the meanings associated with specific non-verbal behaviours, students could also challenge their stereotypes. To discuss language and culture, a chapter in Bolinger (1980) entitled "*Power and deception*" was assigned by the tutor which describes how language can be manipulated to convey different meanings. A chapter from the book "*Language and culture*" (Kramsch, 1998) was also part of the course materials, and explores the relationship between language and cultural identity. In the chapter titled "*Its cultural and...*" from the book "*New ways in teaching culture*" (Fantini, 1997) was used in the course to highlight the importance of accepting different worldviews in foreign language communication, arguing that such worldviews are reflected in language use. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, by gaining a deeper knowledge of how culture influences worldviews, students' understanding that language and cultural orientations have an impact on perceptions could be shaped. This could lead to greater empathy and attitudes of acceptance among the students towards people from different cultures. An additional article, "*Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education*" (Kaplan, 1966), investigates the different text structures produced by foreign language students and American L1 English students. For instance, Anglo-European writing is claimed to be more direct and characterized by linear development, while in Oriental languages a more indirect writing approach taken, and the message is expressed at the end of the text. By highlighting the impact of culture on writing and paragraph formation, the text appeared to raise students' awareness of the different ways of communication and different patterns of thought observed in various cultures. In addition, students were given the opportunity to develop their awareness of their own thought and writing patterns.

Three chapters from the book *“Developing intercultural competence through education”* (Barrett et al., 2014) were included by the tutor, specifically the chapters entitled *“What is intercultural competence?”* *“The components of intercultural competence”* and *“The significance of intercultural competence”*. These texts define IC and describe its components, while also explaining the significance of IC when communicating with people from other cultures. Students read the chapter *“A model for intercultural communicative competence”* from the book *“Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence”* (Byram, 1997). Here, the author introduces the notion of the intercultural speaker and explains the components of his ICC model. These readings have the potential to develop students’ knowledge about IC and its components. The last chapter which students had to read was *“Methods of research in contrastive rhetoric”* from the book *“Contrastive rhetoric”* (Connor, 1996). In this text, the author reviews the research methods of contrastive rhetoric, including descriptions of both quantitative and qualitative approaches; such materials could develop students’ knowledge of how to research intercultural communication. All in all, the readings were in line with the main aim of the course, which was to describe the theoretical background and practical implications of various aspects of culture, language, and communication. The texts seemed to develop students’ theoretical knowledge about culture and IC; moreover, they learned about different aspects of culture, such as the different verbal and non-verbal forms of communication and their variation across cultures. Furthermore, their awareness of other cultures was seemed to be developed through the examples mentioned in the texts such as the non-verbal communication features found in English-speaking countries.

### **4.3.3 Teacher Training programme**

#### **4.3.3.1 American culture**

In the “American culture” course, the tutor assigned 11 readings from the book *“American ways: An introduction to American culture”* (Datesman et al., 2014). The book

formed the cornerstone of the course, with the themes and topics discussed in class chosen based on the text. Other materials such as videos were used to provide further discussion of the ideas mentioned in the book; for example, when talking about violence in American schools, the course tutor included a video which included the testimonials of those injured in gun shooting incidents. Such videos were used to provide additional details and help students develop their empathy. The course tutor also used PPTs to present the information found in the book but with the inclusion of visual material. This was confirmed by the tutor, who in their interview (Study 4) stated that

*I mainly use this textbook, but I use additional information from media platforms, and images, charts, tables and of course the PPT slides. I prepare for each course to use some visual illustrations, materials, short videos clips which often are discussed and analysed together to engage the students a bit more.*

Based on the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), it was found that the topics included in each lesson were adopted from the book; however, the tutor always complemented them with videos and statistics which were valued by the student interviewees. For example, in the session examining “frontier heritage” and the values associated with it, the tutor presented some pictures of famous American superhero movies featuring the violent actions of the classic male hero to show his physical strength. The use of videos was aimed at enhancing the students’ knowledge about the target culture; as expressed by those who participated in this research, students found these video materials more engaging than any other teaching materials used in the course.

The book “*American ways: An introduction to American culture*” (Datesman et al., 2014) targets a wide audience including students, foreign businessmen settling in the USA, immigrants, and refugees with the aim of promoting their understanding of the values that underlie American practices. The authors mentioned that the book has been used in countries other than the USA by tutors of American culture. Considering the cultural content and the

language used in the book, it would be manageable for students to use the book even without the guidance of the course tutor as a means of self-study. This was further confirmed by the results of Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students), as one of the respondents praised the language used in the text by recalling that *“it was easy to understand”*.

The aim of the book is to present and explain traditional American values and discuss their impact on *“aspects of American life”* (p. iv). This book matched the main objective highlighted by the course tutor, which was

*to get a general knowledge of the American culture, American history, culture, and society. So, the main goal would be for them to develop critical thinking, also the knowledge, materials needed to teach American culture.*

However, this aim was not fully realized, as the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that there was no discussion about the way the materials could be used by future English language professionals in their classrooms. Such reflections would be particularly useful for students in the teacher training programme and would provide insight into how such materials could be applied in their future courses. Along with the development of students' awareness of the underlying values, another aim of the course was the development of students' critical thinking skills and language proficiency. However, this goal was only partially fulfilled, as the promotion of students' English language proficiency occurred only sporadically, such as when dealing with specific terms; this will be presented in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The chapters of Datesman et al., (2014) comprise diverse themes related to American culture. The structure of the chapters is similar: each chapter starts with historical background followed by an explanation of cultural values in relation to current American practices. This reoccurring structure made the book easier to read. The first reading which was analysed was an introduction to US culture, in which the history and the different ethnic groups of the US are described in detail. By examining the experiences of these different ethnic groups, students'

awareness of the diversity and richness of American culture could be developed. The chapter also mentions how Americans are cautious about the terms used to address different ethnic groups: terms such as African American and Latino should be used to describe black Americans and Spanish speakers, respectively. Although the difference between race and ethnicity was not explicitly discussed, on one occasion it was expressed that black Americans prefer the term “African American” as it indicates their African heritage. By learning about these terminological preferences, students seemed to better understand how language and cultural orientations can affect the way that an individual perceives the world.

The second chapter discusses traditional American values and beliefs. The text underscores the perception of the US as the land of opportunity and discusses several values such as individual freedom and equal opportunity that attracted immigrants to the US. Each value was thoroughly explained by the authors and were examined in relation to cultural practices. The way the chapters are written aimed to develop awareness of American values such as the before-mentioned equal opportunity as well as self-reliance and individual freedom. The book and the tutor showed the impact of American traditional values on the current practices of the American people. By learning about the underlying values behind these behaviours, the students’ stereotypes about Americans could be implicitly challenged. As many American practices were explained in relation to their underlying values, the students’ skills in interpreting a given practice or belief and relating it to their own were developed. Furthermore, learning about the significance of these values could help students communicate in a more effective way with Americans that they might encounter.

The next chapter used in the course discussed religion in the US, highlighting the religious diversity in the country which is represented by groups such as Evangelicals, Secular Liberals, Catholics, Muslims, or Jews. Referring to Barret and his colleagues’ (2014) model, by familiarizing them with these various religious groups, students seemed to better understand

the internal diversity of the American people. The fourth chapter used in the course deals with the concept frontier heritage, which the text claims are associated with the values of self-reliance, individual freedom, and equal opportunities. The next chapter examines the history of abundance, highlighting how the notion is not viewed positively in every culture. The authors then scrutinise the characteristics of American business, demonstrating that American business culture is based on the values of competition and the equality of opportunities. The text contributed to building the students' knowledge about American values as well as challenging the students' prejudgments about American people through providing information on American practices and their underlying values.

Next, the book describes the three branches of the US government, namely the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Learning about the role of each branch and about former American presidents seemed to broaden students' knowledge about politics in the US. The eighth chapter of the book examines ethnic and racial diversity in the US, which could help the students understand the country's cultural plurality. The chapter afterwards deals with education and the American school system; for this session, students learned about the most prestigious universities in the US. The book then features a chapter on the leisure activities of Americans with a special focus on sports, revealing that competition is highly valued in American society. The last chapter is about the American family and includes a comparison of parental roles in the past and present. The text highlighted that in the past men were viewed as the breadwinners of the household, while women stayed at home. The text then examines how such roles are becoming less and less common, reflecting the dynamic nature of culture. All in all, according to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the readings appeared to raise students' awareness of small c culture through discussing American values and behaviours.

#### 4.3.3.2 Challenging stereotypes

The tutor of the “Challenging stereotypes” teacher training course utilized a variety of readings in accordance with its main objective: to examine British culture with a focus on small c culture, which tends to not be presented and discussed in one particular book. T9, who taught the course, was interviewed in Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors) and stated that

*I do not use a textbook because this is such a unique topic, not British culture necessarily, because there are some excellent introductory courses to Britain and British culture published by the major British and international publishing houses. I think by around this level, students’ familiarity is at least hopefully way beyond these basic knowledge items about British culture. [...] So, what I’m trying to channel our attention towards, is more culture with a small c, that is the everyday, not so prominently represented or not so extensively described and analysed aspects of everyday British culture.*

The various readings used in the course formed the backbone of each class. No other materials were used besides these, and in each class the students discussed the topics from the assigned chapter.

The first chapter was “*Questions of identity*” from the book “*Brewer’s Anthology of England and the English*” (Milsted, 2003), which examines different national identities in Britain. Poems were included as a means of examining the quest for identity among the Scots, Welsh, and English. The students’ knowledge about the cultural plurality of British society seemed to be enhanced by learning about the complex cultural landscape of Britain and the different groups of which it consists. Another chapter from the same book entitled “*A Touch of Class*” was also assigned as a reading for the students and that describes British society from the perspective of its class system. Another chapter which students needed to read was “*The land of lost content*” from the book “*The English: A portrait of a people*” (Paxman, 2007). The author clarifies that the focus of the book is placed on English people. This book is addressed to them with the intention of raising their awareness of their identity through examining their



past and important aspects of their culture. The author also aims to explain the beliefs which influence their practices. The chapter in question examines Britishness versus Englishness, highlighting the cultural changes that occurred over time and the changes affected the way that British people perceive their own identity. The next reading assigned to the students was from the same book and is entitled "*The ideal Englishman*". The concept of "*the Breed*" is defined and thoroughly explained, with the author detailing the process in which boys were sent to specific schools to be taught how to be gentlemen. Other two readings from the same book include "*The English empire*" and "*True born Englishman and other lies*", which discuss the imperial legacy. These readings likely promoted the students' awareness of certain English practices.

The book "*How to be a Brit? A George Mikes minibus*" (Mikes, 1984), addresses the topic of attitudes mainly in the chapters "*How to be inimitable: New English*" and "*How to be Inimitable: Old English*", which were chosen as required readings for the course. Various topics, such as politics, queuing and its underlying meaning, media, advertisements, and shopping were examined. The students were further familiarized with British manners such as queueing through the chapter "*How to be a decadent*". This chapter provides an ironic description through which it shows how aspects of British culture can be perceived differently by taking different perspectives. Several chapters from the book "*Rules Britannia: The 101 essential questions of Britishness answered*" (Candappa, 2007) introduce important cultural practices in British society, such as small talk and tea drinking. Discussing topics such as these seemed to raise students' awareness of British customs and behaviours that do not necessarily exist in other cultures.

All in all, the various book chapters discussed several cultural aspects related to both big C and small c culture. This showed that the readings not only addressed the course objective to promote the students' knowledge about small c culture but also included aspects of big C

culture. The readings were unique for the students in that they presented knowledge on how to behave appropriately and effectively in Britain through the explicit advice provided by the authors. This could help the students to have successful intercultural interactions with British people in the future.

In some readings, the students were exposed to frequent comparisons between British culture and other cultures, such as Central European contexts. For example, Mikes (1984) compared British and Austrian customs at dinner parties. These cultural comparisons could develop students' knowledge about various cultures and help them learn about their beliefs and practices in addition to fostering students' appreciation of cultural plurality.

#### **4.3.3.3 British culture**

The tutor of the course "British culture" relied on two types of teaching materials which included written materials such as online BBC website articles and video materials, specifically the movie "*The Full Monty*" (Cattaneo, 1997) and the series "*Mind Your Language*" (Patel, 1977-1987). The tutor indicated that he adapted the BBC articles by adding questions to the texts in order to make them more effective readings for the students. As for the other materials, they were included with no modifications. All the materials were appropriate for this course as they discussed aspects of British culture, such as famous British people. The readings also helped to achieve the main aim highlighted by the tutor, which was to familiarise students with different aspects of British culture.

The lessons were designed based on the readings. The first reading that the students were given was an essay submitted by a former student which described British culture in regard to three categories: history, ethnicity, and customs. The paper seemed to broaden students' knowledge of certain aspects of big C culture. After this text the following readings were the previously mentioned BBC articles. One of these texts was about the novelist Agatha Christie

and examined how culture is depicted in her novels through narration, characters, and humour. Then, the life of the musician Freddie Mercury and his struggle with identity was examined. The text discusses his homosexuality and how he communicated it with the public, as well as his relationship with his parents. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, it appeared that the two texts developed the students' knowledge of iconic British personalities. They also provided insight into British culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as introducing students to different attitudes towards topics such as homosexuality.

Another reading entitled "*Around the world in 80 words*" (Ro, 2018) analyses the origins of English words such as *turkey*. It can be concluded that this material was chosen to expand students' English language vocabulary. The results of Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students) revealed that the interviewees did not enjoy the language related activities in each text, describing them as "[...] a vocab thing, not cultural" (Gint8S3). The interviewees did not appear to be aware of the relationship between language and culture. The course also included the film "*the Full Monty*" (Cattaneo, 1997) which follows Gaz, an individual who is being sued for failing to provide child support. In order to earn money, he decides to form a male striptease group with his friends. The tutor used the film to expose the students to British slang in order to develop the students' English vocabulary; language tasks were added to the activities to achieve this aim. Even though the interviewees expressed their dislike of the vocabulary learning activities, the promotion of their linguistic competence could facilitate their communication with speakers of the target language.

The students also watched the first episode of the second season of "*Mind Your Language*" (Patel, 1977-1987). This episode showcased the internal diversity of British culture through introducing people from several countries, including India, Japan, France, Pakistan, Hungary, and Spain in a stereotypical way (i.e., presenting the way they speak, dress, or behave). Based on Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, this series likely enhanced the

students' knowledge of other cultures since the characters represent various cultural groups. In addition, the stereotypical depictions of the characters seemed to promote the students' awareness of assumptions that can be held towards those of different cultures which can also result in students questioning their own preconceptions. The episode also presented an opportunity for Hungarian students to examine the preconceptions that people have about Hungarians.

The materials used in this course were appropriate in regard to the course aims. However, despite the fact that the majority of the students belonged to the teacher training programme, pedagogical practices were not taken into consideration. The tutor's approaches showed a clear lack of attention to teacher training: none of the teaching materials were discussed from the point of view of language teachers and the students were not informed about how to use such materials in their future courses. As this course is a content course this is not necessarily a problem, but pedagogical considerations would have been nonetheless useful for the students, such as instruction on how to integrate culture and interculturality into the language classroom.

#### **4.3.3.4 EFL for intercultural competence**

"EFL for intercultural competence" is a course in the teacher training programme. The tutor's main goal was to promote students' awareness about the importance of IC and to develop their knowledge about ways to include aspects of IC into the EFL classroom. The students were assigned four readings. The first reading was "*Stumbling blocks in intercultural communication*" (Barna, 1997) from the volume "*Intercultural communication: A reader*" (Samovar & Porter, 1997). The text explains the six stumbling blocks that can lead to misunderstandings in intercultural interactions, such as assumption of similarities or non-verbal misinterpretation. This reading could develop students' awareness of the possible factors

leading to intercultural misunderstandings and possibly provide them with strategies on how to avoid them in their future intercultural interactions.

The second reading was “*Developing intercultural competence through education*” by (Barrett et al., 2014). This book is addressed to a wide audience including tutors, students, parents, and policy makers. The text offers rationale for the development of students’ IC and details the aspects of IC which should be included when teaching EFL in different educational context. The authors also propose activities which could be used to implement IC development in the classroom, such as role-plays or viewing films. The book was chosen to provide pre-service teachers with an understanding of the meaning and different aspects of IC, as well as insights into the activities that can be used in their teaching practice. The book “*Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching*” (Byram et al., 2002) was also included in the courses, which aims to help tutors incorporate IC into their language courses in a practical way. The text presented questions which might appear in connection to the topic, offering answers to the specific issues that teachers might encounter. Although it is not clearly stated, this book is designed for the tutors and is therefore important for instructing pre-service teachers on how to include IC development in their teaching.

The next reading that students were assigned was “*Recognising intercultural competence: What shows that I am interculturally competent?*” (Lázár, 2013). The text is a self-assessment tool developed by tutors and school heads based on their previous experience and helps people to examine their IC to determine which IC aspects they possess and which ones need development. This reading could motivate students to assess their IC, which could encourage them to seek out opportunities to promote their IC. The last reading was the “*Manual for developing intercultural competencies: Story circles*” (Deardorff, 2020), which offers a systematic methodology to develop IC through storytelling and sharing personal experiences. Therefore, it can be said that the text is designed for policy makers, intercultural trainers, tutors,

and students, among others. The reading claimed that story circles can develop students' respect and openness. The chosen books and chapters adhered to the purpose of the course and the aim of the programme, which was the development of future teachers' IC: all the readings offered practical understanding of the different aspects of IC and its implementation in EFL classrooms.

#### **4.3.4 PhD programme**

##### **4.3.4.1 Language education for intercultural competence development**

The objective of the doctoral course “Language education for intercultural competence development” was to familiarize students with the literature and the researchable aspects related to the inclusion of IC in language courses. The first chapter examined was from the book *“Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence”* (Byram, 1997). This book aims to define ICC components and discuss how they can be included in language teaching. According to Byram, this book is addressed to tutors and policymakers who are interested in implementing IC development in FLT. It is therefore useful for doctoral students who are researching IC, as it is one of the most important texts in this field.

The second reading was *“Intercultural competences: Conceptual and operational framework”* (UNESCO, 2013), which explains the term IC and its significance in today's world. The third book included was *“Developing intercultural competence through education”* (Barrett et al., 2014), which explores the definition and components of IC. The text also examines how to promote IC in educational settings, suggesting specific activities that can be used in the classroom. Most of these readings were theoretical and aimed to raise students' awareness of the different models and components of IC. It is worth noting that doctoral students at this university are required to take part in teaching practice; therefore, since they are interested in IC, these readings could provide them with knowledge on how to incorporate interculturality in their courses.

Another text used in the course was “*The OECD-PISA global competence framework*” (OECD, 2018). The text provides information on how to design teaching approaches, activities, as well as curricula, and assessment procedures to develop students’ IC. To further discuss IC models and components, two additional readings were assigned. The first was the journal article entitled “*Integrating intercultural and communicative objectives in the foreign language class: A proposal for the integration of two models*” (Borghetti, 2013). The paper addresses the interrelationship between intercultural and communicative teaching goals in FLT. The second article examined in the course was “*A model for describing, analysing and investigating cultural understanding in EFL reading settings*” (Porto, 2013), which also examines and describes a model for analysing cultural understanding in English as FLT content. These readings were in line with the main course aim but did not seem to influence the development of the students’ IC. However, this is to be expected, as at this level students are more concerned with their research.

The students were assigned three further articles which centre around the information and communication technologies and textbooks that can be used to develop students’ IC. The reading “*The significance of intercultural understanding in the English modern foreign languages curriculum: a pupil perspective*” (Jones & Peiser, 2013) explores pupils’ perspectives and attitudes towards the integration of IC in the foreign language curriculum. The other article, “*The competences of the telecollaborative teacher*” (O’Dowd, 2013), examines the skills that FLT tutors require in order to conduct a successful online intercultural exchange with their students. Another reading included in the course entitled “*Developing students’ intercultural competence in foreign language textbooks*” (Sobkowiak, 2015) examines if the textbooks used in teaching EFL contain sufficient intercultural content. The readings above explore the development of students’ IC through various approaches, including Information and

Communications technology. It also seemed to familiarize doctoral students with the different types of materials that can be used to integrate IC development into EFL courses.

Another article assigned was *“Making intercultural communicative competence and identity-development visible for assessment purposes in foreign language education”* (Houghton, 2013), which investigates the development of Japanese students’ identities in an EFL course featuring intercultural content. Through this article, the students learned about how to assess IC development. The research article *“How Chinese college students make sense of foreign films and TV series: Implications for the development of intercultural communicative competence in ELT”* (Yang & Fleming, 2013) was also utilized in the course and explores the processes that Chinese students engage in when watching films. In addition, the article *“EFL learners’ intercultural competence development in an international web collaboration project”* (Lázár, 2014) was included, which investigates students’ IC development when participating in online collaborative spaces. These readings introduced doctoral students to materials that could be used to develop learners’ IC. All in all, the students’ critical thinking appeared to be enhanced through their exposure to the various readings and through discussing them with their classmates, as shown in the results of classroom observations. Furthermore, reading empirical research could also boost their knowledge of the methods used in IC research. By actively engaging with these articles, the students also seemed to gain an understanding of how to write their own research articles on IC.

#### **4.3.4.2 Teaching culture through language**

Another course in the doctoral programme is called “Teaching culture through language” and is designed specifically for PhD students who are interested in learning more about culture and interculturality. The aim of this course was to raise students’ awareness of the inclusion of culture in foreign language teaching and learning. The first reading for the



course was a chapter from the book *“Culture learning: The fifth dimension in the language classroom”* (Damen, 1987) which targets teacher trainers and language tutors. The first part of the book deals with the learning of language and culture, while the second part focuses on approaches to include culture in language courses. As such, the students learned that IC development should be implemented in language teaching, which may have contributed to their understanding of IC as an additional skill in language use alongside listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The second reading in the course was the chapter *“Cultural dimensions and foreign language teaching”* (Holló, 2014) from the book *“Studies in honour of Marianne Nikolov”* (Horváth & Medgyes, 2014). Holló proposes a comprehensive framework of cultural dimensions that contributes to the understanding of different cultural patterns that appear in behaviour and communication; in addition, she also suggests activities such as storytelling and role plays that can be used in the classroom to raise students’ awareness of cultural diversity and contribute to their language development. The students also read chapters from the book *“Teaching and learning language and culture”* (Byram et al., 1994); written for language tutors, the text describes classroom practices and novel curriculum approaches in cultural education. By learning about curriculum innovations in cultural learning, students’ awareness about how to contribute to IC development in the classroom context appeared to be raised.

The article *“Culture shock in the classroom”* (Enyedi, 2000) investigated the inclusion of cultural content in language courses taught by NNSs. The findings of the article show that non-native teachers have already experienced a similar learning process to that of their students, and are therefore better able to help their students through the stages of linguistic acculturation. This shared experience seemed to produce higher levels of empathy in non-native teachers towards their students. The next reading utilized in the course was the chapter *“Power and deception”* in the book *“Language: The loaded weapon”* (Bolinger, 1980). The text investigates the ways language can be used to mislead by lying or avoiding the use of certain

words. Students were then assigned the chapter “*Culture in teaching English as an international language*” from the book “*Teaching English as an international language*” (McKay, 2002), which deals with the inclusion of culture in English as an international language classroom. The book is intended for English language teachers, researchers, and curriculum designers.

The readings in the doctoral programme did not aim to develop students’ IC which was explicitly stated in the course description. Using the materials, students seemed to learn about the implementation of IC in language courses, knowledge that they can go on to apply in their own language courses. Since the articles featured educators from different cultures, students were also familiarised with IC research in various contexts.

#### **4.3.5 Summary**

This study analysed the course materials used in the courses examined and aimed to explore the ways in which IC development is implemented in the English major programmes. The results suggest that the tutors used a variety of course materials, including course books, articles, documentaries, videos, books and book chapters, and literature. The topics and themes that were discussed in these materials were in line with the course aims in the case of most of the courses. For instance, the readings about different American values appeared to develop students’ knowledge of this aspect of American culture, which could help them challenge their stereotypes and show a greater understanding of characteristic American behaviours. Furthermore, internalizing different sets of values can promote acceptance and openness to diversity, which is an important part of IC. In most courses, aspects of big C and small c culture were included in the readings, and consequently in the classroom. The readings dealt with a variety of cultures, including both English-speaking cultures such as Great Britain and non-English speaking contexts such as Central Europe. It is crucial for English language graduates

to possess diverse cultural knowledge, as many of them will proceed to work in international settings, whether teaching in international schools or working in international companies. Therefore, acquiring at least some knowledge about different countries can lead to more successful intercultural interactions. The development of students' knowledge can potentially increase their openness to and curiosity about other cultures, while also making them more tolerant to ambiguous situations. Moreover, students' intercultural skills seemed to be promoted through the development of their intercultural knowledge. For example, the students learned about the different cultural dimensions and their impact on cultural practices and behaviours. This understanding could lead to the development of skills such as cognitive flexibility, multiperspectivity and interpreting cultural practices.

In other courses, the readings encouraged future English language teachers to integrate IC into their teaching practice in accordance with the aims of the course. The results also showed that in the doctoral courses the students' knowledge of how to include IC in language courses was enhanced through exposure to a number of articles that addressed this issue. This can be argued to be particularly important for doctoral students considering their potential future capacities as researchers and lecturers sharing knowledge and educating on the topic of IC. The students also developed their knowledge of cultural diversity: students read about different national and ethnic contexts which could potentially lead to greater openness to learning about other people and cultures.

#### **4.4 Study 4: Semi-structured interviews with the course tutors**

The tutors were interviewed to gather information about the aims of their courses, activities, materials, and teaching approaches, as well as their thoughts and experiences on good teaching practices. They were also asked about the challenges they faced when integrating IC into their courses. The data are grouped according to five themes: 1.) the tutor's aims, 2.) aspects

of IC presented in the class, 3.) activities, materials, and teaching approaches, 4.) good practices, and 5.) challenges. The course tutors were assigned codes: T symbolises “tutor” and is followed by a number for identification.

#### **4.4.1. The tutor’s aims**

The findings of this interview study showed that the course tutors formulated course aims related to the development of their students’ IC. Some of the stated objectives were more linked to English-speaking cultures (e.g., raising students’ awareness of different aspects of American or British popular culture). Two tutors also expressed their desire to promote students’ knowledge about Australian culture. As presented below, T1, T2, and T7 provided more detailed answers. In their words, they aimed to develop

*[the students’] knowledge about Australian culture. (T1)*

*[the students’ knowledge about] the culture, heritage, past and present of the original inhabitants of Australia. (T2)*

*[the students’ knowledge] of American culture [...] of contemporary America, American history, culture and society. (T7)*

Other general objectives were also identified, such as promoting students’ intercultural skills and intercultural awareness. The significance of the latter was best reflected through the study of Xiao and Petraki (2007) who found that 32 Chinese students faced certain cultural difficulties and showed an unwillingness to interact with people from various cultures. This was explained by the lack of intercultural content in their language courses.

Another objective that was pursued in some of the courses was the creation of opportunities to interact with different cultures; this reflecting the actions component proposed by Barrett and his colleagues (2014). This was actually achieved in one of the courses, as T5 participated in an online project with Israeli students. Similarly, T3 stated that creating a small community was one of their course aims, especially since their class included both Hungarian

and international students. However, it was also stated that this was a difficult task to achieve as the students take their courses with different classmates, and there were few opportunities to develop as a community: due to the limited interaction, the students would have less possibilities to develop meaningful relationships. However, T3 expressed his satisfaction that students from different cultures in 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.*  
(T3)

The development of the students' own voices was listed among the course aims that were linked to the promotion of IC. As PL12 mentioned

*[...] teaching openness towards otherness, difference and develop [their] own English to represent [themselves].*

This aim is particularly significant in the promotion of the students' IC considering that, as suggested by Byram (1997), the overall purpose of being an interculturally competent individual is not to imitate native speakers, but to develop as an intercultural speaker who is able to maintain their own voice while interacting with people from different cultures.

Other course objectives also aimed to boost students' learning skills by familiarising them with IC development through readings and keeping them updated with the latest research in this field. Furthermore, among the desired learning outcomes some tutors sought to improve students' skills to critically analyse academic texts. These aims were mainly voiced by the tutors of MA and PhD courses in which students were researching the development of IC as their dissertation topics. A few of the course aims were exclusively related to students in the teacher training programme and included objectives such as improving students' skills as future teachers of English. The following comments below show that the tutors mainly aimed to develop skills related to the incorporation of IC development in the future courses of the teacher trainees:

*[Developing the students'] knowledge, materials needed to teach American culture. (T7)*

*[Learning] ways of addressing, as well as reinterpreting cultural knowledge, cultural phenomena that may apply to different classrooms. (T9)*

*The other aim is to try and be a little practical in terms of how you can use this or how a teacher can use this information in the classroom and what the implications are. (T5)*

An additional outcome was the development of the students' research skills, as in some courses (i.e., at the MA level) the students had to submit their theses at the end of the term. A similar goal was identified in a course designed for doctoral students whose research interests centred around culture and interculturality. It was hoped that students would learn how to write literature review and methods sections. (T5) and (T1) stated that this objective was to help students

*learn how to do classroom research, how to write a literature review in a mini project. (T5)*

*reflect on different research methods and how their studies can be written up. (T1)*

All the tutors expressed the importance of developing students' IC, which was also reflected in their course aims. The observations also demonstrated how interculturality featured in the courses, as discussed in the previous sections. This was partially in line with the findings of Pinto (2018), which showed overall agreement among language tutors regarding the significance of incorporating intercultural content into language courses. However, the instructors were reluctant to implement such skills as they were found to be difficult to assess; this finding can also be seen in Menyhei (2016). In the present study, several tutors reported that it is impossible to assess the development of students' IC or confirm if they became interculturally competent because of a particular course or their experience outside the classroom. Even though the findings of Pinto's research were similar to this study, the

participating course tutors did not express hesitation about including IC in their courses. This showed that the tutors were well-informed in regard to the courses they taught.

The aims that the tutors articulated were similar to the goals mentioned in Han and Song's (2011) study, such as promoting students' knowledge of other cultures. Those aims clearly reflected the knowledge and actions components of Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model and contributed to the development of students' IC.

A specific aim that was mentioned solely in the courses of the teacher training programme was the raising of pre-service teachers' awareness of possible methods for developing IC in language courses. T3 explained the practical aspect of his course, stating that

*[...] it is not only an expansion on the college-related courses students have been studying before, but it is also a nice extension to their methodology studies. (T3)*

This aim was further acknowledged by the data from Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students), in which one of the interviewees mentioned the following:

*I think this course is really useful and helpful if you are going to be a teacher because you have to be aware [...] when you teach a language, you should teach the culture as well, and teach your students to think about these intercultural things and be more sensitive towards differences<sup>9</sup>. (Gint7S1)*

The significance of such courses in the teacher training programme was reflected in the study of Willems (2002), the White Paper document (Council of Europe, 2008), and Amery (2021), which all stressed the incorporation of IC development in the teacher training programme so that future English language teachers can encourage their students to suspend prejudgments and interact successfully with people from different cultures. In the study of Lázár (2011), these results are further reinforced, as the pre-service teacher in her study succeeded in conducting a variety of intercultural activities that she had learned in a similar course during her teaching

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<sup>9</sup> The quotations from the interviews are transcribed word for word. They have not been corrected in terms of the use of English.

practice. It can be concluded that when pre-service teachers become EFL tutors at secondary schools, they are likely to make use of activities that will develop students' IC. Consequently, it is possible that more students will receive instruction on how to effectively interact with those of different cultures and to achieve successful intercultural interactions.

#### **4.4.2 Aspects of IC that are present in the courses**

The results indicated that numerous aspects of IC were incorporated into the different courses. Many tutors reported that they teach aspects of big C culture in their courses, such as literature written by indigenous authors (T2), music and humour (T4), and the history of Indigenous people (T1, T2). They also stated that they aim to develop students' knowledge about aspects of small c culture, such as characteristic ways of thinking and behaving. T9 pointed out that given their higher intellectual capabilities, university students have likely already learned about the most obvious aspects of a given culture.

*[...] by around this level, students' familiarity is at least hopefully way beyond these basic knowledge items about British culture. That is mostly to do with culture, with a capital C. (T9)*

Exploring cultural differences was a feature of many of the courses. There were also ample opportunities to compare English-speaking cultures with the students' own cultures, as previously discussed in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations). Examining cultural differences was significant as the courses encouraged students to broaden their perspectives and peacefully co-exist with people from other cultures. This was noted for most of the courses, but it was particularly prominent in those in which both international and Hungarian students were enrolled. For example, T1 explained that discussing cultural differences was not a source of dispute, but was rather something enriching:

*[...]it is not something to despise, it is not something to fight against, it is something to embrace, and it is something that enriches life. (T1)*



This finding was supported by the results of the observations, which showed that on many occasions students were able to civilly discuss their cultural differences without conflict throughout the eight classroom sessions observed.

Furthermore, the tutors indicated that they explored cultural similarities with the aim of raising students' self-awareness. This was explicitly achieved through the presentations that students delivered about their own cultures or through the direct questions posed by the tutors. Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) supported this finding as the results showed that students delivered presentations about their own culture in the courses "Skills for intercultural communication" and "Intercultural communication". The students found it interesting to uncover shared aspects between different cultures. T1 provided an example from their course:

*We had a presentation about Romania, and it was so interesting to see that the presenter talked about a lot of things that were sort of "typically" Romanian but then they were also quite characteristic of Albania. (T1)*

The student interest was also noted during the classroom observations, indicating that it was surprising for them to discover the many cultural aspects that Romanian and Albanian people share.

Aspects of the development of intercultural attitudes were also present in many of the courses, such as the maintenance of non-judgmental attitudes and questioning stereotypes about British people. Many of the tutors mentioned various reasons to encourage the development of such intercultural attitudes in their courses:

*[To] demonstrate that these superficial generalizations or stereotypes are flawed, distorted, skewed, and very often sparking some really meaningful, engaging and insightful debates in class. (T9)*

*[Students had to] get beyond the surface and understand how their own stereotypes and how their own prejudices work. And I want to help them to develop this need for multiperspectivity. (T1)*

Other IC aspects were included in the lessons with the aim of promoting students' openness and tolerance. For example, T1 referenced how students learned about the current situation in Australia, and how people are open and accepting of each other despite their different cultural backgrounds:

*I was thinking about Australia as an example of multiculturalism and how, despite some difficulties and some differences between people, most people are very happy that they live in a culture, in a country where people are from so many different cultures and represent so many different ways of thinking and then still, they come together as the Australian nation although you talk about Vietnamese Australians, and Hungarian Australians and Italian Australians etc. (T1)*

Aspects of IC skills were included in the tutors' cultural and intercultural courses. In an intercultural context, developing the skill of active listening can be essential as speakers should learn to withhold judgments. For this reason, T3 highlighted the skill of active listening:

*I included the active listening topic for many reasons. I wanted to show what it can mean practically and how difficult it is because to actually listen to means [...] to withhold your judgment for the benefit of the person you are talking to is more appropriate for this. It is not about saying this was wrong and this was good. (T3)*

As mentioned earlier, and with reference to the model of Barrett and his colleagues (2014), IC actions were one of the aspects of IC that were incorporated into the lessons. T5 created an opportunity for their students to work with students from another culture; specifically, they interacted with Israeli students through an intercultural online project. One ice-breaking activity was to present oneself and post a picture. As T5 explained,

*they had to post a picture and four words about themselves, this was again in their small groups to get to know each other, and they started discussing the view from their window, where they live, what the four words were and why they were important for them. (T5)*

According to the tutor, some students expressed their positive attitudes about this interaction, expressing that

*this was a great experience. It was interesting to learn about the Israeli culture, interesting to work together and they learned about themselves too. (T5)*

Due to the multicultural nature of some of the courses, many of the tutors considered them as an opportunity for their students to interact and engage with those from different cultural backgrounds. The findings of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that this goal was achieved through the activities utilized in the classrooms.

Several aspects of IC were included in one activity which involved sharing personal stories about intercultural clashes. In the course “Intercultural communication”, the students reported some of the intercultural clashes they had experienced. The same activity was conducted in the course “Communicating across cultures”, however, in this course, the students shared their intercultural misunderstandings with their classmates via the online platform Moodle. This proved to be an eye-opening activity for the students sharing their stories as well as for those who were reading. The task aimed to promote students’ knowledge of the given countries, for example, learning how people behave in Japan, Ireland, and Hungary, among other countries. Moreover, the activity appeared to promote attitudes of openness and acceptance of cultural diversity.

The analysis of the IC aspects presented in the different courses showed that tutors acknowledged the importance of learning about the visible and hidden facets of culture. This result differs from Baltaci and Tanis’ (2018) study, in which that the in-service teachers only taught practical aspects of culture through textbooks such as traditions, food, and clothes, overlooking the communicative elements of culture. Moreover, it also diverged from Önalán (2005) and Gu (2016), both of which reported that the participants claimed that learning about factual knowledge is the most crucial aspect of IC. In contrast, the course tutors participating in the present research were aware of the definition of IC and the importance of each aspect of culture. For this reason, in the present study, tutors were willing to promote students’ attitudes of openness, increase their knowledge of different beliefs, values, and practices, and develop their self-awareness as advocated by Barrett and his colleagues (2014).

The IC components included in the courses matched those identified by the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008), such as attitudes of openness, appreciation of cultural diversity and cultural products, and learning about history. In Study 6 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with students), the students showed appreciation for learning about history. Some students commented on the way that the courses (i.e., Australian through documentaries and Australian Aboriginal issues) raised their awareness of the history of the Aboriginal people in Australia, referring to the lesson as an “*eye-opener*”. In addition, the comparative language approach seemed to raise the students’ awareness of different cultures. The relevance of such an approach was underlined by Holló and Lázár (1999) and Mutlu and Dollar (2017), who stressed that such an approach could help students become more interculturally competent.

#### **4.4.3 Activities, materials, and approaches**

The tutors utilized a variety of methods to integrate IC development into their courses. They did not only rely on coursebooks but instead included a diverse range of materials to engage with the students and encourage them to learn about different cultures. This differs from the findings of Baltacı and Tanis (2018), which showed that in-service tutors mainly used coursebooks. This result reflects the importance that the tutors in the present research attach to the use of engaging materials and their enthusiasm for including aspects of IC in their teaching practice.

The course tutors used texts, images, illustrations, charts and tables (T7), and TED talks (T1), political cartoons (T8), and BBC website articles and series (T4) to develop students’ knowledge about different cultures. Most of them used visual materials (e.g., films and other videos) to stimulate discussion so that students would be more motivated to participate in class and share their views. For instance, T1 emphasized that

*it should not always be the teacher to initiate the discussion. (T1)*

T7 made a PowerPoint presentation for each session to explain the assigned chapter to his students. They justified the use of the digital platform, stating that

*I [...] use some visual illustrations, materials, short videos clips which often are discussed and analysed together to engage the students a bit more. (T7)*

The findings of Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students) showed that the interviewed students appreciated the use of PowerPoint slides. They found the use of pictures in the presentations to be particularly effective; for instance, the interviewees recalled that

*it is very good in terms of visual effects; it summarises the whole thing. (Gint2S1)*

*he used much more plus information plus pictures. I always like the pictures because I think it brings a whole thing closer. (Gint2S2)*

This finding is in line with the recommendation of Byram and his colleagues (2002), who suggest using a variety of visual materials in the development of students' IC. Learning about different cultures by engaging with audio-visual materials could have a greater impact on developing students' awareness of cultural diversity, products, and practices than text-based materials. This is echoed by Han and Song's (2011) study, in which the participants preferred the use of videos over books for learning about the target cultures. The tutors in the present research were aware of this, claiming that students were no longer motivated to read long texts.

Many of the tutors made use of authentic materials in their courses. For example, T2 used texts and literature written by Aboriginal Australians to provide students with a better understanding of their perspectives and history. It was interesting to note that by the end of the term students were able to read some of the poems without referring to their English translations. This finding suggests that the use of these poems fostered students' knowledge of the Aborigines and their language through exposure to the texts and stories that they produced,

and the observations revealed that students were more excited when they could work with such materials.

The results suggest that most of the materials used in the observed classrooms were recent and updated. These included updated information about a given culture so that students learn about new events and issues. In addition, it is also important that these updated materials are engaging to the students. T8, for example, reflected on the use of up-to-date materials to better engage with their students:

*I chose South Park because I thought the Simpsons might be a little bit too old for them, since these are much younger students [...] We read the first chapter from a book by a guy who actually worked for YouTube. I think he was the marketing manager for many years that he wrote a book, and he talks about the democratization of pop culture, what does that mean? And who creates culture? How is it created? Who is it that consumes it? I try to take these topics that are close to them and close to me obviously. (T8)*

It was found that specific activities such as discussions, debates, and role-plays were also used to make the seminars more interactive. The results of the student interviews showed that the interviewees found such activities to be enjoyable. A doctoral student enjoyed classroom discussions in which different cultural aspects were compared, recalling that

*we discussed many different issues all around the world, and we had the chance to discuss with our classmates. We compared the things between the countries, and we also talked about the solutions, what we can do, in terms of solving the problems, as educators and as teachers. (Gint3S1)*

As illustrated in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), role-plays, discussions, and debates contributed to the development of students' IC. The topics discussed during these activities were mainly related to the target culture or aimed at raising students' awareness about cultural diversity. This could result in the promotion of skills such as multiperspectivity. Moreover, students observed in other studies have also been shown to enjoy role-play activities (e.g., Kahraman, 2016; Worawong et al., 2017). However, in the present study, although the

interviewed students enjoyed the discussions they had in class, Gint2S2 asserted that first-year students were often not willing to communicate or share their opinions:

*Unfortunately, it is hard to start a discussion because, in high school, we have to be quiet and repeat what the teacher says. When we come to university, teachers expect students to share their opinions, but it is a big change. We try to adopt; many students can do it, but not everyone. (Gint2S2)*

One activity that was conducted in the “Intercultural communication” and “Skills for intercultural communication” courses and was found to be particularly effective in fostering students’ awareness about their own cultures. The students were required to bring either an object or a photo representing their home culture and explain its relevance, and were also tasked with creating a presentation about their own cultural background. T1 was the tutor of both courses and mentioned several positive outcomes of these activities, such as student enjoyment, discovering similarities between cultures, and raising awareness of unfamiliar cultures:

*This activity of bringing things from their own culture works very well.*

*It was very interesting to see that the things that different cultures are very proud of as their own, are not their own and have got their roots in so many other cultures. This kind of series of presentations about the homes of different participants also turned out to be interesting.*

*It was very interesting to have the students’ presentations because they very often gave presentations about cultures that we otherwise would not hear about if you think, for example, M’s (student) presentation about Indonesia and how she related cultural differences to particular examples that she brought from her own country.*

Another activity that aimed to develop students’ critical thinking skills was creating an annotated list of intercultural clashes in the course “Intercultural communication”. As the tutor explained,

*they also have to collect internet links about intercultural issues, but it is not just a collection of internet sites; it has to be an annotated list, which means a description of what the site does with a little bit of evaluation, whether it is useful or not useful and what it does. (T1)*

However, Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students) showed that the interviewed students did not enjoy this activity. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the annotated

bibliography drawn from 15 websites and described it as “*very demanding*”. Gint10S3 stated that

*we had to find 15 websites and then do a sort of annotated bibliography about them: what is this website about? Is it helpful? Why do you like it or not? So, this was very demanding for me, especially now towards the end, where we had to work on different types of things.*

Although a few students found this activity “*demanding*”, it nonetheless contributed to raising their awareness about cultural diversity, as the links mentioned above presented intercultural issues. The evaluation of these links could also increase students critical thinking abilities.

The activities that were aimed at developing the students’ English language proficiency included writing. In their courses, students had to write essays which the course tutors would then check. For example, in the course “EFL for intercultural competence”, the teacher trainees, along with their other assignments, were required to write a reflective summary, which was a miniature literature review. T5 explained that

*I give feedback on their language use, especially in writing, in the reflective summary and in the classroom research report, I marked mistakes and suggested better vocabulary for example. (T5)*

Developing students’ language skills was indirectly accomplished through the readings or through their participation in class. This could result in developing a subset of students’ intercultural skills (i.e., linguistic skills). Although the activities seemed to serve the purpose of improving the students’ English language proficiency, the results showed that the interviewed teachers did not consider the assignments as a primary or explicit aim to be achieved. For instance, T5 expressed that

*[this aim] is not explicitly [mentioned in the course description].*

Similarly, T8 mentioned that promoting students’ English language proficiency was not included in her course aims, while T4 pointed out that they considered it a goal to some extent:



*I am a native language instructor. So, I know that one of the reasons that they hired me was so that students can really interact with someone who speaks English as a native language and, in this way, help them develop their English skills. This is something that is expected no matter what kind of class I teach. I personally never talk about grammar in class, especially in popular culture class, unless it is like specific words or phrases that are new or that students do not understand. But I do not consider it a necessary goal to the class when planning my syllabus. (T8)*

*Well, I am not sure if it is 50 per cent. It is probably less than that. (T4)*

Many tutors applied an experiential approach in their courses using intercultural content, using activities that required students to reflect on their own experiences in order to make the given topics more personal and thus more engaging to them. T3 relied on their own experience as well as the students' experiences, commenting that

*[...] I make sure the content is basically a trigger for the students to either get into an experience that is related to their background experience or through [...] something happens which makes the topic significant at the personal level. So, this experience-based part and that I will call it participant oriented. (T3)*

Sharing intercultural clashes, as reported in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), presented students with an opportunity to consider their own behaviours as well as those of others in order to explain communicative situations more objectively. Moreover, the other students were likely able to learn from these accounts, specifically in terms of how to behave or develop certain skills in order to act appropriately and communicate effectively with those from another culture.

Along with the experiential teaching approach, Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) also showed that T3 was the only tutor who followed an intuitive approach instead of a theoretical one. He said that this approach would help students to better understand the relevant theories:

*I think I do it differently from a number of colleagues who provide the theoretical input first, then do something with it discuss it. I prefer to do stuff in class, so students take an intuitive approach to almost any of those topics first, and I add a particular reading or more theoretical model to it. If it is the other way around, 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. (T3)*

In the present study the tutors' teaching approaches were interactive rather than frontal, reflecting the nature of other seminar courses in the programme in question. T6 emphasized that he attempted to avoid a frontal approach in the classroom, but the students were dependent and frequently requested stricter guidance from the tutor. This issue was observed only in this course:

*I do not want to say this is what I think, and you have to accept it or argue with it [...] But I would appreciate if my students were freer and to do whatever they wanted to do. (T6)*

The results from the interviewed students further supported the tutor's comments. All of the four students interviewed expressed their need for clear instructions and additional guidance from the course tutor.

#### **4.4.4 Positive features**

The tutors shared some of their good practices for integrating IC development into their courses. Most of them reported that they had relied mainly on assigning their students' academic papers to read in the past; however, they affirmed that in recent years students have become less interested in reading long texts but would rather watch video clips and movies. As a result, the tutors updated the classroom materials and incorporated more visual materials (e.g., as images, charts, tables, PPT slides, and videos clips) to help increase student engagement in the lessons and help them learn more effectively. As (T7) and (T1) explained,

*I wanted to include as many videos as possible that would encourage the students to engage the topic more. (T7)*

*we had an interesting discussion about colonization, based on the Tony Robinson film called Down Under. It is a longer series about Australia by this British comedian. It is very funny, and we talked about whether we can talk about history in a way that makes it funny and quite ridiculous. The students liked the film just because of this. So, it was the approach to a serious topic in a very light manner. They liked it, and it was very easy to talk about that. (T1)*

Presentations were considered an effective way to develop students' knowledge about other countries and promote their speaking skills. A series of presentations were delivered about the home cultures of the different participants. The activity seemed to give students a chance to learn about new cultures and discover their differences and similarities. One of the reasons to include presentations in the lessons was to encourage students to be more active in the classroom:

*The presentation was a way for them [the students] to speak up during the lesson, to encourage them to speak up hopefully in other classes as well. (T7)*

*The aim of the presentations is that I do not think the teacher should take up all the ninety minutes of speaking time. It is much better to share it with the students. (T2)*

This was supported by the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), which showed that presentations were effective because students enjoyed talking about and delivering their topics, sometimes even surpassing the allocated time. When interviewing T7, he acknowledged that the presenters did not respect the time assigned for the presentation (i.e., 20 minutes); however, the tutor did not attempt to stop them, stressing that their students appeared to enjoy the task. Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students) showed that the interviewed students had mixed feelings about the presentations. Gint11S3, an Erasmus student who took the course "American popular culture (B)", perceived the presentations as "useful". She commented that

*it was not something that was done very often in my country.*

It can be assumed that this student enjoyed the presentations since they represented a novel activity for her. Other interviewees complained about the lack of PPT in the presentations. The interviewee Gint1S1 emphasized the importance of using PPT slides when presenting:

*Presentations can get quite boring in a really short time without PowerPoint presentation.*

Gint1S3 also recommended the use of PPT presentations alongside handouts:

*I would encourage the slideshows. When there is a slideshow, I can actually pay attention, even though there was a handout.*

A similar result was found in the study of Menyhei (2016), in which the students complained about a lack of PowerPoint presentations.

Peer teaching was also considered as a good practice as students were encouraged to include cultural and intercultural content in their teaching sessions. Students in the teacher training programme also had to conduct teaching practice in Hungarian secondary schools. Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that the students appreciated peer teaching: it was noted that students were more engaged and paid more attention when their classmates were presenting their topics or explaining the activities. In the course “Challenging stereotypes”, T9 explained that they

*[were] encouraged to select different aspects from the readings and give meaningful tasks in 20 minutes to the rest of the class that may be applicable or could come in handy, in a secondary school classroom as well.*

Other good practices identified by the course tutors were also appreciated by the interviewed students, as will be mentioned in detail in Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students). One of these practices included the presentations and explanations of objects or photos representing the students’ own cultures. Considering Barrett and his colleagues (2014) as a point of reference, this activity potentially contributed to raising students’ awareness of their own culture and provided an opportunity to see how the students perceived their own countries. The task also seemed to develop students’ awareness of other cultures and enhance their understanding of cultural diversity as students learned about aspects of each other’s cultures. This was affirmed by the interviewed students, who commented that they learned from one another. Another positive feature was role-plays. T5 explained their significance:

*Just to make students imagine that they are in someone else’s shoes, in someone else’s life and customs. (T5)*

The use of role-plays was also appreciated by the interviewed students. For instance, the student Gint2S1 commented that

*I like the role play we did in which a group presented Trump while the other group presented the Swedish activist.*

As previously mentioned, most of the course tutors followed an experiential teaching approach. For instance, T1 and T3 relied on students' accounts of their own experiences during activities such as discussing intercultural clashes. Using different platforms, the tutors asked the students to share examples of successful and unsuccessful intercultural interactions. This could help the students become more knowledgeable about the beliefs and practices of various cultures. Also, students who listened or read about these intercultural clashes seemed to become aware of the fact that people from different cultures have different verbal and non-verbal ways of communication. Even though this was not directly addressed in class, this nonetheless was able to make students more curious about other cultures and willing to question their own practices and behaviours which might have been taken for granted.

Another good practice was identified by the interviewed course tutors and students was considering the students' needs. T7 asked the students to fill out a questionnaire at the end of the semester regarding what topics they would like to learn more about. Their responses showed a diverse interest in American culture, including literature, cultural issues, politics, and ethnic studies. Such practices were beneficial as they seemed to help tutors meet the needs and address the interests of their students. This was supported by the interviewees, who highlighted that the tutor paid ample attention to the students' interests and preferences.

Furthermore, the tutors appreciated other features that were not necessarily related to the development of their students' IC. These features could be applied to classes with different content focuses, including cultural and intercultural content. These features are listed as follows:

- The use of task sheets to accompany each reading assignment to facilitate students' understanding of the readings.
- A five to ten minutes review to check what the students remember from the week before.
- A concept test in the middle or towards the end of the course that encourages students to familiarise themselves with topics discussed throughout the course.
- Follow-up discussions after video viewing.

#### 4.4.5 Challenges

The tutors faced various challenges when integrating IC development into their teaching practice. One of the recurrent obstacles was students' reluctance to read long texts. This finding was also reported by Holló (2017). Many of the interviewed tutors also reported difficulties in keeping their students interested and motivated. Student motivation was also an issue that arose in Lázár (2011) and Sercu and her colleagues (2005). T7 complained about a lack of in-depth interest from the students:

*Individuals select the course they are interested in, but generally, due to the popular culture of the US, I think 50% or 60% of them are interested in it, but it is not really an in-depth interest. By in-depth interest, I mean that the students have a generalised perception of America based on the media sources they follow. They do not go into detail when dealing with the course topics, analysing the cultural, social, ethnic, economic, or political aspects and their modern ramifications.*

When speculating on the reasons for this lack of interest, the tutors proposed solutions such as using updated materials, watching films, and providing students with guiding questions.

The results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that the students in some courses were not willing to communicate despite the tutors' effort to encourage them to speak. This could perhaps be explained by the varying English language levels of the students or their introverted personalities. One of the ways to motivate learners to talk was to assign

them presentations. However, T7 complained about the fact that the students did not respect the time allotted for presentations, stating that

*they are not sure about giving a presentation, keeping to the time limit, and it takes away much time from the class.*

Other tutors used different approaches, such as pair or group work. This proved to be useful, as shy students were more comfortable sharing their ideas with a few people than with the whole class.

Other difficulties mentioned by the instructors were linked to the development of students' IC, such as allocating more time to teach culture. In all of the observed courses, the content was mainly cultural or intercultural. However, in the course "British culture", which primarily aimed to develop students' knowledge about British culture, T4 mentioned that more time should have been devoted on the cultural aspects instead of focusing on language development; such views were also supported by the classroom observations:

*Maybe spend a little more time on the cultural aspects in place of the language activities and develop their knowledge. Instead of spending fifty minutes on language exercises, maybe instead of that, 30 minutes on language and then 60 minutes on culture. (T4)*

The students did not place high value on the language focus activities, stressing that they would rather learn more about the daily life of British people than learning about the language. Although T4 expressed the importance of developing students' cultural and intercultural awareness, they allocated more time to teaching the English language than culture.

Another obstacle identified in the course "Communicating across cultures" was the difficulty associated with creating a sense of community in the classroom. Achieving this course objective was challenging since many of the course participants did not attend the same seminars and lectures. However, at the end of the course, T3 fulfilled this aim, recalling that

*the international and Hungarian students started mingling a bit after class or are coming in together, chatting a little bit or going off together.*

The results also suggested that difficulties were experienced in regard to intercultural collaboration in the course “EFL for intercultural competence”. The main cause of these problems, as expressed by T5, was insufficient planning due to time constraint. During the implementation of the previously mentioned online project with Israeli students the tutor faced certain problems, such as the time difference between the two countries and how the courses fit into their timetables. Another problem identified was long delays in communication. The Hungarian students did not answer the other students for a week, which was demotivating for everyone involved in the project. This course seemed to contribute to the development of the actions component of Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model (i.e., looking for opportunities to interact with people from other cultures). Although the observation of this course did not last until the end of the term, these problems, along with the short duration of this project, may have had a negative impact on the development of students’ intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills. For example, the prolonged communication gaps could have discouraged students from learning from and about people from different cultures or may have limited their understanding of the internal diversity of this cultural group.

The findings also suggested other difficulties related to student practices and pedagogical issues arising from cultural differences. The challenges identified were partly in agreement with those obtained from previous studies, such lack of time, class size, and the varying levels of English language proficiency. Many of the tutors also mentioned that plagiarism occurred in student essays, which can be explained by low levels of English language proficiency among some students. T1 commented that

*there was either one or maybe two other students whose papers were problematic, but those two rewrote them in a way that I could finally give them a mark at the end of the term, but how this young man got into the programme, I have no idea. If you look at them, my course descriptions always have a warning about plagiarism, and I always also tell them about this. It is actually an interesting thing because I usually have a very*



*detailed course description that I give out, and it turns out that a lot of students do not read them. (T1)*

Only the tutor of “American popular culture (B)” acknowledged that it was challenging to encourage students to become more independent. The tutor in question attempted to promote autonomy and creativity among the students by having them choose readings and presentation topics; however, students showed a negative reaction to this decision. Study 6 (i.e., the group interviews with the students) showed that the participants were uncomfortable with the teaching approach and the lack of strict instructions. Interestingly, in another course which is “Intercultural communication” all the participants valued the fact they were given the freedom to choose the topics for their presentations. The attitude of the participants in “American popular culture (B)” could be explained by the fact that they had not yet reached a stage in their academic development where they were ready for independent work. Although the tutor aimed to make the course more student-centred, the interviewees were not fond of the approach, suggesting more guidance:

*[...] if the teacher gave some input and then students provided some input as well and maybe there will be better, I believe the teacher could do more. [...] but he did not give any information like we normally do in classes such as an introduction to each topic. (Gint11S4)*

#### **4.4.6 Summary**

Study 4 contributed to answering three research questions (i.e., RQ 2, RQ 3, RQ 5) from the perspectives of the course tutors.

RQ 2: What are the considerations behind the inclusion of intercultural competence development in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university?

The findings of this study present the tutors’ reasons for including IC development in their English language courses. The course aims reflected the tutors’ views about the importance of

promoting students' IC. Specifically, these aims were to develop students' knowledge about the target cultures (i.e., British culture, American culture, and Australian culture) and their own cultures, their intercultural skills, and the actions component of IC suggested by Barrett and his colleagues (2014). One tutor wanted to help students create their own voice instead of imitating native speakers, which is important for successful intercultural interactions. Another aim that was mentioned was the creation of opportunities for students to interact with different cultures, which aligns with the actions component proposed by Barrett and his colleagues (2014). These aims suggest that the tutors found it crucial for students to look beyond culture at the surface level. Furthermore, the tutors wanted students to develop the capacity to question the stereotypes that they hold and develop an awareness of cultural diversity through discussing different cultures. Moreover, courses in the teacher training programme aimed to boost teacher trainees' skills in implementing IC development in their future courses.

Study 4 also provided answers to RQ 3, which investigated the ways in which the observed tutors of classes with cultural and intercultural content view the value of their courses. The results of the interviews with the tutors indicated that they valued the development of their students' IC. This was further confirmed by their classroom practices, which reflected their commitment to incorporating the promotion of IC in their courses. It was found that the tutors included cultural and intercultural aspects in their lessons; for example, in their courses, many tutors integrated aspects of both small c culture and big C culture (i.e., the cultures of English-speaking countries and students' countries, stereotypes, and intercultural experience). Furthermore, in many courses students' home cultures were compared to British or American culture, which seemed to raise their awareness of cultural multiplicity. Students at this level of education were expected to be able to discuss underlying cultural values. This seemed to help them understand that the way people behave in a given culture can be explained by hidden

variables. By gaining a better understanding of the underlying values and meanings that shape behaviors and actions, students could become more tolerant to unexpected behaviors.

The tutors used various materials to implement IC development in their lessons, including textbooks and videos. The use of supplementary materials such as authentic items from the target culture(s) reflected the positive views of the tutors towards contributing to the IC development of the students in their courses. For instance, many tutors utilized cultural products from the target culture, such as poems and plays written by Australian Aboriginals. These materials could contribute to the development of students' knowledge about the target culture, and in this specific example it gave students the opportunity to understand Australian history from the perspectives of Australian Aborigines.

The activities used by the course tutors included role-plays, discussions, and debates through which they explored issues related to the target culture(s). These interactive tasks seemed to help the students understand other cultural perspectives, which consequently could encourage them to become more open and show more acceptance of different behaviours through experiencing behaviours other than their own. Among these activities, the course tutors had their students share an object or photo representing their culture to the class in order to facilitate discussion and understanding of different cultures. According to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, this particular activity could promote various aspects of IC. These include 1.) developing awareness of one's own culture through deciding on a culturally characteristic item, 2.) enhancing other students' knowledge about unfamiliar cultures and 3.) encouraging discussion on cultural differences and similarities.

This study also investigated the impact of the cultural and intercultural content on English major students as reflected in RQ 5. The results of Study 4 showed that the inclusion of different aspects of IC through the various activities and materials chosen by the tutors could lead to the promotion of students' intercultural attitudes, such as openness and the willingness

to challenge their existing stereotypes through learning about the underlying values that shape behaviours. On many occasions, the intercultural clashes that students shared encouraged them to think about their own and others' behaviour and explain intercultural situations objectively. Moreover, through learning about these incidents other students appeared to develop the skills needed to behave appropriately and effectively with people from a given culture by listening carefully and attempting to determine the root of the misunderstanding. This intercultural content enhanced students' knowledge of cultural diversity, which had the potential to promote their intercultural multiperspectivity as well as their skills in interpreting cultural practices. Furthermore, the tutors emphasised that drawing cultural comparisons could increase the students' knowledge of various cultures. This was not limited to English-speaking cultures, but also the cultures of the students such as Japan, Albania, Turkey, as well as other cultures. The integration of these aspects of IC development was particularly significant in English major programmes for a number of reasons. Many of those who graduate the programme in question will be English language and culture tutors, and will have the opportunity to include culture and IC in their classes. Others may go on to work for corporations, which in today's world are oftentimes characterized by internationalism, meaning that workers in these companies will likely have to communicate in a multicultural setting.

#### **4.5 Study 5: Semi-structured interviews with the programme leaders**

The programme leaders were asked about their views on incorporating IC development into the different English major programmes. It is worth mentioning that the leaders who were interviewed were involved in coordinating programmes with varying scopes, including teacher training, English language education, and English linguistics, among others. Codes are used to identify the interviewees: the programme leaders will be referred to by the acronym PL followed by a number for identification.

#### 4.5.1 Factors behind the importance of IC development in English language programmes

The integration of IC in the different English programmes was encouraged by the programme leaders for several reasons, including the development of different aspects of IC, interactional purposes, and international experiences.

Being interculturally competent was one of the reasons the development of students' IC was valued in the programmes. PL7, PL9, and PL11 emphasized the significance of developing students' attitudes of tolerance and acceptance of people from other cultures, while PL9 underlined the development of negotiating skills:

*It is important that people are tolerant and understand that there are all sorts of different people with different views. (PL7)*

*[...] intercultural studies facilitate communication, tolerance, openness and asking questions, and entering discussion instead of just hating. [...] We tend to be blind to our own culture... Cultural difference is a fundamentally important tool to raise self-awareness to further self-reflexivity. (PL9)*

*We can see that a lot of countries are not opening up to the world, and accepting diversity and different cultures and different nationalities, but rather closing up and then concentrating on the national value and emphasizing nationality above other nations. I think that from this perspective, there is a very big responsibility to promote interculturality, accepting others, not judging the other people (PL11)*

*I think it is very important [...] especially future teachers to be open and accepting and non-judgment, and to be able to shed light on the importance of this in the eyes of their students, not only just to know about it, but to actually practice it. (PLA)*

These comments seemed to express the programme leaders' desire to promote intercultural attitudes among the students such as tolerance, respect, openness, and acceptance of other cultures with reference to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model. They also elaborated on raising students' awareness of different cultures as well as enhancing skills of discovery and negotiation through "asking questions" (PL9). A similar finding was also reported by Amery (2021), indicating the importance that programme leaders attached to the development of students' IC. This result was further supported by Bachner's (2001) study, in which as the Dean of Global Studies and project director he highlighted, the importance of developing students'

general skills, such as skills related to the discovery and learning of new cultural phenomena. Promoting these skills was more effective, showing a more significant impact on students' IC and consequently better ensuring successful intercultural interactions. It is worth noting that these aims can be considered to be realistic as it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop students' knowledge about every country and teach them how to behave with people from every culture.

Integrating IC development into the English language programmes was justified by its role in ensuring successful intercultural interactions. As indicated by PL3 and PL4, interaction with people from different cultures requires more than being familiar with aspects of big C culture, such as literature, grammar, and vocabulary:

*Because I saw through my own experience how important it is to be aware of culture, to have IC, because it is not enough to be able to analyse a play by Shakespeare. It's not enough to know all the old English forms of this or that word. It's not enough even to have a fantastic vocabulary, even up to date vocabulary or good grammar. It is simply not enough in order to be able to really engage in a meaningful conversation with people, in order to understand what is going on in another society. You just have to have cultural competence and intercultural competence. (PL3)*

*[...] I was a teacher with a degree ready to teach. I went to the US for three months, not for the first time in my life, but for the first time alone. [...] I had a very bad case of culture shock, and that shed light on the fact that it is not enough to know a lot about English grammar and applied linguistics and history and literature, but something was missing, and then slowly I became interested in what exactly I was missing in the US. (PL4)*

Another reason that the programme leaders identified regarding the importance of IC integration in the English major programmes was the cultivation of an international atmosphere on campus. Introducing students to IC content is an opportunity to better integrate international students. As PL10 and PL5 stated

*I think it is important for its own sake, but it is also important because we have got quite a number of international students. So basically, we cannot avoid including it because we've got a real-life presence of interculturality in the classrooms (PL10)*

*approximately, one tenth of our students come from outside of Hungary, I think it is a big advantage that all our classes are offered in English. So, if you compare this to other tracks at faculties. For example, if an international student studies History at the faculty, then, the specific courses offered for them in English, but typically those are taken by international students only, so, they will not be integrated into the training. As compared to the ancient American studies here, we do not want to offer courses just for international students. So, our aim is to integrate them. (PL5)*

PL10 mentioned the presence of students from other cultures in the classroom as a reason to implement cultural and intercultural content. International students bring an atmosphere of interculturality into the classroom, which can motivate students to learn about other cultures. Furthermore, diverse classrooms create opportunities for drawing comparisons between different cultures and discussing how students from different cultures perceive the same phenomena. However, this does not present the only reason to develop students' IC, as cultural groups are not homogenous and are characterized by a range of cultural variety. Therefore, it is important to promote students IC even in a "homogeneous" classroom.

Overall, the different responses appeared to reflect the fact that IC was a part of the mindset of programme leaders despite their different areas of interest. The results did not correspond with Holló's (2017) findings, which revealed some educational managers believed that the students' IC could be developed through socialising. Furthermore, the findings of the present research are in contrast to the results obtained by Salem (2012), which suggest that the head of the division of the English Programme at the university and the coordinator of the Intensive English Programme courses argued that the main aim of English language courses was to develop students' English language proficiency. That said, in the Tunisian educational context, it was reported that English language policymakers and curriculum designers supported the incorporation of cultural content in ELT (Abid & Moalla, 2019; Hermessi, 2017). However, the students were not regularly exposed to such cultural components in their language teaching curricula (Hermessi, 2017). The discrepancy between the views of policymakers and

the reality of the teaching culture could be explained by a lack of awareness of the need to develop students' IC.

#### **4.5.2 Is IC development integrated in all the English language programmes?**

Although the programme leaders voiced the importance of developing students' IC, the findings also revealed that not all of the programme leaders included the promotion of students' IC in the aims of the different educational programmes they were responsible for. This could be expected as different programmes focus on the development of different competencies. It was found that courses with cultural and intercultural content were designed only in some of the English departments. The aims of different departments are quoted in their words below:

*The main aim of the programme is [...] to prepare students in a flexible way to approach foreign language teaching. (PL11)*

*To prepare future language teachers for real-life teaching. (PL2)*

*The aim of an English degree is to let students do whatever they like afterwards, to be journalists, to be literary gentle people, some of them become linguists. (PL7)*

Although the established aims of the different programmes, such as promoting students' skills as future journalists or developing their skills as language tutors, are understandable, it can also be argued that students can benefit from IC regardless of what field they are working in. In the examples of journalists and language tutors, the acquisition of IC can be justified for both: Firstly, journalists often interact with people from various cultural backgrounds, and having intercultural attitudes and skills can be seen as prerequisites for journalism. Secondly, language tutors usually present and describe the target culture when teaching their students the target language.

#### **4.5.3 The integration of IC content into the programmes**

All the programme leaders agreed that the university encourages courses with cultural and intercultural content. PL5 expressed the following:



*I think our department is open towards teaching culture and intercultural communication. I think there are research projects about cross-cultural issues and gender studies. I think we are lucky to have very few constraints, and we can teach and research any of these issues. (PL5)*

The excerpt above suggests an acknowledgment of the need to be aware of cultural diversity and the importance of interculturally competent graduates. The department itself aims to create a favourable international environment for its students, as evidenced by the following anti-discrimination statement written on the website of the department of English Language Pedagogy which expresses respect for diverse ethnic groups and nationalities:

*The staff of the Department of English Language Pedagogy are fully committed both to promoting freedom of expression and to respecting the rights and dignity of all people regardless of their ethnic or socio-cultural background, gender, religion, beliefs, or sexual orientation. As we consider diversity beneficial and respectful communication essential, we expect the same commitment from our students in their discourse and behaviour.*

This was further supported by the considerable number of international students accepted into the programme and the continuous efforts made by tutors to help them integrate into the Hungarian educational system and society at large, as well as the efforts to create friendly relations between the international and Hungarian students. This was best reflected in the Spring festival organized by the university on a yearly basis. In addition, a HELP programme was launched to provide academic support to international students. At the time of the interview with the Dean's Commissioner for international students, there was a plan to create a "Study App" to help students "*with translation or some administrative issues*" (PL8).

When programme leaders were asked about the integration of IC content into the different English programmes, most of them revealed that it was included implicitly. It was, however, presented explicitly in courses focusing specifically on intercultural content. Their views are quoted below:

*It is always taught implicitly. [...] Explicitly, I would say that it is done in the courses which are designed to teach cultural history, some aspects of cultural history. (PL6)*

*It is taught explicitly, so they have one of the courses assigned as an intercultural competence course for them [...]. I love the diversity of these classes, and I always rely on their own experience. (PL11)*

*It aims to develop students' awareness and deepen students' understanding of cultural differences and understand the different levels of intercultural communication and how those can be researched. (PL3)*

The programme leaders highlighted the need to develop students' IC; however, it was included explicitly only in the departments that aimed to raise students' awareness of English-speaking cultures and in culture-specific courses. The results were partly in line with Holló's (2017) findings that showed that three out of the four interviewed programme leaders argued that there was no need for the explicit inclusion of IC development in English major courses. The development of students' IC includes showing them how different mindsets and values can influence their intercultural interactions. Therefore, it would not have been enough to simply include interculturality implicitly.

#### **4.5.4 Limitations to the integration of IC development in the programmes**

All the participating programme leaders agreed that it is the course tutor who decides on the content and themes to be addressed in their courses. This means that courses with cultural and intercultural content were designed by the tutors, as they were "*much freer at university*" (PL8). Some of them reported facing some constraints when implementing IC development; for example, they underlined the disinterest of teacher trainees in learning about small c culture.

PL1 commented that

*big C culture is a natural part of a language teachers' education. I think that maybe the small c culture is less accepted as the students feel that this is not their job. They are going to teach grammar. (PL1)*

This was not supported by the students interviewed from the teacher training programme, who expressed the importance of learning about both big C and small c culture in developing their future students' IC. They also referred to the traditional approach to higher education in the humanities. PL3 explained that

*[...] they go for classical approaches in what they teach at the Faculty of Humanities, Literature, History, Linguistics, maybe in modernized versions, but they very rarely think outside this framework. (PL3)*

This suggests that the current teaching approach needs to be updated, as the interviewed students acknowledged the significance of IC development. Although the traditional approach could develop students' awareness of big C culture, it would not contribute to students' IC development in relation to values, underlying meanings, and different cultural perspectives. They also identified the lack of motivation from tutors to implement IC development in their courses. As PL4 said,

*I do not think everybody is keen on teaching culture or intercultural communication. In this sense, the constraint is the personal beliefs of the teacher educator. (PL4)*

PL1 emphasized the role of language tutors in raising students' awareness of cultural diversity:

*I think it is an inevitable part of becoming a teacher to have this approach of interculturality. I feel that a language teacher has more opportunities to do that than any other subject matter teacher. (PL1)*

This was consistent with the studies of Holló and Lázár (1999) and Medgyes (2017), which suggested that IC elements could be introduced and incorporated in language courses. As culture and language are interrelated, language teaching easily lends itself to the teaching of content.

#### **4.5.5 The shift in the implementation of IC development in the English language programme**

In comparing how culture has been incorporated into language courses over the years, the programme leaders agreed overall that in the past the main focus of cultural learning was placed on big C culture. The comments below highlight this as well:

*Culture was essentially history, literature, and anything related to the big C culture. Now, small c culture is there definitely. Intercultural competence as a word did not exist. (PL12)*

*Famous people, history, literature, theatre, but nothing about behaviour culture or how to get along, how to communicate in France or the US or the UK. (PL4)*

However, in the last few years there has been a growing awareness in Hungary that students need to learn not only about cultural artefacts and products but also about underlying cultural beliefs in order to be able to engage in successful intercultural interactions. This was explained by the fact that Hungary is now welcoming hundreds of students from different cultural backgrounds, and as such teaching both local and foreign students about small c culture can benefit both parties. Learning solely about big C culture was not useful as it did not help people engage in meaningful conversations. This was supported by the results of Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors), which showed that in the teacher training programme, the tutors aimed to develop students' knowledge about

*ways of addressing, as well as reinterpreting cultural knowledge, cultural phenomena that may apply to different classrooms. (T9)*

Continued globalisation fuelled by activities such as travelling, the use of the Internet and social media, and immigration highlights the importance of educating interculturally competent people as interactions between people from different cultures becomes more commonplace:

*I saw through my own experience how important it is to be aware of culture, to have intercultural competence because it is not enough to be able to analyse a play by Shakespeare. It is not enough to know all the old English forms of this or that word. It is not enough even to have a fantastic vocabulary or good grammar. It is simply not enough to be able to engage in a meaningful conversation with people to understand what is going on in another society. (PL3)*

#### **4.5.6 The impact of the implementation of IC content on the development of students' IC**

The participants mentioned that the inclusion of cultural and intercultural content in the teacher training programme resulted in pre-service tutors who could incorporate IC development into their teaching practice. This was expressed by PL11, who observed the teaching practice of future English language tutors:

*I was responsible for their teaching practice. [...] The International Institute offered us that we can do the teaching practice with their students. I was helping my students to prepare the lessons. It always starts with the needs of the students, how we teach and what we teach, then, we shape our activities or the teaching around these students, and most of them are Asian. So, for example, the first lesson started with the big world map in Zoom, and everybody had to pin the location where they lived. [...] We did try a lot of intercultural things about eating, about habits. (PL11)*

This finding showed that students did not only learn about IC but also practised it. Although in the example provided above there was no detailed explanation of how eating was approached, it reflected the importance that pre-service tutors attached to integrating cultural content in their language courses. Other programme leaders expressed their hopes about the impact of the integration of IC promotion in their programmes. Considering the subsequent comments, the aspects of IC aimed to be developed were understanding the diversity of a given cultural group, developing one's awareness about other cultures, and achieving multiperspectivity.

*When the students come to us, they have this very traditional view of society. So, I still have to emphasize that there is no such thing as a homogeneous society even in Hungary. Sometimes when you talk about other varieties of Hungarian, other ethnic minorities, we have a big Romani minority and often forget about it. I think it is something that they need to know about, that they should be valued members of our society. So, especially these days in Hungary, teaching these values is very important. These values should be valued by society. (PL12)*

*International students very often appreciate learning about other cultures not only Hungarian but also learn with students from other countries. (PL5)*

*To be able to take the approach of looking at things from different perspectives [...] this is more like an awareness-raising process partly awareness-raising and partly deepening the understanding of cultural differences and the different levels of cultural differences so that students should be able to recognize these [...] give them ways of thinking that will help them to learn to understand the culture more, to make them more independent thinkers, and to make them inquisitive about things that they see. (PL3)*

The programme leaders held positive views towards implementing IC development in their programmes. Their answers shed light on the three promoted aspects of IC: intercultural attitudes, intercultural knowledge, and intercultural skills. Based on their answers, the implementation of IC content was useful in helping students acquire the skills needed to interact

with people from different cultures. In addition, the importance of encouraging students to value cultural diversity and be critical thinkers were also mentioned by many programme leaders. However, it can be difficult to reach conclusive answers as to whether students' IC was developed. Nevertheless, as most of the programme leaders stated, it is hoped that these aspects are able to be developed among students.

#### **4.5.7 Summary**

Study 5 provides answers to RQ 2 by investigating the reasons given by programme leaders for including cultural and intercultural courses in the English major programmes. The semi-structured interviews with the programme leaders indicated that they all articulated the importance of promoting IC in the English major programmes. They acknowledged the need to include intercultural content in the programme courses to develop students' IC (e.g., tolerance, openness, and skills of negotiating) and facilitate interaction between people from different cultures. They also referred to the international atmosphere on campus and helping students to have successful intercultural interactions. Highlighting the reasons above showed that the programme leaders were aware of the importance of IC. It was also found that the university supported culture and intercultural courses. This was best seen on the website of the Department of English Language Pedagogy of the university in question, a statement was written to ensure that employees in this department respected others regardless of their cultural background. This was also reflected in the growing number of international students applying to this university. Furthermore, many courses with cultural and intercultural content were taught at different levels, namely the teacher training programme and at BA, MA, and PhD levels. It can be concluded that those interviewed believed that having interculturally competent graduates was valuable in general.

This study also aimed to shed light on the influence of the implementation of cultural and intercultural courses on students' IC from the perspectives of programme leaders by

answering RQ 5. The interviews with the programme leaders showed that the inclusion of courses with cultural and intercultural content raised pre-service tutors' knowledge on how to integrate interculturality into their own future courses. This was supported by a programme leader who observed how this knowledge was manifested in the students' teaching practice. Other programme leaders expressed their hopes that the integration of interculturality into the different programmes would contribute to the development of students' IC. As the development of IC is a long process, it was difficult to determine the impact that the programmes efforts had on the students, and one programme could not develop all aspects of IC. Therefore, the findings suggested that their aim was to raise students' understanding of cultural diversity and multiperspectivity. They also sought to enhance students' critical evaluation capacities in order for them to acquire further intercultural skills. In addition, they referred to the development of students' intercultural attitudes, including openness and tolerance. It was stated that these aspects were addressed explicitly in some English programmes, specifically in those courses which contained intercultural content. Since these facets of culture were addressed explicitly, it could be assumed that students experienced development in regard to these aspects.

#### **4.6 Study 6: Group interviews with the students**

In order to put the tutors' perceptions about the courses into perspective, the students' views were also examined by means of group interviews involving one to five course participants. The results are grouped as follows: reasons for choosing the courses and their features. They also expressed their views about what they liked and disliked with regards to the topics, activities, and materials included. Codes are used to identify the interviewed students: Gint stands for "group interview" and is followed by the number of the group; S stands for "student" and is followed by a number used to identify the specific student in the group, for example, Gint11S1 stands for Student 1 in group 11.

#### 4.6.1 Reasons for choosing the courses

The interviewees reported different reasons for joining the courses containing cultural and intercultural content. One of the reasons was that some of courses were compulsory. For the two “American popular culture” courses, most respondents stated that it was compulsory to complete them as it was required for students majoring in American studies. However, this did not apply to visiting Erasmus students who had more freedom to choose their courses. Gint11S1, an Erasmus student who took the course “American popular culture (B)”, expressed that she “*is interested in pop culture*” and was writing her MA thesis on popular culture at her home university in France.

The personality of the tutor was another reason to choose a certain course. Students from the BA, MA, and teacher training programme participating in the courses “Communicating across cultures”, “Australian Aboriginal issues”, “Skills for intercultural communication”, and “Challenging stereotypes” held positive attitudes for the classes, stating that they enjoyed the courses because of the tutor’s personality. For instance, two students had chosen to take the course “Communicating across cultures” because they already knew the tutor; thus, they had certain expectations about the course and some ideas of how it would be taught in terms of its methodology. This was supported by Gint7S1, who stated that

*[...] I knew that he is a kind person. (Gint7S1)*

This finding was in line with Menyhei’s (2016) study, which identified tutor personality as a factor contributing to students’ enjoyment of a course.

For students, course content was another influence on deciding whether to take part in a course. There was a general agreement among the interviewees in the BA and teacher training programmes that the course content motivated them to participate in the following courses: “Intercultural communication” and “Australia through documentaries”, “British culture”, and



“American culture”. The interviewees discussed their interest in learning about culture and interculturality:

*I have chosen this course and have taken similar courses before because I enjoy the content you learn about people and different cultures. (Gint10S2)*

*I wanted to learn more about Australia. (Gint1S2)*

According to Barrett and his colleagues’ model (2014), this result shows that the interviewees were aware of cultural diversity and expressed their willingness to learn about other cultures. It could be assumed that the students’ cultural knowledge was somewhat developed even before participating in the observed courses. This was supported by the interviewed tutors, who argued that promoting students’ IC is a long process and requires more than one culture-focused course. The interviewees’ motivation and desire to know more about a culture appeared to play a crucial role in raising their awareness about a given culture and further developing their intercultural skills.

The course content was also identified as a motive by doctoral students who took part in the “Language education for intercultural competence development” course. Similar courses at this level were designed to match the interest of students. The course in question was mainly designed for doctoral students whose research focus was on IC. In this regard, Gint3S1 and Gint3S2 said the following:

*I chose this course because it is about my research topic IC, to learn more how to teach IC and how to raise cultural diversity awareness in English classes. (Gint3S1)*

*IC is one of my main concerns in my dissertation because in my country [Brazil], specifically, in my state, we have lots of black people who have their own music, and it is very difficult for them to express their culture. They want to express the culture through music. Music is to affirm and valorise their identity. So, I want to understand how ICC can be used. I would like to use music as a tool to affirm identity. (Gint3S2)*

In this course, the students shared and compared different aspects of their home cultures as discussed in Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations). The discussions they had seemed to develop their awareness of how speakers from different cultures interact and how different

interpretations can be derived from the same event. For instance, the Turkish student spoke proudly of the Turkish occupation of Hungary, while the course tutor presented the negative impacts that Hungarian people at the time experienced. After this exchange, the student became more aware of how to express her opinions about the Ottoman conquest of Hungary. The intercultural content discussed in the course “Language education for intercultural competence development” seemed to develop students’ multiperspectivity and ability to take other perspectives into account when interpreting events or behaviour.

The timetable was another important factor in choosing a course. Some respondents explained that they registered for a course simply because it matched their schedules. Several interviewees indicated that they participated in a given course because

*[it] fitted in the schedule. (Gint2S2, Gint8S2)*

## **4.6.2 Features**

The interviewees had mixed views of the courses. Some courses were criticised, with the interviewees suggesting practices which could make the courses more interesting and engaging for students. Other courses received positive evaluations from the students. The following sections present and examine both the positive and negative aspects of different courses according to the interviewed students.

### **4.6.2.1 Positive features**

One of the aspects of the courses which received praise from the students was the use of online platforms. For instance, the course “Australia through documentaries” was held online; the tutor used the platform Zoom, through which it was possible to divide the groups into pairs or small groups to discuss their ideas. The interviewee Gint1S2 expressed her appreciation of the use of breakout rooms to encourage students to speak. She recalled that

*the teacher had these breakout rooms. I enjoyed that. I think that lifted the anxiety that many people had of not speaking up. (Gint1S2)*

Some course tutors complained about the students' unwillingness to communicate and participate in class. The use of breakout rooms through online learning platforms encouraged learners to share and discuss their ideas with their group members and consequently seemed to develop their language proficiency, which is considered as a component of IC.

Another feature that received positive feedback was the tutor's own IC and their knowledge about Australian culture. For example, an interviewee appreciated that the tutor raised their awareness of certain racist notions and terms that the student had unintentionally used in class, such as the term Abos for Aboriginal people. Gint1S1 stated that

*[...] there were occasions during which I used phrases I did not know were racist, and I used them unconsciously. Instead of Aborigines, I used Abos in my notes, and [the tutor] mentioned that I should not use it because it is racist, and I had no idea. (Gint1S1)*

This finding highlights the importance for English language tutors to be interculturally competent or at least well-informed about the cultures that they teach about as this could have a direct impact on the development of interviewees' IC, such as in the case of raising their knowledge about racist notions as mentioned by (Gint1S1). With reference to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, the IC of the tutor was able to assist the student in enhancing their sociolinguistic competence and, consequently, avoiding the use of terms that could lead to potential misunderstandings during intercultural interactions.

Having a native English speaker as a tutor was another aspect that was viewed positively by the respondents. The interviewees who took part in the course "British culture" referred to the fact that the tutor's British nationality made the course seem more "authentic" (Gint8S4). Gint8S3 described the impact of having a native speaker of English as a course tutor, saying that on several occasions he drew comparisons between British culture and Hungarian culture. This was further reinforced by the findings of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations). In

class, they examined how the topic of homosexuality is viewed in both countries. It was maintained that in the UK, people are more accepting and supportive of same-sex relationships, while less so the case in Hungary. Having a native English-speaking tutor provided the participants with an opportunity to compare the two cultures and learn more about their similarities and differences.

The use of authentic materials and student-centred teaching approaches were highly appreciated by the students. For example, in the course “Australian Aboriginal issues” the respondents were particularly fond of this course due to the authentic Australian materials used in class. Using supplementary materials from the target culture could enhance participants’ knowledge about the products of a given cultural context. The course tutor encouraged learning through exploration, which could cultivate the interviewees’ curiosity to learn more about the culture in question. Moreover, there was broad agreement among the four interviewees that the tutor showed interest in the students’ opinions regarding the topics they had discussed. The tutors’ teaching approach could be described as student-centred; Gint4S1 indicated that

*this teacher is so different in a good way that she does not want to hear her own voice, so she lets us talk. She is genuinely interested in our opinion, and because we see she is interested, we have the courage to talk and, in that way, we learn more.*

This was further supported by the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), which showed that the students spent more time talking than their tutors. This was not observed in all of the courses, which could explain why some interviewees were not satisfied with courses in which the tutors dominated the classroom discourse. On some occasions, the tutors did not consider the students’ differing opinions. Based on this result, it could be concluded that the participants enjoyed sharing their views and preferred that the tutor act as a facilitator.

Another positive feature from the students’ perspective was the international atmosphere. The interviewed BA students who took the course “Intercultural communication” reported that the main reason behind their enjoyment of the course was its international

atmosphere, as there were students from a variety of countries such as Hungary, Turkey, Japan, Kazakhstan, Ireland, and Albania. This diversity provided them with the chance to compare different cultural aspects. Studying in an international atmosphere could result in an increased tolerance of ambiguous situations and openness towards and acceptance of other people as students are in direct contact with those from different cultures. Moreover, this opportunity could encourage them to learn from each other. The actions component of Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model was aimed to be enhanced through pair and group work, particularly through collaboration with people from various cultures. This finding was also reported by Brooks-Lewis (2014) in which a multicultural classroom environment raised students' awareness of cultural diversity and promoted attitudes of openness.

The flexibility of the tutor in regard to presentation topics was also raised as a favourable feature in the course "Intercultural communication". The interviewees recalled that they were free to choose the subject of their presentations. Gint10S3 stated that

*[...] when we shared our topics, some people had group culture, some people had corporate cultures, national cultures, and it was not supposed to be only our country's cultures. It was supposed to be something else. But the teacher was very flexible. (Gint10S3)*

Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that most of the students delivered a presentation about their own culture. Substantial interaction among the students was noted during this activity, and they seemed to enjoy sharing aspects of their culture with their classmates, as some of the cultural products and practices were new to them. The activity was also useful in that it could familiarise students with cultures that were previously unknown to them, such as Japanese culture.

Peer learning was another course feature that was appreciated by the students. In the follow-up interviews, the interviewees were very satisfied with the course content. Gint10S3

stated their impression that the course “Intercultural communication” was based on peer learning, commenting the following:

*It was designed in a way so we could learn from one another, and that is what I liked about it. I am now in my second year, and maybe it should be compulsory for 1st-year students because it is very insightful. (Gint10S3)*

The suggestion to make courses with intercultural content compulsory for first year students showed that this participant had positive attitudes towards incorporating IC in English language courses. This finding matched the results of Salem’s (2012) study, which showed that the Lebanese participants recommended the incorporation of IC in ELT for lower-level students so that the course would have a greater impact on their IC.

The multiculturalism of the course tutor was seen as another feature in the course “Communicating across cultures” as reported by S5Gint5. The fact that the course tutor represents various cultural backgrounds and is multilingual, speaking German, English, and Hungarian, meant that S5Gint5 was able to relate to them, 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. The results of Study 3 (i.e., the course materials analysis) further supported the claims of S5Gint5. By studying the U-curve of cultural adjustment which consists of culture shock/stress (survivor stage), acceptance (immigrant stage), and assimilation (citizen stage), the opportunity arose for both the tutor and the participants to share their experiences of acculturation in a new country. This provided the interviewees with support and reassurance that what they were experiencing was universal. This shows that integrating topics that matched the interviewees’ interests and needs was viewed positively by students in intercultural courses.

Having the freedom to decide on the topic of an assignment was reported as a positive feature by students in the courses “Challenging stereotypes” and “American popular culture”. This could be effective in developing students’ IC, as genuine interest in the topic will likely

lead to its more detailed examination. As a result, their knowledge on their topics was developed. As Gint7S2 and Gint6S1 expressed,

*I am never happy when we have to write an assignment, but I think we were given enough freedom so that we could really choose what you're interested in. So basically, when I started to write it, I really enjoyed it because it was really a topic that I was interested in, and I wanted to do research on it. I was writing about the British sense of humour, what elements it has and why it is misunderstood and why people have that opinion on it. (Gint7S2)*

*I like that we could choose what we would like to present and also for the essay at the end of the course, we could choose any kind of topic, but we had to write about the topic while incorporating what we have read. (Gint6S1)*

Reflecting on Gint7S2's statement, it is not only the student's knowledge of British humour that seemed to be promoted, but also their multiperspectivity and their ability to explain a behaviour or event from different perspectives by examining different opinions on a given topic. Other than that, the student's skills of discovery were also enhanced as she learned how to acquire new knowledge about the target culture.

Another positive aspect which emerged was the organization and structure of the courses. More specifically, the participants in the MA course "Skills for intercultural communication" referred to the variety of materials used in the class as well as the smooth transition between topics and materials. For instance, (Gint9S2) recalled that

*the way the classes were structured, I think that was good, either we started with one of these research papers or we started with something from the book, or some film clip and I think starting with that immediately allows you to have better discussions about the topics at hand. (Gint9S2)*

It was important to structure the course in a way that motivated the students to learn more about the target culture. Using a variety of materials, as will be discussed later, encouraged the participants to focus more on the content of the course.

Comparing different cultural aspects was reported to be a positive feature of the doctoral course "Language education for intercultural competence development". The students enjoyed

sharing their cultural elements and comparing them. Through learning about cultural diversity, students could show greater respect for people with different beliefs, values, and practices. It also seemed to raise their awareness of cultural multiplicity through encouraging discussions of different perspectives. Gint3S2 provided the following commentary:

*We talk about our culture, and we understand other cultures. And that was the main idea, I guess. I think it is really helpful for me, the knowledge about our cultures, and how I can compare my culture with yours, how different are they. (Gint3S2)*

As a course feature, comparing cultures contributed to the students' understanding of the cultures in question. Generally speaking, it could also better prepare them to tolerate ambiguous situations as they gained a deeper understanding of the impact of culture in shaping people's behaviours.

#### **4.6.2.2 Negative features**

Lack of discussion was identified as a negative aspect of some of the courses. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some courses which started as face-to-face classes were forced to be held online due to COVID regulations. The course "American popular culture (A)" was one such course. Gint6S1 compared the face-to-face lessons to those that took place online, saying that

*through the internet, it lacked the conversations. (Gint6S1)*

This was also confirmed by the course tutor, who replaced the discussion component of the course with written questions and also expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of discussion. The effectiveness of the discussions included in the courses with cultural and intercultural content was also indicated by students in Chinh's (2013) study who suggested including it in future courses to make them more enjoyable.

The lack of discussion was also identified as a negative feature for some of the face-to-face courses. The courses "American popular culture (B)" and "American culture" were



criticised by the students due to their lack of discussions. The interviewee Gint11S1 expressed how their expressions were unmet in regard to discussions and analysis in the course, while the interviewee Gint2S1 recalled that there was no discussion about the underlying meaning of particular stereotypes:

*When I read the syllabus for the first time, I thought this is going to be interesting. But the way it was executed, the way it was presented, it was disappointing. I was probably expecting [...] a lot of discussion and presentations but not 15 minutes presentations. I was expecting something like 45 minutes presentation with a bit more analysis and not facts which is what we got a lot. (Gint11S1)*

*[...] I felt that the discussion part was missing. We kept saying that Americans are so racist, and we never really went into the depth of racism. Why are people racist, and what is considered to be really racist? (Gint2S1)*

These comments were supported by the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations). The presentations that the students designed presented facts but lacked analysis. It was recommended that the tutor should have asked thoughtful questions “to stimulate the mind” (Gint2S1) and encourage discussion amongst the students. Moreover, they suggested a different approach to examining and debating topics:

*I think the right approach is to give information about both sides, the ones who are sensitive about culture, the ones who are doing racist things, and then discussions, and questions, for example, are they racist? What does racism mean? (Gint2S1)*

Discussions showed potential as an effective activity to develop the participants’ awareness of the hidden meanings and values of the target culture, as they allowed students to exchange perspectives. Participating in discussions could help students gain a better understanding of different behaviours as well as a deeper awareness of cultural values. In addition, discussions seemed to encourage critical analysis among the students, as the activity provided them an opportunity to challenge their own assumptions and biases.

Another shortcoming highlighted by the participants was the lack of in-depth-analysis in the courses “American culture” and “Challenging stereotypes”. For instance, Gint2S1, who took the course “American culture”, complained about the lack of data analysis. The tutor

usually provided a PowerPoint presentation with data charts and figures that summarised the assigned reading for each lesson. Even though the respondents appreciated this type of presentation more than reading long chapters, they argued that the charts were not properly analysed. Similarly, the interviewee Gint7S1 who took the course “Challenging stereotypes”, referred to a topic about immigrants in the UK that was not well examined in class. They shared the following on the issue:

*We discussed the percentage of immigrants in the UK, and there was a debate. We discussed whether it is good for your country, but I felt that we did not explain it. We remained on the surface of the topic, and we did not go deeper into the topic. (Gint7S1)*

*The data analysis was missing. There were sometimes charts, but we do not really connect them, for example, to the history of the US and then why we are here right now; the present was not connected to the past. We just said that it means literally what the chart meant, people like this sport much better than the other. (Gint2S1)*

From the point of view of Gint2S1, the interviewees’ knowledge about some aspects of American culture remained surface-level without including in-depth explanation. Analysing figures and relating them to the history of the USA could have been more informative for the participants, as it may raise students’ awareness about the historical context behind the figures. Consequently, students would have had the chance to gain a better understanding of important factors related to the information presented to them. As such, presenting information about the target culture without the proper analysis and discussion of values did not appear to prove useful, and it may not have adequately developed the participants knowledge of the target culture and may have even reinforced stereotypes. In addition, asking students to compare their own culture(s) to the target culture may not have been effective in this case, as they were only able to compare surface-level cultural aspects and thus overlooked hidden values and beliefs.

The interviewees were aware that culture is composed of many layers. This knowledge may have resulted from participating in many courses with cultural and intercultural content. This also showed that they were aware that cultural practices can be explained by examining

underlying beliefs. Therefore, it can be suggested that tutors of cultural and intercultural courses should raise students' awareness of cultural practices and products as well as their underlying beliefs and assumptions. The results also indicated that the interviewees possessed intercultural attitudes and were curious to learn about the beliefs of others.

### **4.6.3 Topics**

The interviewees were also asked about the topics that they found interesting or relevant to the subject matter of the course. They also identified the topics that they did not enjoy and, in some cases, proposed other topics which could be included.

#### **4.6.3.1 Preferred topics**

Learning about the history of Australia was favoured by the interviewees, for instance, Gint4S1 considered it to be an “eye-opener”. The participants reported that the course “Australia through documentaries” and “Australian Aboriginal issues”, developed their knowledge about Australian culture, as reflected in the following comments:

*I had no knowledge whatsoever about, for example, the society and Aborigines. I think the course provided cultural enrichment. (Gint1S1)*

*The new information for me was the Aboriginal aspects of immigration and integration throughout Australia's history. (Gint1S2)*

Learning about the history of Aboriginal people aimed to cultivate the interviewees' attitudes of empathy and respect for others through providing a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties faced by the Aborigines. Learning about the challenging history of native Australians appeared to foster participants' appreciation for the divergence of people's experiences. As Gint4S4 commented,

*I think this course helps you respect other cultures and be tolerant. (Gint4S4)*

Moreover, discussing this topic seemed to indirectly develop their skills of interpreting information and relating it to other contexts. Although there was a lack of explicit comparison made between Australian and Hungarian cultures regarding their history, the interviewed students nonetheless examined the similarities and dissimilarities between the two cultures. This suggests that their relating skills seemed to be developed and that they appeared to learn how to link their experiences to other contexts. This can be seen in this excerpt from the interview with Gint4S4:

*I can identify with the Aborigines' struggle because they have partly lost their cultural features. In my culture, I had the same situation. We had this "cold war" with the Russians, and till now, we had their influence. For example, most people in my country speak Russian very well, and they started to abandon their own language. This is also what happened to the Aborigines; they speak English and abandon their language because white people say they need to speak English. (Gint4S4)*

This example reflects the essence of the observed courses with cultural and intercultural content. Raising the interviewees' awareness of a specific culture was not enough to make them interculturally competent, however, as mentioned in the comment above, developing intercultural skills could help them examine a given culture objectively and relate it to their own. Due to the lack of time and the diverse issues and topics to be addressed in the class, it was impossible for the tutors to cover all of the relevant topics. Nonetheless, the interviewees in this course were more independent and seemed to develop their knowledge and skills, as mentioned by Gint4S4 above.

Learning about refugees and their experience in Australia was also appreciated by one interviewee. Although there was overall agreement among the four interviewees that all the topics discussed in the course "Australia through documentaries" were relevant and interesting to them, Gint1S3 found the topic of refugees particularly interesting:

*When we talked about the refugees, that was unexpected because I have been in this university for six years. We have not talked about this refugee problem in Australia and any other country. I find it useful. I liked it and opened my eyes.*

This result showed that certain topics should be incorporated into cultural and intercultural courses. The topic of refugees, for example, is relevant not only in educational institutions but for society at large. Controversial topics can engage and encourage students' critical thinking skills, but only if they are planned carefully. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues' (2014) model, these topics appeared to promote human rights among students and to encourage tolerance and empathy through a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the refugees. This finding contrasts with Jabeen and Shah's study (2011), in which it was found that Pakistani governmental institutions neglected students' IC development and critical thinking.

The topic of the Stolen Generation was favoured by the participants who attended the course "Australian Aboriginal issues". All of the students agreed that the experience of the Stolen Generation was essential and new to them. This was confirmed through the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations): on one occasion, a student did a presentation about the Stolen Generation and became very emotional when talking about it. This finding suggests that the course seemed to raise the interviewees' awareness of Australia

Topics such as the stages of acculturation, schemas and cues, politeness strategies, and non-verbal behaviour were favoured by the interviewees in the course "Communicating across cultures". Gint5S5, for example, specifically enjoyed reading about the stages of acculturation:

*The stages of acculturation are relevant to me. The teacher said that the first thing 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 are used to things. The first time I came to Hungary, I felt the same thing that he explained.*

The course content on the stages of acculturation was practical and useful for the interviewed students, particularly those living in a new country. Examining the topic seemed to develop their awareness of the different stages they themselves were experiencing and, consequently,

they could learn how to navigate the different stages of the acculturation process. This was further affirmed by Gint5S5:

*I understand why I went through obstacles as a foreigner. (Gint5S5)*

Gint5S2 enjoyed reading about the schemas and cues people use during intercultural interaction. In his view, learning about these two concepts could help racism towards those from different cultures. This is present in the following interview excerpt:

*For me, these schemas and cues and preconceptions of people were interesting, how to tackle them, how to solve them, and how to live without them, how not to be racist. (Gint5S2)*

The comments suggests that this topic aimed to raise the participants' interpreting and relating skills. By acquiring knowledge about these two notions, the students could challenge and question their own preconceptions. This could result in the promotion of intercultural attitudes such as open-mindedness and acceptance of those from other cultures. Gint5S5 commented that the passages about politeness strategies would be particularly helpful when traveling abroad. The importance of other topics was also highlighted, such as non-verbal behaviour. Gint5S4 described it:

*I noticed some differences between the countries. For example, people share the same gesture, but it has a different meaning. Also, there are some misunderstandings that can occur because of that. (Gint5S4)*

Learning that non-verbal behaviours and politeness strategies differ from culture to culture could develop students' knowledge about their own culture and identify the ways in which these cultures vary from their own. In addition, discussing these topics can enhance students' cultural sensitivity, which can lead to an increased mindfulness of differences in students' future intercultural interactions.

Learning about power distance and stereotypes was notably interesting for the interviewees in the course “Intercultural communication”, although some opinions differed as seen in the following excerpts:

*We discussed during the other classes the different kinds of communication that you can maybe deal with working in companies, and I was very interested in power distance, which is a topic of my essay. I wanted to go deeper, and I applied practical application to that. (Gint10S2)*

*The topic of stereotypes is interesting. I had a stereotype for a long time, and that stereotype was based on my culture, and I thought that European people are one group of culture. (Gint10S4)*

Discussing power distance could raise students’ awareness of hierarchy; this is a relevant topic for many students, as some of them will likely go on to work at international companies after graduating. Discussing hierarchy in class could provide them an idea of how to engage in successful communication in business contexts. Furthermore, learning about stereotypes could help to develop the participants’ attitudes of open-mindedness and to challenge and overcome their prejudices.

Other topics that were highly valued by the interviewee’s include active listening and cultural dimensions. In the MA course “Skills for intercultural communication” the respondents expressed an appreciation for all of the topics covered in the course, as reflected in one student’s statement:

*everything was interesting. (Gint9S4)*

However, two interviewees, Gint9S2 and Gint9S1, were interested in the topics of how to listen effectively and cultural dimensions:

*My favourite topic was about listening how to listen effectively because I didn’t think about this before and it made me think about it and to apply some rules. (Gint9S2)*

*For me, all of the topics are interesting. Actually, I really interested in the topics about cultural dimensions because I am studying in an international environment. (Gint9S1)*

The students' attitudes of empathy could be promoted by learning about the significance of active and effective listening. By listening attentively, students can focus on the perspectives and feelings of their interlocutors. In addition, discussing cultural dimensions could foster students' awareness of the impact of beliefs and values on people's cultural practices. This could result in increased tolerance when interacting with people from other cultures.

Topics related to big C culture related to British culture (e.g., cuisine, habits, the British royal family, Freddie Mercury, and Englishness) were greatly appreciated. For example, learning about British cuisine could promote students' understanding of the cultural relevance of certain British dishes. The interviewees' answers further confirmed that their knowledge about the target culture was enhanced. For example, Gint7S2 claimed that their knowledge about British class systems was improved through the course:

*[...] I learned many facts about the British, about the social classes. I think it was important that we talked about it because some of us has never been to England. (Gint7S2)*

The examination of big C culture alone is not enough to contribute to the development of students' IC. It would be more informative to include aspects of small c culture in order to help students gain a deeper understanding of the target culture.

Regarding the course entitled "American culture", the interviewees were particularly interested in topics including education. Gint2S2 reflected on their interest in the topic of American education:

*It is very interesting; we studied the differences between American and Hungarian schools. (Gint2S2)*

The interviewee's knowledge about the educational system in both countries seemed to be developed through comparing the two. For example, the curricula in American schools tend to be designed to highlight extracurricular tasks, while in Hungarian schools the focus is placed on students' subjects.



All of the topics examined in the PhD course “Language education for intercultural competence development” were greatly valued by the students. According to the interviewees, they discussed IC research in different national contexts and its incorporation into language courses. Gint3S1 and Gint3S2 mentioned the following:

*Actually, the topics I have had so far, were very interesting, because we discussed many different issues all around the world, in different parts of the world. (Gint3S1)*

*They are really interesting as they show how students react all over the world to the idea of understanding another culture. (Gint3S2)*

Learning about theoretical and practical topics related to IC likely provided students with insight into conducting their research and implementing IC development in their courses. For example, by examining the methods used in other research studies, the participants could learn how to decide on the most appropriate methods to use in their own research. Furthermore, the students’ awareness of effective strategies to develop learners’ IC was enhanced through learning about how IC promotion can be implemented in language courses.

#### **4.6.3.2 Topics criticised by students**

Some interviewees reported an aversion to discussing politics. One interviewee who took the course “Australia through documentaries” said that the topics were more political towards the end of the course, which they did not appreciate. As Gint1S1 said:

*I do not think people were comfortable sharing their opinions on those topics, between ‘strangers’ in this environment. (Gint1S1)*

This course was taught online, which may explain the reason for why students were not comfortable with sharing sensitive information. Interestingly, other interviewees in the course “Australia through documentaries” described controversial topics as “*relevant*” and “*engaging*”. This result partly supports the results of Bagui and Addar’s study (2020), which showed that Algerian students expressed a disinclination towards topics such as homosexuality and religion. Discussing controversial topics presented an opportunity to examine different

views and the reasons why a given topic is controversial. This could result in enhancing students' appreciation of different values and viewpoints. By gaining insight into the underlying values behind various norms and beliefs, students could develop greater empathy and respect towards those holding diverse opinions. Moreover, by scrutinizing various arguments, students could gain the ability to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of different stances.

Topics including biographies, literature, and arts were criticised by the interviewees taking the course "Australian Aboriginal issues". This can be seen in a statement from Gint4S3:

*I do not like Music and Poems. But when we learn it, we can have more understanding about the Aborigines, which is one of the purposes we learn this course. (Gint4S3)*

Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that the topics discussed in class were relevant to the course, and that the participants were aware of this. These topics were effectively discussed during the lessons and familiarised the students with Australian culture, which consequently could improve their knowledge about the cultural products of the Australian Aboriginals. By examining the experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds in Australia, the participants could gain a better understanding of the heterogeneity of Australian society.

In addition, learning about theories was not viewed favourably by some of the participants. Although the interviewees stated that the reading materials used in the course "Communicating across cultures" were interesting and useful, most of the interviewees criticised certain articles. As one student stated, the readings

*are theoretical and go too deeply into the topics. (Gint5S1)*

However, this also showed a lack of theoretical knowledge among some of the students. The data in Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors) indicated that the tutor used these passages to help learners understand theories that would later be discussed in class. In their words,

*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. (T3)*

The examination of newly created words in the Oxford dictionary was the most criticised topic in the course “British culture”. Gint8S4 considered it to be,

*[...] a very official reading. So, it was about the official culture, not the everyday culture.*

By learning the new words, students could learn about the evolving nature of language resulting from technological progress and cultural change. Therefore, it could be concluded that while this topic was relevant, it may not have been enjoyable or interesting to the interviewee. Nevertheless, Gint8S2 expressed the impact of this topic, saying that

*I learned lots of new verbs and expressions. (Gint8S2)*

This confirmed that this topic was useful for enriching students’ linguistic ability.

Another suggestion was learning about the native speaker tutor’s experiences. The interviewees who attended the course “British culture” also expressed their motivation to explore the personal stories of their tutor. Gint8S1 proposed

*to hear [the tutor’s] own stories, how he lived, or how he thinks about his own culture, the history and the people of Blackpool. (The tutor is from Blackpool in Britain)*

By sharing details about his own culture, the tutor could offer students an insider’s perspective about the target culture.

All of the interviewees in the course “American popular culture (B)” agreed that their knowledge about American culture did not develop over the semester as they already knew most of the information presented to them. Therefore, they presented the following content suggestions:

*More contemporary topics. (Gint11S4)*

*I would have loved to have a presentation on television studies or even to have an entire class on the topic of what TV teaches people. (Gint11S3)*

*I would like to see a comparison with other pop cultures may be other than the American one. (Gint11S2)*

The results of Studies 2 and 3 suggest that the topics addressed in class were relevant to the course; nevertheless, the interviewees felt that improving topics such as those above would be more engaging and up-to-date. This shows that by including more interesting topics about the target culture, the students' curiosity and willingness to learn about American culture can be increased.

#### **4.6.4 Activities**

The interviewees also commented on the activities used in the courses. They identified the activities that they thought were the most relevant to the course and to the development of their IC. They also mentioned the activities which they found to be the least effective or enjoyable.

##### **4.6.4.1 Preferred activities**

Watching and interpreting videos was identified as the most preferred activity in the course "American popular culture (A)". When the course went online, the course tutor excluded this activity, a decision which was not popular among the students. This was echoed by the interviewees who took the "British culture" course, who reported that they particularly enjoyed watching the series Blackpool. As said by the course tutors, students favour the use of visual materials such as movies, series, and presentations over long readings. These materials were effective in developing students' IC as the course tutors could draw on the students' preferences, thus increasing their concentration on the content. This finding is similar to that of Young and Sachdev (2011), who also revealed that tutors in the USA, UK, and France believed that to develop students' IC, videos from the target culture should be used. The use of videos

could be helpful to enhance students' IC. As students are fond of such materials, videos could be both meaningful and interesting to the learners.

The use of a Google Drive sheet to supplement the videos watched in the course "Australia through documentaries" was highly favoured by the interviewees. Using the online sheet, students were required to write their ideas after watching the films. Gint1S3 commented the following in regard to the activity:

*For each class, we had to fill in this sheet for the movies. I like that because they actually made me watch the film so that I paid more attention to the film.*

Including the above-mentioned digital component motivated the respondents to concentrate more on the films.

Other well-received activities that were identified by the interviewees were the end term writing tests in the BA course "Australia through documentaries" as well as the presentations in the MA course "Skills for intercultural communication". In both cases, the respondents enjoyed the freedom that they were given regarding the choice of their topic. However, the tutor of the BA course did limit the theme of the readings to social issues in Australia. Regarding this freedom of choice, Gint1S2 and Gint9S4 said the following:

*I could choose something suitable for me, and I was interested in, and then I could also research it. (Gint1S2)*

*The tutor gave us two times presentations and only one of them should be related to the topics. It allows us to discuss something more rather than what is mentioned in the syllabus. (Gint9S4)*

The interviewed students researched and analysed cultural aspects that they were interested in. Giving learners the option to write or present on a topic of their choice was seen as an effective way to increase their motivation for the activity, as they are more likely to be passionate about a topic which they have chosen. This could also lead to a better understanding of the chosen topic. Moreover, by researching a topic that intrigues them, the respondents could be

encouraged to examine it from different perspectives, which could develop their skills of multiperspectivity as well as their capacity to take other people's viewpoints into consideration and decentre their own.

Interactive activities including debates, role-plays, and games were the most well-received activities in many of the BA courses. For example, in the course "Australian Aboriginal issues", Gint4S3 recalled the following:

*I think as university students we can discuss more in class like I remember one day we had a debate an Aboriginal skull and whether to keep it in [a museum in] in England or Australia. That impressed me a lot. (Gint4S3)*

The results of Study 2 (i.e., classroom observations) further supported this finding. The students enjoyed debates, which presented them with an opportunity to develop their empathy through better understanding of the perspectives of others and responding to them. The activity also improved their abilities to evaluate cultural beliefs and practices as well as to explain their own points of view. In addition, by engaging in discussion with those holding different perspectives, students had the opportunity to develop attitudes of respect towards people with different opinions. The use of games was another activity that was viewed positively. This was expressed by Gint4S2, who reflected on the course tutor:

*Always gives us some games. We can play games to improve our knowledge. Today's activities (clapping and making noises) were exciting. Through the activities, we could feel the Aborigines' life. (Gint4S2)*

This activity has learning potential considering the inclusion of aspects of Aboriginal culture. For instance, in the clapping game mentioned by Gint4S2, students could experience and learn about the rhythms and music that were essential in the lives of Australia's indigenous people.

Sharing instances of culture clash was the most favoured activity in the course "Intercultural communication". There was overall agreement among the four interviewees that simulating intercultural clashes had a positive impact on their development of their intercultural

knowledge. Gint10S4 revealed that through this activity, they compared their own culture to the target culture:

*[...] one clash I remember was when one girl said, in Hungary when you come in the house; you have to take off your shoes [...] I am from Japan. We have the same cultural custom, but I found one difference between Hungary and Japan: in Japan, when you come into the house, in the entrance there is a step, and you take off your shoes downstairs, and then you can go into the house. So, you cannot miss taking off the shoes, but in Hungary, there is no step. (Gint10S4)*

Simulating intercultural clashes was considered an effective activity to develop the interviewees' IC as it helped them learn how to analyse misunderstandings. Moreover, this activity had the potential to foster the participants' critical thinking skills by encouraging them to consider different perspectives. By examining different values and practices, they could be motivated to question behaviours which may be taken for granted. Scrutinising intercultural clashes could also develop their ability to switch between different cultural perspectives, which could lead to a development in their cognitive flexibility. This was further confirmed by the interviewees:

*[...] reminds you that you need to tolerate, accept diversity and respect our people with opinions (Gint10S2).*

*I liked how the professor used the intercultural clashes for critical thinking. She would ask questions like, what do you think about this? Why do you think this happened? Do you think if this happened to the other person, they would perceive it like this? So, many questions made us think (Gint10S3).*

*[...] the things that we discussed or shared are more about some kind of particular, we cannot generalise them, but still, it would give us some idea how other people would behave in this kind of situation, or what we could we expect from them (Gint10S1).*

These findings can be explained by considering that the development of such skills could result in more successful intercultural interactions.

Furthermore, the incorporation of the online learning management system Moodle into the teaching of intercultural content was appreciated by the participants. This platform was used both by the tutors and students at the university for various purposes, such as for uploading

reading materials. The five interviewees who took the course “Communicating across cultures” expressed their appreciation for the implementation of Moodle. They supported the use of the platform, stating that it helped them share and reflect on their intercultural experiences and learn from each other’s stories. Among the positive comments, Gint5S2 described how learners in the course

*[...] 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 interesting stories that happened to them. (Gint5S2)*

The excerpt above demonstrates that the tutor created an ongoing activity which required the participants to report and comment on each other’s intercultural experiences. Moodle provided a safe space for the students to share their personal feelings and experiences. Writing about their intercultural experiences allowed them to reflect on personal actions which they may have previously taken for granted. The fact that the interviewees read each other’s intercultural stories and responded to them created a bond among the course participants that was regarded as highly advantageous by their tutor. Referring to Barrett and his colleagues’ (2014) model, this suggests that the development of the intercultural attitude of valuing cultural diversity and training students to learn from and about each other’s cultures and perspectives were indirectly addressed. In addition, students’ cognitive flexibility could be fostered by responding to various cultural experiences, which could motivate the students to take diverse perspectives into account.

Another activity which was well-received by the students was the creation and delivery of presentations. The respondents enjoyed the presentations they did about their own cultures and described them as “*very informative*”. The presentations also helped them to compare and contrast different cultural aspects. For example, Gint10S3 reported that they discovered similarities between their country and the countries of their classmates, such as “the summer



holiday” in which they celebrate it but on different dates. The activity seemed to develop their intercultural knowledge through communal learning. This finding was consistent with those put forward by Chinh (2013), who showed that EFL students had positive attitudes towards learning about diverse cultures, which in turn develops their intercultural knowledge. The presentations also aimed at raising the respondents’ awareness of their own culture. This could be seen in the case of a few of the interviewees who were reminded of their own cultural aspects:

*I did a presentation on some of the Albanian national traits. It reminded me of how much I take for granted this religion coexisting, especially when I meet people from other countries who have problems. So, it raised my awareness about this. (Gint10S3)*

*I have experience regarding different cultures and how to approach people from different backgrounds because we are more than 100 ethnicities in Kazakhstan, but it is just something that I probably take for granted. This course was a sort of reminder. It probably makes me more self-aware and aware of other people’s behaviour because you do not discuss it daily or thoroughly. (Gint10S2)*

Encouraging students to bring in an object that represented their home culture was also greatly valued by the interviewees. As Gint10S1 commented,

*it is interesting to see how many different objects people brought. I brought an instrument, someone else brought a picture of the Danube, and the girl from Kazakhstan brought a tent. So, it is interesting how we perceive our culture and what we think it is important to show from our culture, and how one symbol from a culture can also be a symbol from another culture. I like that as well. It is very insightful. (Gint10S1)*

This activity could raise the respondents’ awareness of both their culture and the target culture. The fact that the group was international also aided in the successful implementation of this activity. This task was enriching as the participants were able to learn from one other through the information provided on the significance of the chosen object from their perspective.

Discussing authentic British cultural products was recognized as an effective activity in the course “Challenging stereotypes”. Gint7S3 valued the fact that the course tutor brought authentic objects related to British culture and discussed them in class. Examining new authentic British cultural items that students were not familiar with could increase their

curiosity to learn more about the values and meaning connected to these artefacts. Moreover, this activity involved learning about the traditions and practices that are linked to these items. As a result, such an activity could help the participants interpret and explain their significance from the point of view of British people. This could indirectly encourage them to compare the cultural products of their home culture with those of the target culture which may lead to a better understanding of the two cultures.

Drawing comparisons between different cultures was one of the most well-liked activities by the participants. The interviewees expressed that they enjoyed comparing their cultures (i.e., Hungary, Turkey, Brazil, and Tunisia) in the course “Language education for intercultural competence development”. This was an enriching experience as the respondents were able to learn about cultures which may have previously been unfamiliar to them. This could contribute to the development of not only their knowledge but also their intercultural attitudes, such as valuing different cultures and understanding the points of view of those who are different from them. As Gint3S2 shared during the interview,

*it is very nice for me to talk about my culture and learn about other cultures, especially about three different countries. It was very interesting for me because I learned about other people’s problems and their struggles and feelings. (Gint3S2)*

Cultural comparison is an effective approach to encourage the interviewees to question events and practices which might be taken for granted. They could learn that their behaviours are not universal and that people from different cultures perceive the world differently. Furthermore, this activity could help the participants gain a better understanding of the cultures in question by examining the relevant similarities and dissimilarities. Gint3S1 and Gint3S2 touch on this in the following excerpts:

*We have many things in common with Hungary. And it was a very precious and very honourable thing to be here in history for my culture, but when we see how Hungarian people think about my culture, it changed immediately, it is not honour anymore. I now, question somethings about my culture. Not just history about Hungary and my country,*

*but other things as well, when people talk about the things, how they think, how they understand the things. (Gint3S1)*

*During the discussions in which I compared my perspectives and my knowledge, my experience in Brazilian society, with the articles and with examples from my colleagues, was very useful. I could reflect about that. For example, in Brazil, I think the problem related to black people is not only in Brazil. In Hungary, they have this thing, something like this with Roma people. (Gint3S2)*

#### **4.6.4.2 Activities criticised by students**

The lack of captions for documentaries shown during class was one point of criticism by the interviewees. Even though watching videos was appreciated by the respondents, a few of them complained about their lack of subtitles. Related comments can be seen below:

*[...] we have a new accent, new expressions, and no subtitles, so we cannot note them down. Having subtitles for movies is necessary because I think there were many cases where we did not understand what they were saying. (Gint1S2)*

*[...] the language was also very difficult. It is in the north of England, and I could not find subtitles because it was only on YouTube. (Gint8S2)*

The participants' complaints appear fairly reasonable considering that not many of them were familiar with Australian or British English. This could negatively influence the development of their vocabulary and English language proficiency. As language is an important aspect of IC, the promotion of their IC could be affected as well.

The misallocation of certain questions was also criticized. All of the interviewees in the course "Australia through documentaries" agreed that the task which required them to find five new words/expressions when watching the assigned film was not well-received. According to them, this activity was misplaced because it appeared as the last question in their worksheet. They suggested redesigning the worksheet questions or replacing this activity with another question about "something interesting" (Gint1S1). On the one hand, the activity could be useful to help students learn new words and expressions in English. On the other hand, the order of the items in the worksheet could be reconsidered to give students the opportunity to take notes while watching films.

Another point of criticism from the participants was the inclusion of language-related activities in courses with cultural and intercultural content. The interviewees who participated in the course “British culture”, for example, raised issue with the language exercises included in the handouts used in class. This is reflected in a comment from Gint8S3:

*I did not like those when we talked about English expressions and translated them into Hungarian. It is rather like grammar or vocabulary and not cultural. (Gint8S3)*

The development of cultural knowledge should go hand in hand with the development of students’ linguistic abilities. Study 4 (i.e., the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors) showed that the course tutor highlighted vocabulary development as one of the course aims. According to Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), examples of the vocabulary items they learned included brittle, Pimm’s, abridged, quintessentially, blowhard, and hot-headed. The promotion of the respondents’ linguistic competence, for example, could potentially facilitate their communication with British people.

In addition, the interviewees also criticised presentations which simply relied on cultural facts rather than a deeper analysis. Although most of the interviewees appreciated the presentations delivered in class, Gint11S1, who took the course “American popular culture (B)”, was not satisfied with the presentations, indicating that they

*were just facts that you could google them and find the same things on random websites. (Gint11S1)*

This was further reinforced by the results of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations), which showed that the students’ presentations restated facts and information from Wikipedia and lacked critical analysis. After the presentation, it was noted that there was a follow-up discussion; however, the students were not motivated to participate. Presentations such as these are not sufficient for developing the IC of the audience or the presenters as they lack critical reflection on cultural differences or and elements.

Another complaint was voiced regarding the historical comparison between two national contexts. An interviewee who took the course “British culture” voiced dissatisfaction about the activities in class which involved a comparison between England’s history and Hungary’s. Gint8S4 elaborated on this, saying the following:

*[...] I did not compare these two because they are incomparable. So, this class was a little bit boring for me. For example, I cannot compare Hungarian cuisine to English cuisine because there is the British breakfast and the Hungarian goulash, but these are stereotyping. So, we eat the same more or less, or I cannot compare the language aspects because they are different languages. (Gint8S4)*

Every culture is unique; however, many cultures also share the same beliefs and practices. While this activity may not have been enjoyable for the interviewee, it can nonetheless be considered relevant to courses covering cultural and intercultural content. In such courses, comparing different cultures could be effective as it could develop students’ appreciation of cultural diversity, while also encouraging them to reflect on their preconceptions and stereotypes.

#### **4.6.5 Materials**

The course tutors did not solely rely on course books and other readings. They also used diverse materials, such as presentations and series, to motivate the students and encourage them to engage with the course content. The interviewees commented on the various materials used in their courses. Some materials were well-received and praised by the participants, while other materials were criticised.

##### **4.6.5.1 Preferred materials**

Articles and documentaries were considered to be effective materials to develop students’ IC. In the BA course “Australia through documentaries”, the respondents agreed that the readings included were relevant to the course. The documentaries were considered particularly useful as they examined real events that could raise the participants’ awareness of

the target people. Furthermore, examining real experiences could also promote their empathy. By listening to the stories of the Aboriginals, the participants could better relate to them and better understand their viewpoints. The following comment reflects the interviewees' positive evaluation of the course materials:

*The other thing that I was hoping for is to learn about the people who live in Australia, and through some documentaries, I could learn quite a lot about those people. (Gint1S2)*

Audio-visuals materials were also well-received by the interviewees in cultural and intercultural courses. As expected, the participants mentioned films and videos as suitable materials for the courses "Skills for intercultural communication" and "Australian Aboriginal issues". This result was also found in Kural and Bayyurt's (2016) study, which showed that the students enjoyed the inclusion of videos in their courses. Moreover, the researchers added that the use of videos developed the students' sociolinguistic knowledge. The respondents who participated in the course "Australian Aboriginal issues" provided a number of reasons as to why they enjoy viewing films in class. One stated reason was that it is easier to remember information from videos; in addition, they added that videos are a fruitful alternative for students who do not like to read. The respondents also valued the use of YouTube videos. For example, Gint4S1 said that

*I mostly remember the YouTube videos used in presentations. I find them all very useful because our generation is so used to YouTube videos. It is a simple yet powerful tool to teach anything because they are short enough to keep our attention. (Gint4S1)*

The readings used in the observed classes were praised by a number of participants. The interviewees in the courses entitled "Communicating across cultures" and "Language education for intercultural competence development" generally found the readings to be relevant, engaging, and practical. For example, in the case of doctoral students, the reading described in the quote made the interviewees more aware of the importance of IC development as it encouraged them to show respect toward other cultures and other traditions. The interviewees

also found the length of the readings to be favourable, the tutor decided to assign short extracts rather than long articles or chapters. Further comments on the readings can be found below:

*For example, an article written by I. L, the study she conducted included five different countries. This study is interesting and relevant to teaching ICC because at the end of the training the students showed ICC development because their responses changed in a positive way. At first, they reacted harshly. For example, about the food, some of the students said that was disgusting. But later on, they start saying, I would not say this thing, I should respect. (Gint3S1)*

*Some of the useful information is how to behave in case you encounter a cultural shock, what are the symptoms in case you are somewhere else, and you suffer from them. (Gint5S3)*

*[...] because the students are not very good at reading a lot, so I would rather they read an excerpt well and process it well than giving them a good long reading that nobody touches. (Gint5S5)*

Comments were also made regarding the readings assigned in the “British culture” course. The participants expressed positive attitudes toward the articles used in class, describing them as “*authentic*” and “*interesting*”. The analysis of the readings showed that the articles discussed topics that would engage the students, providing information about famous figures such as Freddie Mercury.

The choice of the course books was also valued by the participants. The interviewees who took the courses “American culture” and “Skills for intercultural communication” praised the book used for the two subjects. They described the language used in the book as “*simple and easy to follow*”. Gint2S2, who took the course “American culture”, mentioned a different reason for liking the text. She referred to the easy access to the chapters. The value of textbooks was also reported by Lázár (2011), Önalán (2005), and Sercu and her colleagues (2005), who stressed that if the cultural content in the books is presented effectively, it is easier for tutors to implement IC development in their language courses. The choice of the coursebook was important as it formed the foundation of the course. The positive aspects of the textbooks highlighted by the respondents can be considered when selecting books to use in a course. When

the language of the book is reader-friendly, students will likely be more motivated, which can promote the development of their knowledge.

#### **4.6.5.2 Materials criticised by students**

Long and linguistically challenging readings were criticized by the participants in some of the courses. For example, Gint7S1 described the readings used in their course as “*boring*” and “*too detailed*”. This outcome is contrary to that of Addar and Bagui (2020), who found that the Algerian participants in their study praised the use of literary texts as they believed they aided in the development of their cultural awareness. Gint7S1 also referred to the language founded in the book, claiming that it was too difficult for her. The student included the following recommendations on how to modify or supplement the materials:

- Using PPTs to summarise the text.
- Assigning shorter readings.
- Replacing the text with role play.
- Watching videos and listening to British music.

Although the participants were not particularly motivated to read “long” academic papers, there were specific requirements that university students must meet. One of these requirements is the ability to read articles, books, and book chapters. Therefore, in courses with cultural and intercultural content, it was useful for students to read what scholars have written in the field of intercultural communication. Furthermore, basic concepts are usually explained in textbooks which students must be familiar with, such as the definition of culture and IC. The data of Study 2 (i.e., the classroom observations) showed that the course tutors often supplemented readings with videos; this was beneficial and appeared to meet the participants’ needs.



#### 4.6.6 The importance of including cultural and intercultural content in EFL courses

All the interviewees expressed the important role that courses with cultural and intercultural content played in their training programme. This result confirmed previous research by Chinh (2013) showing that Vietnamese students held positive attitudes towards learning about various cultures, specifically their enthusiasm to learn about non-English-speaking cultures. However, Jabeen and Shah (2011) showed that 87% of the Pakistani students examined showed negative views towards the inclusion of IC in their EFL courses, as IC development was overlooked in language teaching. The participants in the present research seemed aware of the importance of being interculturally competent, as they recognised the need for IC development in the EFL classroom.

A major justification that the participants gave for the incorporation of IC development in their courses was its role in developing their knowledge about cultures. In this study, the respondents articulated the usefulness of learning about other cultures and expressed the positive impacts that the cultural and intercultural courses had on developing their knowledge about the target cultures as well as their own:

*We talked about some things that we Hungarians think of ourselves and what other people think of us, and it was nice to see what we think of ourselves and what others see is very similar. (Gint9S2)*

*[...] this course raised my awareness about my own culture and how it differs from others, for example, our people are more polite and mainly smiley people and how in other countries it could be totally different. (Gint9S1)*

*I thought that the Aborigines immigrated to Australia because I thought white people were living there. I did not know about the history. After taking the course, I can understand more about their culture. It developed my knowledge about history. (Gint4S3)*

*[...] we were discussing these habits about queue and the queue jumping. We learned how we should never do that in Britain. (Gint7S2)*

*I know that if we go to a bar and someone pays me a beer, I definitely have to pay back or invite back for another beer. (Gint7S3)*

Furthermore, the participants' awareness about the underlying values of American practices also seemed to be promoted. For example, the tutor of the course "American popular culture (A)" managed to successfully explain the underlying beliefs of sports for American men. Gint6S1 and Gint2S1 shared their experiences regarding the impact of learning about the underlying beliefs of sports and being competitive:

*It became more understandable why they act the way they do and the reason behind it. For example, in the chapter where we had to read about the sport, it was interesting to see that some sports are considered to be only for males and in these sports, if a man is not doing a certain kind of male expected work, they are always regarded not as a strong man or not the ideal American. It was interesting to see the theory behind it because it had to do with the Freudian Oedipus complex. (Gint6S1)*

*I think I have more understanding about them. For me, it was hard to understand why they are competitive, [...] they are interested in having the newest phones. As a Hungarian, it is very strange; I do not care what they think about my phone [...] When you learn about their heritage frontiers, you know that they are born to be competitive and individual. Now I understand why they are and behave like that. (Gint2S1)*

As the excerpt above suggests, the interviewees' awareness of the underlying values of Hungarian and American culture seemed to be promoted in the course. This fostered students' understanding of the impact that values and beliefs have in shaping people's behaviours. This is an expected outcome of learning about a new culture and discussing the previously mentioned topics.

The courses seemed to have a positive impact on the students' intercultural attitudes. Many of the interviewees believed that the courses they took made them more open-minded and curious to learn about different cultures. This was mentioned by Gint1S1, who claimed that

*this course [Australia through documentaries] helped me view other people and other cultures with more open-mindedness and acceptance. (Gint1S1)*

This finding was in line in with the results of Mutlu and Dollar's (2017) study, which showed that the students investigated believed that courses with IC content contributed to promoting openness towards people from different cultures. The interviewees were also encouraged to

question practices and behaviours that they might take for granted. It was only in one course that all the interviewees, with the exception of one respondent, considered that the course did not improve their attitudes as they already considered themselves to be “*open-minded*”, “*interested in cultures*”, and “*tolerant and accepting other cultures*”. One course was not seen as being enough to promote the interviewees’ intercultural attitudes or instigate a drastic shift from ethnocentric attitudes to ethnorelative ones (Bennett, 1993). Nonetheless, the interviewees participating in these courses were open to learn about other cultures, and the course tutor considered that as a first step towards developing the capacity to tolerate uncertainty, value cultural diversity, and show respect toward people from other cultures.

The intercultural skills of the interviewees appeared to be fostered through the courses they participated in. For instance, Gint9S4, Gint3S2, and Gint1S2 said that the development of their skills to critically evaluate cultures and their ability to interpret each other’s words from different perspectives were targeted by the course tutor:

*This is what I will keep mostly that you always need to question, search, and see why and not to jump to conclusions and as the other people said before how important it is to listen. (Gint9S4)*

*The course helped me think more, consider more, at least listen and try to understand. (Gint3S2)*

*Being more aware with our use of words. (Gint1S2)*

The development of the participants’ intercultural skills was one of the foremost aims of the tutors of the observed courses, as they wanted their students to be able to rely on their skills to achieve successful intercultural experiences.

Other positive outcomes of including cultural and intercultural content in their courses were mentioned by the students interviewed, including knowledge about the relationship between culture and language and being a future tutor of English language and culture. This finding was also reported in Morganna and his colleagues (2020): the participants in the study

expressed their ability to integrate IC into their future courses based on the intercultural courses that they participated in during their training. The following comments reflected their views:

*[...] we are not just English teacher, but the official title is an English language and English culture teacher, this is the official title of our diploma. So yeah, it is very important to learn about the English and American and other English-speaking countries cultures because we can teach it as a fun thing, as an interesting thing. (Gint8S4)*

*I am in the teacher training programme, and I think it is important. Even I plan to stay in Hungary and teach Hungarian students. Still, as a teacher and especially as a foreign language teacher, I have to be very open-minded and understand different cultures and teach these attitudes to the students. (Gint2S2)*

Other interviewees expressed the importance of learning about different cultures in general:

*[...] if you learn a language, after a while, you will get in touch with the culture as well. And then I think you can speak the language better if you know the culture. (Gint8S1)*

*It would be important not just for me as a student in the university, but in general to learn more about culture because you can learn about interesting facts every time you click on Google but trying to understand why these cultures are different, and what are the causes the reasons and why are people think differently? And why do they feel that this is the right way of living? (Gint5S3)*

The participants' views were reasonable; however, as the process of globalization continues and people from different cultural backgrounds come into contact with one another more frequently, it can be concluded that it is important to develop the knowledge and skills needed to behave appropriately when interacting with people from different cultures, regardless of the type of occupation a student may have in the future.

#### **4.6.7 Summary**

The objective of Study 6 was to analyse how English major students view their courses containing cultural and intercultural content; answers were provided in regard to RQ 4 from the point of view of the students. The results showed that the respondents expressed varying views about the courses through the mixed feedback that they provided in the interviews. In terms of features, the fact that the tutors relied on pair and group work was viewed positively by the

students. This made them more willing to participate in class and express their opinions. They also referred to the tutor's knowledge about the target culture, which they believed could positively influence their own knowledge. They also enjoyed having native English speakers as their tutors, which seemed to help them better compare the cultures in question and discover similarities and differences between cultures. In addition, they remarked positively on the use of authentic materials such as drawings in the course "Australian Aboriginal issues". Materials such as these were used to complement the main readings and aimed to raise the interviewees' knowledge about products from the target culture. It could be assumed that such activities made the participants more curious to learn about cultural products as they have been previously unfamiliar with them. The international atmosphere of many of the classrooms was also identified as a positive feature of some of the courses. This could help respondents develop their intercultural attitudes, specifically their tolerance and acceptance of those from other cultures through learning about and from their culturally diverse classmates. However, some courses were criticized for having negative features, such as a lack of discussion and in-depth analysis, which according to the respondents did not improve their IC as they were not able to examine the underlying values and beliefs associated with a given figure or a practice.

Many of the respondents expressed a preference to learn about debatable topics such as the refugee situation in Australia. Due to the documentaries the interviewees seemed to develop empathy by gaining a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by refugees or Australian Natives. Topics such as active listening and cultural dimensions were valued. By listening actively to their interlocutors, students can focus on the perspectives of others. In addition, discussing cultural dimensions appears to foster students' awareness of the impact of values on people's cultural practices. The interviewees also enjoyed topics related to big C culture which could promote their knowledge about the target culture.

The participants showed less interest in learning about the literature and art of the target culture. However, these topics were often relevant to the given course and aimed to develop the interviewees' knowledge about the target culture, such as the poems written by Australian Aborigines. They also showed negative attitudes towards learning newly created words from the Oxford dictionary. Although the respondents did not enjoy this activity, as English language students, it potentially played an important role in developing their English language vocabulary. In addition, the development of the students' linguistic competence could facilitate their communication with British people.

The interviewees expressed their views about the class activities. One activity they appreciated was the use of videos: watching videos featuring cultural and intercultural content appeared to develop the participants' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills. For example, by watching documentaries about Indigenous Australians, the interviewees could familiarize themselves with the difficulties Aborigines experienced, which could develop their empathy. They also enjoyed debates and role-plays, which had the potential to cultivate their empathy and enhance their willingness to express their perspectives. In addition, they highlighted that simulating intercultural clashes had a positive influence on their IC development, encouraging them to question behaviours which may be taken for granted and withholding their prejudgments. The participants were also fond of the presentations about their own cultures that they were assigned, as well as the activity which required them to bring an object to class which represents their culture. These types of activities were able to raise their awareness about their own culture and introduce them to other cultures that might be unfamiliar to them.

Although interviewees' views towards watching videos were positive overall, a few of them complained about the lack of subtitles, citing their unfamiliarity with British or Australian accents. Including subtitles could improve the development of their English language

proficiency and vocabulary knowledge, which is a part of IC development. Another activity that the participants criticised was the language activities included in their activity handout sheet, which they considered irrelevant considering that the overall aim of the course was to foster their knowledge about British culture. However, promoting the students' linguistic competence is important as it can improve their abilities to communicate with the target culture. Some interviewees also criticised the presentations delivered by their classmates, claiming that they were over-reliant on surface-level facts and lacked deeper analysis of cultural issues. As such, this activity did not sufficiently engage the respondents' critical evaluation skills or develop their knowledge. Furthermore, although one interviewee complained about activities which featured comparisons between different cultures, such activities appeared to develop students' awareness of cultural diversity and encourage them to challenge their stereotypes.

The respondents expressed mixed views about the materials used in the courses. Documentaries were identified by the interviewees as useful materials. For example, documentaries about indigenous people which presented and discussed real life events could raise their awareness about the target people and facilitate the development of their empathy towards native people. Generally speaking, the participants had positive attitudes towards audio-visual materials as they presented a more engaging alternative to reading texts. Nevertheless, they also appreciated certain readings which they believed to be relevant. The participants also endorsed the books used in the courses "American culture" and "Skills for intercultural communication" due to their simple and reader-friendly language which encouraged them to engage with the texts. Nonetheless, reading texts of varying difficulty is a skill that is important for students to practice, as many important cultural concepts are presented and explained in books.

To answer RQ 5, this study examined the impact that the observed courses had on the development of the students' IC from the students' own perspectives. The students explained

the ways in which the courses featuring culture and intercultural content were beneficial to them. All the respondents highlighted beneficial effects that the courses had on the development of their knowledge about their own culture and the cultures of others. They also gained insight into the differences and similarities between cultures, including their own. In regard to the intercultural attitudes of the interviewees, the results showed that the courses appeared to have a positive impact on the students' intercultural attitudes. Many of the interviewees believed that the courses they attended increased the extent to which they respect different cultures, value cultural diversity, and show tolerance; such developments can occur through learning about the underlying values that shape people's behaviours and also by being exposed to different perspectives and experiences in the classroom. As some of the courses examined the sources of stereotypes, the interviewees were also encouraged to question the practices and behaviours that might have been taken for granted. The tutors appeared to develop their students' intercultural skills, including the ability to critically evaluating cultures, by encouraging them to ask questions and practice active and careful listening. The development of such skills is of great importance to successful intercultural interaction between members of any culture.



## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary of the findings

The first aim of this research was to describe and analyse how the IC of English major students is developed in courses at the BA, MA, and PhD levels as well as in the teacher training programme of a Hungarian university, while the second aim was to identify good practices for developing the IC of future EFL professionals to be used in other contexts. To achieve these aims, this research utilised a qualitative case study approach that included documents and materials analysis, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the course tutors and programme leaders, and group interviews with the students. This conclusion first summarizes the answers to the research questions, then discusses the implications of the results for English language pedagogy. Finally, it points out the limitations of the study and draws attention to areas of future research regarding the development of English major students' IC.

**RQ 1: How is intercultural competence development present in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university?**

This research question was answered with the help of three studies: the document analysis of the course descriptions and syllabi, the analysis of teaching materials (i.e., those provided by the tutors as well as student presentations), and the classroom observations of 14 courses in the different programmes.

The findings indicated that the percentage of courses in the programmes which included cultural and intercultural content was relatively low. Considering the importance of intercultural communication in the globalized world, more emphasis should be placed on incorporating cultural and intercultural content into the English language programmes to provide students with the skills they need to engage in successful interactions with those from different cultures. The analysis of the course catalogue showed that there were a number of courses that aimed to

foster the students' knowledge about specific cultures. For example, some courses included information about American values and Aboriginals' cultural products, while others sought to develop students' intercultural attitudes through teaching them about British stereotypes and encouraging them to challenge their own preconceptions. Other courses aimed at enhancing particular intercultural skills. It was found that the course syllabi of the courses examined presented the topics and approaches which would be used to achieve the given aims. The results also suggested that a few of the course descriptions contained an anti-discrimination statement, which reflected the cultural approaches taken by several of the tutors to promote respect for people of different cultures.

It was found that the observed courses with cultural and intercultural content had different foci in terms of the promotion of the students' IC. The BA courses that were examined in this research could be considered as an introductory phase during which students' awareness about cultural diversity is raised and the cultures of English-speaking countries are highlighted. The courses examined in the MA programme, as exemplified by the course "Skills for intercultural communication", helped students realise the importance of IC in corporate settings and contributed to the development of the skills needed to help ensure for successful intercultural interactions. Moreover, the course "Intercultural communication studies: Concepts, theories and research" appeared to have a positive impact on developing students' theoretical knowledge about IC and about verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures. The focus of the courses examined in the doctoral programme was somewhat different, as it seemed to be more aimed at developing students' skills and knowledge as researchers in the field of intercultural communication through the readings they were assigned. In the teacher training programme, the focus of the courses examined was placed on American or British culture. Furthermore, based on the themes presented in the course syllabi, the course "EFL for intercultural competence" aimed to provide pre-service teachers with knowledge of how to

implement aspects of IC into their teaching practice. Although the scope of each programme is different, the course tutors took the students' IC development into consideration.

The course observations (Study 2) found that the intercultural content in all of the observed courses focused mainly on English-speaking cultures, which was obvious as the courses were part of English major programmes. The course sought to promote students' knowledge about aspects related to big C and small c culture by learning about the values of English-speaking cultures, perceptions of multiculturalism and immigration, and the practices and cultural products of different cultural contexts among many other topics. The results also suggested that in most of the courses the students were encouraged to compare the cultural products, values, and behaviours that they learned about in connection with the target cultures with their own home cultures. This could encourage them to potentially challenge their stereotypes and develop skills of multiperspectivity through enhancing the scope of their intercultural knowledge.

The results suggested that the topics covered were diverse, touching on a number of areas of culture (i.e., history, politics, climate, literature, soap operas, TV, values, and customs, among many others). Despite their wide spectrum, all of the topics could potentially contribute by providing students with insights into different facets of culture and interculturality. Reviewing these cultural aspects served to develop students' knowledge of the ethnic diversity in the US, promote their intercultural skills, and familiarise them with aspects of Australian culture, among many other outcomes. These aims were established in order to develop specific elements of IC which could come together to form the students' overall IC.

The courses were characterised by pair and group activities which encouraged students to interact with one another and discuss the topics raised during the courses. This interaction provided an environment in which students could deepen their understanding of relevant issues. Verbalising their ideas through group interaction was also instrumental in helping them to

consolidate the ideas presented in the course. Several of the courses observed featured students from different cultures. This diverse setting gave students the opportunity to experience cultural diversity and develop intercultural attitudes such as acceptance of and respect for others. Many tutors relied on role-plays which – as an activity requiring active and committed participation – could be useful in promoting students' IC. This activity contributed to the development of their ability to adopt the perspectives of others and understand different points of view. An activity that was specifically used in the few courses with cultural and intercultural content in the teacher training programme was peer teaching. These sessions could be considered crucial for pre-service teachers as they provided them with knowledge on how to incorporate culture and interculturality into their future courses. During these sessions the students were tasked with teaching each other, with many of them utilising motivating activities such as role plays aimed at developing intercultural awareness. Consequently, the peer teaching sessions presented pre-service teachers with an opportunity to learn how to implement and create activities and materials which can be used to promote IC development. The doctoral courses were characterised by group discussions which covered different aspects of IC research. Participants in these courses found such discussions to be particularly useful for their own research. The topics in the doctoral courses varied, including both theoretical and empirical readings. This helped to familiarise students with the theoretical aspects of IC, but also to learn how to examine its elements as a researcher, as many of them were investigating culture-related topics for their dissertations.

The findings of the materials analysis (Study 3) showed that the courses included a variety of materials to support the development of students' IC such as documentaries, book chapters, course books, and videos. It was found that the materials contributed to the development of various aspects of IC, such as learning about the values of the English-speaking cultures. The teaching materials also encouraged students to learn to challenge their stereotypes,

which could help them develop a greater sense of understanding when interacting with people from different cultures. Furthermore, the results suggested that other cultures besides English speaking-cultures, such as European cultures were presented and described in the materials. This was of great importance to the students, many of whom are likely considering pursuing careers in international contexts. In the teacher training programme, some of the readings equipped trainees with knowledge on how to implement interculturality in their future language courses through examining the activities and materials that could be used in the classroom to develop students' IC. The results also showed that the doctoral courses enhanced students' knowledge of how to incorporate IC into language courses; this is notably important for doctoral students who may go on work as researchers or lecturers in the field of IC. This also revealed how language and culture can be integrated regardless of the major focus of a course.

**RQ 2: What are the considerations behind the inclusion of intercultural competence development in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university?**

The above research question was addressed through the interviews conducted with course tutors and programme leaders (Studies 4 and 5, respectively). The results of the semi-structured interviews with the course tutors (Study 4) pinpointed their reasons for integrating IC content in their courses. The tutors aimed to develop their students' intercultural attitudes, such as openness and appreciation of cultural diversity. Furthermore, they sought to enhance students' awareness about their own culture as well as about English-speaking culture(s). In addition to improving students' intercultural skills to ensure successful intercultural interaction, tutors also made efforts to create opportunities in which students could interact with those from other cultures. The tutors also highlighted the importance of incorporating IC development in the English language programmes as a means to help students become intercultural speakers, as suggested by (Byram, 1997). The implementation of IC content in some courses in the teacher training programme aimed at boosting the teacher trainees' skills in regard to the

implementation of IC development in their future courses. These aims reflected the tutor's beliefs on the importance of looking beyond the surface level of culture. Furthermore, they showed their commitment to empowering their students to question their stereotypes and develop an awareness of cultural diversity through discussing various aspects of different cultures.

The results of the interviews with the programme leaders (Study 5) showcased an emphasis on the incorporation of IC development in the English major programmes, which they indicated would enhance students' tolerance of uncertainty and openness towards interaction with people from other cultures. Other reasons mentioned for the implementation of IC in English language courses was the creation of an international atmosphere on campus and the promotion of students' successful intercultural interactions.

**RQ 3: How do the tutors involved in the intercultural competence development of English major students at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses?**

The findings of the interviews with the course tutors (Study 4) suggest that the course tutors valued the promotion of students' IC. This was best reflected in the course objectives that were intentionally designed with the development of IC in mind. The course aims included aspects of IC such as stereotypes, literature, politics, internal diversity among cultures, and communication in English-speaking cultures.

It was also found that the tutors relied on different types of media for their teaching materials to develop IC in their courses, including readings and videos. Videos were included as tutors noticed that students were notably disinterested in reading books and articles and that the use of diverse materials was welcomed. The use of videos enabled students to better focus on the course content and consequently learn more. Other supplementary materials such as authentic cultural products from the target culture(s) were used which reflected the positive

views of the tutors toward contributing to the development of the students' IC in their courses. In one of the courses, the tutor included poems written by indigenous people. The use of such materials appeared to promote the students' awareness about the history and language of the given culture. The course tutors used activities such as debates, discussions, and role-plays to promote students' IC, which potentially cultivated students' attitudes of openness and encouraged them to show their acceptance to other perspectives. The students were also asked to bring a picture or an object to class which represented their own culture and explain its relevance. This activity developed students' knowledge about their own culture and others. The mentioned activities and the supplementary materials that were used showed that the tutors attached great importance to the development of the students' IC in their courses.

**RQ 4: How do English major students participating in courses developing intercultural competence at a Hungarian university view the value of their courses?**

The findings of the group interviews with the students (Study 6) showed that the interviewees had mixed attitudes towards the examined courses. A number of positive aspects were mentioned, such as the knowledge provided by the course tutor that raised their awareness of some of the racist expressions that the students had previously used unintentionally. They also praised the use of cultural products which seemed to develop their knowledge of the target cultures. Another positive feature that was mentioned by the participants was having a native speaker of English as their tutor. This reportedly helped them compare different cultures and question practices which students may have taken for granted. However, there were some courses that the students criticised due to their lack of insightful analysis of the underlying values influencing the behaviours or practices discussed in class.

The results indicated that many respondents valued topics concerning related to refugees or Indigenous people, which could help them to empathise with the given target culture and understand different perspectives of particular social issues. Other topics which were mentioned

in a positive light included active listening and cultural dimensions. By listening actively to their interlocutors, students can focus on the perspectives of others. Furthermore, some respondents criticised vocabulary development exercises, stating that the courses should be focused solely on cultural topics. However, it should be noted that the development of the students' English vocabulary could facilitate their communication with native English speakers.

In relation to the activities used in the classroom, one activity that received positive feedback from the participants was role-plays. Role-plays were an effective way to encourage empathy among students. They also enjoyed simulating intercultural clashes as it helped them reflect on their behaviour and develop their interpreting skills. They also identified watching videos, even for homework, as one of their favourite classroom activities, finding them to be more engaging than other materials. Based on their knowledge of these sentiments, the tutors included videos both in class and as homework. These videos were especially beneficial if they included cultural or intercultural content. For example, by watching documentaries about Native Australians, the students could better understand the difficulties they experienced, which could enhance their sense of empathy.

One group of interviewed students were critical of the presentations delivered by their classmates, which they claimed simply included facts which could be gathered from Wikipedia. The respondents were not satisfied with the final product, claiming that critical evaluation skills and knowledge were not developed. It was also found that the interviewees held mixed views about the materials used in class. They agreed that they found the documentaries to be interesting; these could be particularly useful when talking about historical events as the films could develop students' knowledge about the history of a given culture and enhance their willingness to empathise with the target culture.

Overall, the students provided positive feedback about their courses with cultural and intercultural content, and all of them articulated the importance of learning about different



cultures. For example, the students in the teacher training programme expressed their intention to pursue careers as teachers of English language and culture. They highlighted that it was important to develop their IC in order to be able to include aspects of interculturality in their future courses. Other students acknowledged the role that being interculturally competent plays in successful intercultural interactions. The significance of IC was also reflected in the materials and activities that they suggested, such as role-plays and watching videos from the target culture. This showed an appreciation for cooperation and an awareness of the important impact that the use of cultural products has on the development of attitudes towards and knowledge of IC.

**RQ 5: How does intercultural competence development in the English major programmes of a Hungarian university contribute to the professional competence of future English language professionals?**

This research question is addressed using the findings of the interview studies with the course tutors and the programme leaders (Studies 4 and 5, respectively) as well as the group interviews with the students (Study 6). The interviews with the tutors indicated that the aspects of IC incorporated in the topics, materials, and activities included in their courses contributed to the development of students' IC. For instance, the tutors expressed their aims to promote critical attitudes among students (i.e., questioning their stereotypes and acceptance of other cultures) through learning about the underlying values that shape people's behaviours. In addition, the tutors asked students to share intercultural clashes that they had experienced in the past, an activity which encouraged them to think about their own and others' behaviour in order to explain the situation objectively. Students could learn valuable lessons by listening to and examining the experiences of their peers, such as how to behave in certain situations or what skills are needed to engage in a successful interaction. Intercultural content such as the example above have the potential to promote intercultural multiperspectivity and skills in interpreting

others' practices. Another activity type that could promote students' IC was comparing different cultures. This activity was used to enhance students' knowledge of their own cultures and those of others. In the courses of the teacher training programme, the tutors aimed to help the future teachers learn approaches for the incorporation of IC aspects in their future English language courses. The peer teaching sessions and the information presented regarding aspects of British and American culture contributed to the achievement of that aim. Instead of working in secondary schools, students from the culture-related courses of other programmes will likely work at international companies after graduating, and this career path was considered in their courses. For example, in some courses students were introduced to the conduct that would be expected at a multicultural international corporation.

The findings of the interviews with the programme leaders (Study 5) suggests that the inclusion of courses with cultural and intercultural content raised pre-service tutors' knowledge of how to integrate interculturality in their future courses. One programme leader witnessed how some pre-service tutors were already incorporating aspects of IC into their teaching practice. Moreover, they also expressed their hopes that the integration of IC development in the English programmes would produce interculturally competent graduates. It is difficult to determine just how interculturally competent students are after they finish the programme, as there are many factors beyond the university context that can contribute to or hinder the development of students' IC. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that the programme leaders aspired to raise students' understanding of cultural diversity and multiperspectivity. They also aimed to develop students' critical evaluation skills and also sought to enhance intercultural attitudes such as openness and tolerance in students. It was stated that these aspects were addressed explicitly in some English programmes, especially in the courses which were centred on intercultural content. Since such content was explicitly included, it could be assumed that emphasis was placed on the development of these intercultural aspects.

The findings of the group interviews with the students (Study 6) reflected the positive impact that the content from the observed courses had on the development of students' IC. All the respondents said that their knowledge about their own and other cultures developed as a result of the courses they attended. Regarding their intercultural attitudes, the courses that the interviewees enrolled in potentially helped cultivate their respect for different cultures, value cultural diversity, and show greater tolerance in unfamiliar situations through learning about the role of culture in shaping people's behaviours. The intercultural skills of the students appeared to develop as a result of the knowledge gained from their courses; for example, they learned about the significance of asking questions as well as active and careful listening to ensure successful intercultural interaction.

## **5.2 Quality assurance and limitations**

A number of limitations should be highlighted in connection to this research. The present research utilised an exploratory research design and qualitative methodology, meaning that the results cannot and should not be generalised. Regardless, measures were taken to ensure the transferability of the results. One such measure was triangulation, which made use of the many different perspectives considered in the research. As such, the data collected from the course tutors, students, and programme leaders were presented and compared alongside the observations and readings to further explain the findings. Furthermore, in the process of data analysis, the categories created when working with the verbal data were checked by a doctoral candidate to ensure reliability. The credibility of the studies was also ensured through member checking. The transcripts were sent to the interviewees to verify and review what they said during the interview.

The current research was limited to courses which featured cultural and intercultural content. It was planned to examine how interculturality is presented in content-based language

development courses. However, this was not possible due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic situation on teaching; due to the stressful situation surrounding the pandemic, tutors who were not teaching culture-related subjects were hesitant to allow classroom observations. Examining such courses would have yielded rich data regarding the tutors' motivation to integrate IC into their courses, as the main focus of these courses is usually not on developing students' IC.

Another limitation related to the Covid-19 pandemic was its effect on the learning and teaching process in Hungary, and thus on the present research. The modality of these courses changed from face-to-face classes to lessons via online platforms, which meant that not all courses were synchronous. As a result, the observation of such courses was not possible. This resulted in the lack of the student perspectives for some courses as well, since they refused to participate in this research.

Another limitation does not concern the effectiveness of the research methods or the transferability of the results, but rather relates to the integration of IC development into different courses. The 16 courses considered in this dissertation only represent a small minority of the courses that the institute in question provides. On average, around 430 courses are offered in a given semester. While there are a few more courses that could have been included in this research but were not due to the lack of time, it is clear that the development of students' IC is not the first priority of this institute. Although they are not a model institution in this regard, they are in the process of building up and improving the integration of IC development into a number of courses at all levels, from BA to PhD programmes. As this research found, these efforts have yielded promising results, and the need for the inclusion of IC at this institution is now well established as confirmed by the interviews with the programme leaders. With this in mind, the limitation that IC development represents a small part of the institution's activities,

serves as evidence that it is feasible to initiate this innovation on a small scale and gradually expand it to higher levels and in more courses.

### **5.3 Implications of the research**

The results of the present research yield considerable implications related to English language pedagogy in terms of effective teaching activities, critical thinking, inclusive teaching, learner autonomy, and transferability of practices to other institutions. Firstly, this research identified some of the effective teaching activities used by the interviewed tutors and valued by the students which have the potential to foster students' IC. These include watching documentaries about indigenous people, participating in debates and role plays, and sharing experiences of intercultural clashes. Teachers are not limited to the activities examined but can also create other impactful tasks beyond the scope of this dissertation which can be used in different cultural contexts. Secondly, as shown by the results, some of the courses with cultural and intercultural content encouraged critical thinking by encouraging students to reflect on the source of their stereotypes and challenge their own preconceptions. Consequently, students appeared to develop the capacity to withhold prejudgements and examine cultural differences objectively. Thirdly, this research could foster inclusive teaching by encouraging the promotion of IC to initiate changes in the courses of the various English language programmes in order to answer the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. As revealed in this research, inclusive education can enhance students' empathy and cultivate a greater understanding of other cultures. By acknowledging and appreciating cultural diversity and using some of the practices described in this dissertation, tutors and educational managers in other contexts can create learning environments that are inclusive and offer students opportunities to understand and value linguistic and cultural differences instead of simply imitating native speakers. The findings of this research showed that the implementation of IC development in English language courses could foster learner autonomy. For instance, due to the lack of time and the

diverse issues and topics to be discussed in the class, it was impossible for all of the tutors to cover all of the relevant topics. Nonetheless, the interviewees in one course showed greater independence and seemed to further their knowledge and skills beyond the bounds of the course. Finally, several results of the research can be transferable to other educational settings, and many of the practices described in this dissertation may be used for designing foreign language university training programmes at different levels with an emphasis on developing the students' IC.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for future research**

Considering the limitations mentioned above, a later study could assess how IC development is integrated into content-based language development courses. This could prove to be a fruitful area of research into how course tutors perceive the implementation of IC development in their courses. In addition, since students in the teacher training programme underlined the importance of integrating IC into their teaching practice, further and more detailed information about how IC development is included in methodology courses could yield rich data regarding the impact of IC promotion in the teacher training programme. This could be carried out using classroom observations and interviews with the course tutors and students.

A few courses were held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was found that course tutors did not use the same platforms to teach their students. One tutor used a non-synchronous platform, while other tutors preferred synchronous ones. This shows that courses featuring cultural and intercultural content can be taught online. A further study could examine the effectiveness of using online platforms to develop students' IC.

A follow-up tracer study to investigate how the students observed in this research go on to use the IC that they developed in their courses would also provide useful insight. The results

of such research could be used to improve the course contents used in the programme as well as the teaching methods and approaches used in the courses that aim to develop students' IC.

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## Appendix A

Lesson observation sheet with a focus on teaching intercultural competence

**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: \_\_\_\_\_**

Respond to each statement using the following scale and then comment on it:

1: not observed, 2: more emphasis recommended, 3: accomplished very well

<b>Intercultural content</b>	1	2	3	Comments, examples
Are the cultural tasks related to cultural products and achievements of the target language countries?	1	2	3	
Do the tasks deal with the behaviours of people from different cultures?	1	2	3	
Do the students analyse the manifestation of values of the national culture and foreign cultures?	1	2	3	
Do the cultural tasks describe English-speaking cultures solely?	1	2	3	
Does the cultural and intercultural content raise awareness of the students' own culture?	1	2	3	
Do the tasks and activities develop students' intercultural skills?	1	2	3	

Do the tasks and activities develop students' intercultural attitudes?	1	2	3	
Do the activities deal with taboos, stereotypes, and bias towards different cultures?	1	2	3	
Does the teacher integrate cultural elements (aspects from different cultures) in their language lessons?	1	2	3	
Does the teacher compare and contrast the culture of origin and foreign cultures?	1	2	3	
Do the tasks deal with differences in verbal communication?	1	2	3	
Do the tasks deal with differences in non-verbal communication?	1	2	3	
Are the activities based on experiential learning (the students' experiences)?	1	2	3	
<b>Description of the lesson</b>	1	2	3	
Is the lesson theory-oriented?	1	2	3	
Is the lesson practice-oriented?	1	2	3	
Do the students have homework?	1	2	3	
Is the home assignment interculturally-oriented?	1	2	3	
<b>Teacher's role</b>	1	2	3	
Does the teacher dominate the talk?	1	2	3	
Do the students' interactions dominate the class?	1	2	3	
Are students from different cultures allowed to mention some of their cultural aspects?	1	2	3	
Does the teacher act as a facilitator?	1	2	3	
Does the teacher use cooperative learning, such as discussions and role-plays?	1	2	3	
Does the teacher use websites and movies to teach various cultures?	1	2	3	
<b>Students' feelings</b>	1	2	3	
Are cultural activities interesting for the students?	1	2	3	

Do the students enjoy the activities?	1	2	3	
Do they relate to other students' intercultural incidents?	1	2	3	

## Appendix B

### Interview questions for the course tutors

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. What are the major aims of this course?

1.1 For how many years has this course been taught?

1.2 Did you design the course or were you given this course to teach?

1.3 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. I have seen your course description and in it the main topics that you deal with. Why did you choose to address these topics?

2.1 Have the topics changed throughout the years? If yes, how?

2.2 What textbook and/or other educational material do you rely on?

2.3 Why did you choose or keep these (textbooks or other materials) in your syllabus?

2.4 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. What are the students' attitudes toward the course?

4.1 How do they give feedback about the course?

4.2 How do the students react to the presentations and the activities that were held?

4.3 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. Do you think this is a successful course? Are you happy with it?

5.1 Can you see the growth in the students' intercultural competence/cultural competence as a result of the course?

5.2 In your opinion, what do the students learn from the course?

5.3 What benefits could you mention about the course?

5.4 What difficulties could you mention about the course?

5.5 In your view what could be changed to improve the course?

5.6 Apart from the issues we have already discussed, would you like to share some more of your views about this course?

## Appendix C

Informed consent form (course tutors)

**Title of study:** The role of intercultural competence development in the English major programs at a Hungarian university: A case study

**Researcher:** Maroua Talbi

**Email:** [marwatalbi961@gmail.com](mailto:marwatalbi961@gmail.com)

**Background and purpose of the study:** You are kindly invited to participate in a research study about the role of intercultural competence development in the English major programs at a Hungarian university. The purpose of the study is to investigate how the intercultural competence of future English language professionals is developed at BA, MA, and PhD levels and in the teacher training program. It will also seek to find out students' attitudes towards the culture/intercultural courses.

**Your participation:** I am asking you to participate in this interview because your insights are highly relevant for my study. You will be asked questions regarding the course you teach. Participation is voluntary and you can decide to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

**Confidentiality:** The interview will be audio recorded. The information that is obtained will remain anonymous. Your name will not be mentioned in any report or publication ensuing from the study, as pseudonyms or codes that reflect the participants' gender and nationality will be used to identify them.

If you have any questions or concerns any time after the interview, please contact me, the researcher Maroua Talbi or my supervisor, associate professor Holló Dorottya ([hollo.dorottya@btk.elte.hu](mailto:hollo.dorottya@btk.elte.hu)).

If you agree to participate in the interview, please sign the form below.

Thank you very much!

I have read and understood the above information. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time.

Date:

Name of the participant:

Signature

## Appendix D

### Interview questions for the programme leaders

Thank you for taking part in the present study. I would like to ask you a few questions about the integration of culture, interculturality, and intercultural competence in the different programmes at an Institute of English and American Studies. 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. This interview will be recorded. I will store the recording and the transcription electronically without your name until two years after the defence of my dissertation and then will delete these data.

### Questions for the head of the Institute of English and American Studies and director of studies

1 Can you please briefly introduce yourself (areas of expertise, present role and responsibilities, number of years in teaching at university and in your in current position)?

2 How important is it to include culture and interculturality in the different programmes?

3 Do any aspects of culture or interculturality have a role in the different programmes?

3.1 If yes, what role do they have? How are they taught? (Are they taught explicitly or implicitly?) (How are they taught implicitly?)

3.1.1 What materials and approaches are used?

3.1.2 I know that the teachers have a lot of independence in designing their courses, but do the School or the Departments have policies or guidelines concerning the content of the courses?

3.1.3 Do they encourage the integration of cultural content in the different programmes? If so, how is this done?

3.1.4 Are there any constraints for implementing the teaching of culture?

3.1.5 Has the fact that the student body has become very multicultural influenced the way culture and interculturality are included in your training programmes?

3.2. If yes, how? If not, why not?

4. Has the role of culture or culture teaching changed in the education of English major students since the time you were a student? How has it changed?

5. How do you see the role of culture and interculturality in your subjects?

6. How important do you think it is for the students to learn about culture and interculturality? Why?

#### Questions for the department heads

Thank you for taking part in the present study. I would like to ask you a few questions about the integration of culture, interculturality, and intercultural competence in the different programmes at an Institute of English and American Studies. 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. This interview will be recorded. I will store the recording and the transcription electronically without your name until two years after the defence of my dissertation and then will delete these data.

- 1 Can you please briefly introduce yourself (areas of expertise, present role and responsibilities, number of years in teaching at university and in your in current position)?
2. What are the main aims of the different degree programmes that your department contributes to?
3. Do you have planning guidelines worked out together to teach particular things in the different courses?
4. Do any aspects of culture or interculturality have a role in your department?
  - 4.1 If yes, what role do they have? How are they taught? (Are they taught explicitly or implicitly?) (How are they taught implicitly?)
    - 4.1.1 What materials and approaches are used?
    - 4.1.2 What encourages/motivates you to integrate culture in this department?
    - 4.1.3 Are there any constraints for implementing the teaching of culture?
    - 4.1.4 Has the fact that the student body has become very multicultural influenced the way culture and interculturality are included in your training programmes?
  - 4.2 If not, why not?
5. Do you attach different importance to culture and interculturality in the different programmes (BA, MA, Teacher training, and PhD courses)? If yes, How?
6. Has the role of culture or culture teaching changed in the education of English major students since the time you were a student? How has it changed?
7. How do you see the role of culture and interculturality in your subjects?

8. How important do you think it is for the students to learn about culture and interculturality?  
Why?

### Coordinators

Thank you for taking part in the present study. I would like to ask you a few questions about the integration of culture, interculturality, and intercultural competence in the different programmes at an Institute of English and American Studies. 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. This interview will be recorded. I will store the recording and the transcription electronically without your name until two years after the defence of my dissertation and then will delete these data.

1 Can you please briefly introduce yourself (areas of expertise, present role and responsibilities, number of years in teaching at university and in your current position)?

2 What are the aims of the degree programme/culture courses that you are responsible for?

3 How are the goal(s) achieved?

4 Do any aspects of culture or interculturality have a role in your programme?

4.1 If yes, what role do they have? How are they taught? (are they taught explicitly or implicitly?) (How are they taught implicitly?)

4.1.1 What materials and approaches are used?

4.1.2 What encourages/motivates you to integrate culture in this programme?

4.1.3 Are there any constraints for implementing the teaching of culture?

4.1.4 Has the fact that the student body has become very multicultural influenced the way culture and interculturality are included in your training programmes?

4.2. If not, why not?

5 Do you attach different importance to culture and interculturality in the different programmes (BA, MA, Teacher training, and PhD courses)? If yes, how?

6 Is culture present in the teaching practice that the students do in the teacher training programme?

6.1 If not, do you encourage them to include culture in their teaching practice? Why?

7 Has the role of culture or culture teaching changed in the education of English major students since the time you were a student? How has it changed?

8 How do you see the role of culture and interculturality in your subjects?

9 How important do you think it is for the students to learn about culture and interculturality? Why?

10 Are students able to show empathy when communicating with others? How?

11 Can students behave appropriately and effectively with people from different cultures/the teachers (mainly international students)? How?

12 Do international students experience difficulties in behaving/communicating as expected by the teachers?

## Appendix E

Permission request letter

**Title of study:** The development of intercultural competence in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university: A case study

**Researcher:** Maroua Talbi

**Email:** [marwatalbi961@gmail.com](mailto:marwatalbi961@gmail.com)

Dear professor (name),

I am writing to request permission for conducting an interview with you for my research study. The study is about the development of intercultural communicative competence in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university. It aims to investigate how the intercultural competence of future English language professionals is developed at BA, MA, and PhD levels and in the teacher training program. It will also seek to find out students' attitudes towards courses with a culture/intercultural focus. Your insights are highly relevant for my PhD study, that's why I am asking you to please participate in an online interview of about 20-30 minutes. I would like to ask you questions regarding the inclusion of cultural and intercultural content in the courses in the different English major programmes under your leadership.

I thought it might be best if I suggested times for the interview, but if the slots below do not suit you, I am happy to find other possibilities (except the timeslots when I myself teach classes). Could you please indicate two times that would suit you within the timeframes listed below? I am asking for two in case several people indicate the same.

Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> of October (starting from 11 a.m.)

Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> of October (12 am - 7 pm)

Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> of October (4 pm - 7 pm)

Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> of October (11 am - 7 pm)

Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> of October (11 am - 7 pm)

Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> of October (11 am – 7 pm)

Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> of October (12 am – 7 pm)

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> of October (4 pm – 7 pm)

Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> of October (11 am – 7 pm)

Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> of October (11 am- 7 pm)

Please indicate which online platform you would like to use: MS Teams, or Skype, but if you prefer something else, I am happy to comply.



Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

With kind regards,

Maroua TALBI

## Appendix F

### 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. How did this course affect your cultural knowledge?

6.1 How did this course affect your attitudes to different cultures?

6.2 How did this course affect your cultural/intercultural skills?

6.3 In what ways did the course raise your awareness about your own culture? And about cultural differences?

6.4 On the whole, did the course live up to your expectations? What were its best features?

6.5 If you had the chance to change something about the course (topics, home assignments, materials), what would it be?

The following question would be asked to the students who do not participate in class and where the teacher talks most of the time.

7 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?

8 Finally a few questions about your experience about cultural learning. 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?

8.1 How important do you think it is to have culture related courses in your training programme?

8.2 What ways of learning about culture(s) do you find the most useful?

8.3 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.)

8.4 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.

## Appendix G

Informed consent form (Students)

**Title of study:** The role of intercultural competence development in the English major programs at a Hungarian university: A case study

**Researcher:** Maroua Talbi

**Email:** [marwatalbi961@gmail.com](mailto:marwatalbi961@gmail.com)

**Background and purpose of the study:** You are kindly invited to participate in a research study about the role of intercultural competence development in the English major programs at a Hungarian university. The purpose of the study is to investigate how the intercultural competence of future English language professionals is developed at BA, MA, and PhD levels and in the teacher training program. It will also seek to find out students' attitudes towards the culture/intercultural courses.

**Your participation:** I am asking you to participate in this interview because your insights are highly relevant for my study. You will be asked questions regarding the course you attend. Participation is voluntary and you can decide to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

**Confidentiality:** The interview will be audio recorded. The information that is obtained will remain anonymous. Your name will not be mentioned in any report or publication ensuing from the study, as pseudonyms or codes that reflect the participants' gender and nationality will be used to identify them.

If you have any questions or concerns any time after the interview, please contact me, the researcher Maroua Talbi or my supervisor, associate professor Holló Dorottya ([hollo.dorottya@btk.elte.hu](mailto:hollo.dorottya@btk.elte.hu)).

If you agree to participate in the interview, please sign the form below.

Thank you very much!

I have read and understood the above information. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time.

Date:

Name of the participant:

Signature

