



Students' Perspective Towards Intercultural Based On Learning Experience In Intercultural Reading Subject

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Abstract. Intercultural study fosters a growth mindset by encouraging connections with others and broadening perspectives. This study explores students' views on intercultural understanding as a vital aspect of communication, based on their semester-long learning experiences. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, 12 participants were examined through tests, observations, and in-depth interviews, culminating in an essay assignment on intercultural themes. Key findings indicate a significant increase in students' intercultural awareness, with strong engagement in themes such as identity and pop culture, which facilitated comprehensive discussions. An 18.2% improvement in test scores from mid-term to final exams demonstrated their enhanced understanding. Students displayed growth in three main areas: improved communication skills for interacting in diverse cultural contexts, heightened cultural sensitivity to various norms and values, and increased open-mindedness leading to more inclusive behavior. The publication of an intercultural book (ISBN) compiling their essays underscored their active engagement and contributions. The study highlights that integrating intercultural themes into the curriculum enhances students' competence in navigating cultural differences and equips them for effective global communication. These findings hold practical implications for curriculum designers and educators aiming to prepare students for diverse work environments. Although limited by the reliance on self-reported data and a single cohort, future research could include a comparative approach and explore long-term impacts. Expanding methodologies to involve interviews or focus groups would provide deeper insights into how students internalize intercultural concepts. Such research could enrich the understanding of intercultural competence and guide effective educational practices.

Keywords: intercultural, student's perspective, learning experience.

1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries is more important than ever. It facilitates communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries, leading to more tolerance, acceptance, and, ultimately, stronger relationships amongst people of diverse backgrounds. So, intercultural become a thing that is important to learn.

Understanding culture is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of communication when engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Research findings

suggest that while survey respondents perceived themselves as skilled in cross-cultural communication, their actual competence remained relatively low. (Chi, N. T. N., Thuy, T. T., & Huong, N. T. T., 2023).

Some scholars provide various interpretations of intercultural communication. It is generally defined as the interaction that takes place between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. (Chen & Starosta, 1998:28). Intercultural communication is described as a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, and contextual process in which shared meanings are created by people from different cultures. (Lustig & Koester, 2007:46). Intercultural communication involves the impact on communication behavior when individuals from different cultures interact. Therefore, it can be seen as an exchange that takes place within symbolic intercultural contexts. (Arasaratnam, 2013:48)

Intercultural learning delves into understanding and appreciating different cultures deeply and respectfully. This educational approach can drive social change by enabling people from varied cultural backgrounds to form positive relationships rooted in the principles and values of human rights, fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity. Adopting an intercultural perspective is crucial in social education. However, it also necessitates examining various cultural and diversity interpretations, power dynamics, resource allocation, political and social frameworks, human rights issues, discrimination, historical context, and the daily interactions among different individuals. Developing intercultural skills involves cultural self-awareness, open-mindedness, empathy, active listening, and problem-solving skills.

Dinges (2014) wrote about intercultural competence. Although intercultural interactions in trade, education, and the exchange of scientific and artistic ideas have taken place over thousands of years, there has been limited documentation on human competence in these domains. Millions of individuals have managed to engage with people from different cultures successfully—whether earning academic qualifications, closing business agreements, negotiating treaties, or collaborating on advancements in science and the arts. However, it is only in recent decades that structured efforts have been made to study the individuals and the contexts in which these interactions occurred.

Literature Review

Research in intercultural competence is spanned across several academic disciplines as well as applied fields. Challenges to the persuasive and effective development of intercultural competence across multiple levels of society are, of course, present. (Arasatnam-Smith, 2017).

Intercultural traits can influence attitudes and worldviews by guiding individuals toward specific experiences, which in turn shapes their perspectives on intercultural matters. (K.Leung, 2014).

On a positive note, engaging in intercultural group work has been shown to enhance students' cultural awareness. (P.Moore, 2015).

The research in Malay that investigates the notion of intercultural competence from the perspective of students in a Malaysian university found that it is viewed as a

relational process, where both communication partners must be included to achieve appropriate and effective behaviors mutually.(Dalib, S., Harun, M., & Yusoff, N. (2014).

Many colleges and universities in the United States seek to foster intercultural competence among their students. Three primary themes emerged: (a) intercultural learning happens when students engage directly with the experiences of others; (b) a sense of safety to explore cultural differences is crucial for effective intercultural learning; and (c) students adopt various methods for intercultural learning, ranging from passive activities like listening or observing to actively reflecting on how their personal identity relates to intercultural understanding, with these methods varying in complexity and intentionality. (King, P. M., Perez, R. J., & Shim, W. J. (2013)).

Intercultural learning can be gained from many sources, including textbooks. Intercultural reading provides students with various experiences to understand different cultures and how to navigate them. As textbooks are primarily relied upon by teachers in the teaching of foreign languages, one way to help and encourage students to focus on intercultural competence (IC) is by providing textbooks that facilitate the intercultural language learning process. (Bal, N. G. (2020)).

In one study, numerous students shared that the similarities they identified between the two cultures had a positive impact on their perceived development of intercultural competence. (Sevilla-Pavón, A. (2019)).

Intercultural learning is considered very important for university students because their roles in international interaction and communication, especially in their job fields, are practiced almost constantly. The development of intercultural competence by higher education students, viewed in close relation to the internationalization of higher education, is regarded as crucial for changing prejudiced attitudes, preparing students to live in a global world, and empowering them professionally. (Pinto, S. (2018).

A lack of connectedness between local and international students in the higher education context is considered a perennial concern that negatively impacts the student experience. Strategies for helping students improve their communication skills, foster intercultural friendships, and work toward greater connectedness are provided. (Willoughby-Knox, B., & Yates, L. (2022).

The research in Malay was presented in two themes that describe the essence of intercultural competence: cultural understanding and language ability. The analysis not only adds to the current understanding of intercultural competence but also contributes to the emergent literature on intercultural competence that takes into account lived intercultural experiences in Malaysia. (Dalib, S., Harun, M., & Yusof, N. (2017).

Another study suggested that learning about perceptions and transitions in intercultural competence helped participants gain a deeper understanding of their own experiences and broader intercultural matters.. Allen, T. J. (2021).

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that it is crucial to explore students' perspectives on intercultural in order to understand how they perceive it as an important concept for successful communication with individuals from diverse cultures.

However, research on interculturalism in higher education in Indonesia is still rare. Measuring students' understanding of interculturalism as a factor that influences

communication success from a student perspective needs to be done as material for improving learning methods and the curriculum. The importance of intercultural learning is proven by including Intercultural Reading courses in the university curriculum. But of course, research to test students' perspectives, what the right approach is, and measure students' absorption of intercultural related courses needs to be carried out. To map out appropriate improvements in the future. Consequently, this research aims to determine students' perspectives on intercultural after completing a semester-long intercultural reading course.

2. Research Method

The study is qualitative descriptive research. Instruments used are observation and depth interview. The research conducted during one semester.

Procedures

Intercultural reading subjects gives students opportunity to explore various phenomena occurred in society comes from different background and cultures. It exposes to different worldviews:

1. Exploring diverse literature
Intercultural reading exposes students to different literary traditions, genres, and themes from around the world.
2. Expanding perspectives
Encountering different cultures values, beliefs, and societal norms broadens students' understanding of the world.
3. Developing critical thinking
Comparing and contrasting different worldviews encourages students to analyze and evaluate their own perspectives.

The students given various topic for intercultural reading subject, i.e:

1. Why Should We Learn Intercultural?
 - Intercultural Definition
 - The Purpose Of Learning Intercultural
2. Identity
 - Primary Identities
 - Secondary Identities
3. Pop Culture
4. Culture Shock
5. Comparing Foreign Culture
6. Non Verbal Communication
7. Stereotypes
8. Encountering Different Culture

Then, the learning process during one semester was observed, including their activities, their participation in the class discussion session, presentation, and also the results of both examination, mid and last exam.

Depth interviews were given to all of the students, recorded, and analyzed. At the end of the semester, students were given an assignment to write an essay on the topic of intercultural they have learned.

Data Analysis

Data collection involved depth-interviews, test and questionnaires. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns. This process included coding data inductively, starting with open coding to capture initial insights, followed by axial coding to relate these codes to broader themes. Coding was conducted to organize and streamline the analysis.

Ensuring Reliability

To enhance the reliability of the findings, the study employed a double-coding approach, where two researchers independently coded the data and compared their interpretations to ensure consistency. Discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved to reach consensus. Additionally, member-checking was conducted during the interview phase, allowing participants to review and verify their responses to confirm the accuracy of the recorded data and interpretations. These measures helped ensure that the analysis was both trustworthy and reflective of the participants’ true perspectives

3. Results and Discussions

The study used all of population of the 4th semester students in English Department who took Intercultural Reading course, consisting of 1 male and 11 females. The intercultural reading course is a special basic course taught in semester 4 of the English Department Teacher Training and Education Faculty.

Table 1. The participant of the research

Sex	Amount	Percentage (%)
Male	1	8
Female	11	92
Total	12	100

The findings of the research discussed in two parts:

Students’ Perspective on Intercultural

Students' perspective on intercultural is divided into several aspects that refer to the material that has been studied during one semester.

Table 2. Theme of perspectives

No	Theme/topic	Title	Amount
1	Identity	The phenomenon of mixing English in South Jakarta's children which is contradictory to the development of Indonesian	1
2	Pop culture	- The Impact of Korean Popular Culture on Changes In Teenage Behaviour In Indonesia - Trend Crisis of Beauty and Fashion in Indonesia Due to Pop Culture - Pop-Culture and it's differences	3
3	Culture shock	- Culture Shock In Russia Experienced By Turah Parthayana - Culture Shock In Islamic Boarding School - A Child Of The Neighborhood	3
4	Comparing foreign culture	The Influence Of Foreign Fashion On The Style Of Dress In Indonesia	1
7	Non-verbal communication	See The Difference in Non-verbal Communication	1
8	Stereotypes	Ethnic Stereotypes in Indonesia	1
9	Encountering different culture	Pros and cons of problems in mobile legends game	2
How We Encountering Different Culture			
Total			12

The focus perspective highlighted by students is mostly pop culture and culture shock, followed by encountering foreign culture. The rest are identity, comparing foreign cultures, non-verbal communication and stereotypes.

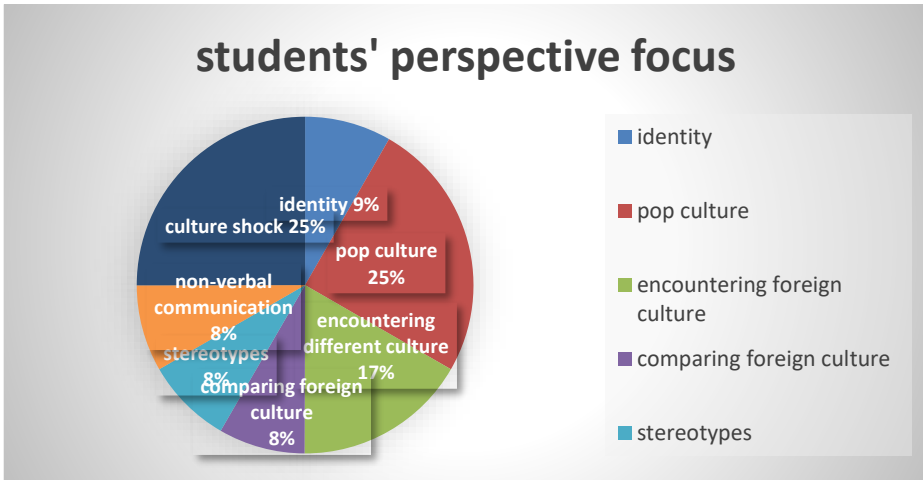


Figure 1. Students' Perspective Focus

The following are the students' perspectives on intercultural as outlined in essay which describes the background situation of the theme they chose and ends with their opinion regarding the topic.

1. Identity

- The phenomenon of mixing English in South Jakarta's Children (Zn)

With the mixing of languages that occurs in South Jakarta children, it is considered to have a positive advantage, where they can be more expressive in showing their respective characters and flexibility; they can also be more relaxed in using the foreign language; and even foreigners will find it easier to understand the language spoken by these South Jakarta children, and foreigners can also learn a little from the Indonesian spoken by these South Jakarta children. Inseparable from the positive side of the mixing code, there is also a negative side that must be avoided by the children of South Jakarta, where they will pay a little more attention to or put aside the Indonesian languages themselves, good and correct Indonesian, and the regional languages of each because not everyone in South Jakarta is a native of Jakarta itself.

2. Pop culture

2.1 The Impact of Korean Popular Culture on Changes In Teenage Behavior In Indonesia (AlfN)

A very significant cultural and moral shift, apathy toward the country's own culture, and a shift in the younger generation's mindset toward constant

imitation of all aspects of Korean life are the negative effects of Korean culture entering Indonesia. In the midst of a social crisis that is continuing to erode national cultural identity, it encourages the younger generation to embrace a liberal lifestyle in the name of globalization and modernization. There are also positive effects from some of these negative effects. All are safe to use if they are used properly. Studying Korean culture is acceptable because it can give one a broad understanding of other cultures. However, we must not lose sight of Indonesia's indigenous culture because it is a valuable asset that must be protected and is integral to the country's identity.

2.2 Trend Crisis of Beauty and Fashion in Indonesia Due to Pop Culture (EvNa).

This refers more to a cultural crisis, which shows that Indonesia's indigenous culture is slowly being eroded by global pop culture. This intense competition between modern culture and indigenous culture will make people lose their identity and live following the trend. In fact, living by following trends is considered not suitable for various factors. They can become consumptive in terms of shopping, especially clothes because they are easily tempted by cute clothes or aesthetic clothes. In addition, the criteria about something that exists in themselves will increase in value, and it is effortless to consider other people not at their level or ancient.

2.3 Pop-Culture and It's Dfference (AdARp)

In conclusion, exposed content of fandoms have high chance to collide with others as there are people who had the audacity on hating people likings. There always will be people that doesn't respect other opinions and boundaries, sadly entertainment department see this as a lucky field to gather attention for their new content. If we look at the marketing details, the departments were responsible for all the dispute, drama, trend, and fandoms identity to use it to increase their content sales.

In my perspective and opinion any fandoms have the same intend and behavior, just with different subjects. Any fan-culture have their own time to shine, but the endless problem is there will always some people that want to feel superior or bring down the others.

3. Culture shock

3.1 Culture Shock In Russia Experienced By Turah Parthayana (DinW)

There are many types of culture shock which of course are very difficult for us to get used to, but by learning about culture shock we will definitely be able to understand some foreign cultures so that later it won't surprise us.

3.2 Culture Shocked In Islamic Boarding School (PAbS)

Efforts to overcome culture shock to new students in the following ways: 1). Recognizing and acknowledging feelings of discomfort. 2). Open up. 3). Open yourself to new things. 4). Get directly involved with the culture. 5). Be social.

3.3 A Child Of The Neighborhood (HildMa)

In addition, my friend from Batak tribe, his associations shocked me. What I thought was unusual turned out to be something she considered normal. Starting from the very open way of dressing and sleeping with his girlfriend. It really shocked me. Although maybe there are also many like that here. But, it's just that this is the first time I have heard and seen it with my own eyes.

From this, it can be seen that it is true that everyone has their own regional characteristics and habits. We should respect it as best we can even though the difference can make us become influenced and carried away. Do not let us forget what we should avoid and still have to take care of what we should take care of.

4. Comparing Foreign Culture

- The Influence Of Foreign Fashion On The Style Of Dress In Indonesia (HanFK)

The influence of outside fashion that enters Indonesia has a positive and negative impact in terms of dressing culture. Actually, it is not wrong if we follow the style of dressing from outside, but we should be able to choose which clothes are appropriate to wear and which are not. Don't let it bring bad influence to us Indonesians.

However, it's important to remember that despite the significant impact of outside fashion influences, Indonesia's cultural identity still plays an important role in shaping fashion styles. Many Indonesians still choose to blend traditional elements with modern trends or keep a more conservative style of dressing in accordance with their cultural values.

5. Non Verbal Communication

- See The Difference in Non-verbal Communication (IntSN)

The difference in proxemics or the use of personal space is also a problem for Andi, from Batak, when interact with his friend, a sundanese. . The Batak culture tends to value closer physical contact and has a narrower zone of personal distance, while the Sundanese culture maintains a wider physical distance and has a wider zone of personal distance. Andi feels uncomfortable

with the greater physical distance from his Sundanese friends because he is used to the closer physical contact in Batak culture.

According to my opinion, this incident illustrates the cultural experience known as culture shock that Andi went through when he moved to a new environment with a culture that was vastly different from his own, especially in terms of non-verbal communication. Andi undoubtedly experienced the common phases of culture shock, such as the honeymoon stage, negotiation stage, adjustment stage, and adaptation stage. However, Andi quickly went through these phases and easily adapted to the culture in his new environment.

6. Stereotypes

- Stereotypes, the titled is Ethnic Stereotypes in Indonesia (YanRD)

Indonesia is the country that have many island and the cultural. Java is one big island in Indonesian. There are two ethnics in Java, Javanese and Sundanese. Javanese famous with stereotypes which friendly with another people that we know or not, majority people is obedient, polite and calm tone of voice, and easy to mingle. Meanwhile stereotypes in Sundanese is cheerful, friendly, really respect your parents. Women that easy to mingle and man that humourist. Because ethnic Sundanese and Javanese side by side just redistrict with river that call Cimanuk. But there is good efforts from both of local governments to unite them. Besides that there are several things that we can do, such us growing the tolerance, the spirit of nationalism, a cooperative attitude, sympathy and empathy, remove negative stereotypes on certain ethnic. The more things that are done over time the stigma and stereotypes between ethnic groups will disappear. And will create a harmonious society. Although it is not easy but with the support of the society and the government this can be realized properly and become a harmony.

7. Encountering Different Culture

7.1 Pros and Cons of Problems In Mobile Legends Game (OktD)

For things that make me disagree in this game there is a lack of ethics and morals for some people if they experience defeat in the game they tend to get emotional and say inappropriate words, even I have experienced when my teammates played not well until my other teammates even racist carried the name of tribe, race and sometimes they vilified the good name of parents. It is very inappropriate and lacks ethics and morals for this popular culture. It would be nice to play a game that should not say inappropriate words and offend someone,

7.2 How We Encountering Different Culture (AnsyA)

This text leads to the way how we encountering different culture among alumni. It was not easy to meet new people from different generations but everyone must be confident and accept the situation when someone more successful than other.

I think I could handle difficult situation when I met old friends and new friends from many different of alumni. The level of fear of greeting and fear of not being accepted by friends because of long time separated, especially when my friends were married, the difference was very pronounced. What I experienced was enormous. But when we know how to behave, everything would be ok.

Students’ Score in Intercultural Reading Course

The results of the numerical data for studying this intercultural reading course at the end of the semester are as follows:

Table 3. The profile of intercultural reading class

Students	Attendance (%)	Mid exam	Last exam	Assignment
ZnN	79	80	82	80
AlfN	100	78	80	78
EvAN	100	90	90	90
DW	93	78	80	70
PAbdS	33	78	78	75
HaFK	93	80	85	85
IntSN	93	80	84	90
AdAP	100	78	85	70
YAnRD	78	88	88	88
HilMA	85	85	85	85
AnsyA	80	80	80	70
Total		895	917	881
Mean	84.6	81.4	83.4	80.1

In terms of attendance, the average student attendance in the intercultural reading class was 84.6%. This is the number recorded in the system. In fact, the class attendance rate could be higher, this is because students often forget to click absent in the system. However, with that figure, the level of interest of students in taking intercultural reading classes is already in the high category.

Students' ability to understand intercultural concepts and principles through the questions tested in the midterm exam is at an average of 81.4. This figure increases with the final semester exam results with an average of 83.4. there was an increase of 18.2%.

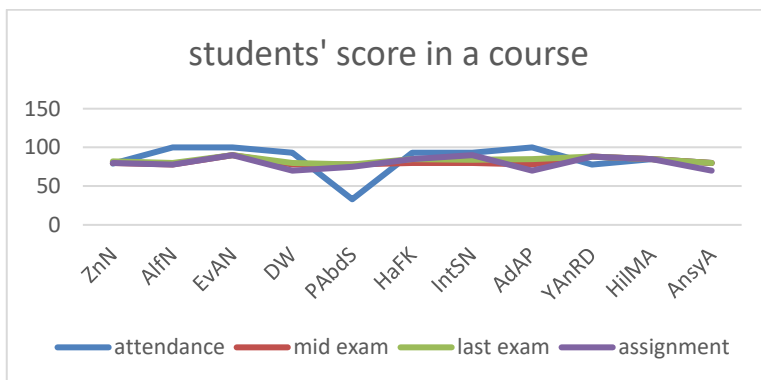


Figure 2. Students' score in intercultural reading course

Students are also given assignments related to intercultural topics in the form of presentation assignments, summaries of discussion results and project-based assignments such as writing intercultural themed articles based on their own experiences and observations of various intercultural phenomena that occur in Indonesia and the world. At the end of the article they write their opinion regarding the topic they speak. This is one of the benchmarks used as a reference in measuring their level of intercultural awareness. To appreciate their efforts and to grow their motivation, the students' articles were published in a book entitled Intercultural Reading.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1 Students' perspectives

The discussion of findings in the "Students' Perspective" aspect can be described as a qualitative exploration of how students engage with and perceive intercultural themes based on their assignments and projects over the semester. Here is how this aspect can be structured and articulated:

4.1.1 Overview of Student Themes

The findings revealed that students approached intercultural topics with a range of perspectives, which were shaped by their observations, personal experiences, and reflections throughout the semester. These themes showcased students' growing awareness and analytical abilities in understanding the complexities of intercultural interactions. The main themes covered include identity, pop culture, culture shock, comparing foreign cultures, non-verbal communication, stereotypes, and encountering different cultures.

4.1.2 Key Themes and Insights

- **Identity:** One student focused on language mixing in South Jakarta's children, examining the balance between expressiveness and the

preservation of native language. This reflects concerns about cultural hybridity and identity preservation in multilingual contexts.

- **Pop Culture:** This was a prevalent theme, where students analyzed the influence of foreign media (e.g., Korean pop culture) on teenage behavior and national identity. They noted both positive (e.g., motivation and inspiration) and negative effects (e.g., shifts away from indigenous cultural practices and increased consumerism).
- **Culture Shock:** Essays discussed culture shock experiences in various contexts, such as studying abroad and adapting to new educational environments. This theme revealed students' awareness of adaptation challenges and the stages of cultural adjustment.
- **Comparing Foreign Cultures:** Students explored how foreign fashion influences local styles, noting the interplay between modern global trends and traditional values. The concern over losing cultural identity amidst global influence was a recurring sentiment.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** This theme highlighted students' awareness of cultural differences in non-verbal cues, such as physical distance and gestures, and how they impact interactions. One essay noted the challenges faced by individuals from different cultural backgrounds and the eventual adaptation process.
- **Stereotypes:** Discussions on ethnic stereotypes underscored the importance of fostering tolerance and understanding between groups to reduce stigma and promote harmony.
- **Encountering Different Cultures:** Students described both challenges and opportunities in dealing with cultural diversity, from digital interactions (e.g., in online gaming) to real-life situations like school reunions. These reflections pointed to the importance of confidence and openness in navigating multicultural settings.

4.1.3 Student Opinions and Reflections

Most students concluded their essays with personal opinions, highlighting the need for balanced intercultural engagement. While some focused on the risks of cultural assimilation and the erosion of local identity, others emphasized the opportunities for learning and growth that exposure to different cultures provides. The reflections collectively show that students are developing a nuanced understanding of intercultural interactions, acknowledging both benefits and challenges.

4.2 Students' score in intercultural examination

From the analyze, there are some aspects that can describe:

4.2.1 Attendance and Engagement

The average attendance was 84.6%, indicating high participation despite technical issues with the system. This reflects students' commitment and interest in the intercultural reading course.

4.2.2 Academic Performance

Midterm exam scores averaged 81.4, which improved to 83.4 in the final exam, suggesting an 18.2% overall increase in intercultural competence. Assignments, which required critical reflection and integration of personal

experiences, averaged 80.1, demonstrating students' capacity to apply learned concepts.

4.3 Relation to Literature on Intercultural Competence

The student perspectives align with key concepts in intercultural competence literature, such as Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence. Their discussions reflect various stages of intercultural awareness, from recognizing differences (ethnocentric stages) to adapting and integrating diverse cultural elements (ethnorelative stages). The themes of identity, culture shock, and stereotypes particularly resonate with research emphasizing the emotional and cognitive shifts individuals experience in cross-cultural interactions.

5. Conclusion

The analysis highlights that themes such as pop culture and culture shock resonate strongly with students, sparking their engagement and prompting comprehensive discussions. These topics, among others, serve as pivotal tools for fostering deeper intercultural understanding. The study indicates that students' intercultural awareness significantly improves after completing a semester-long intercultural reading course. This growth is reflected not only in their ability to analyze and articulate perspectives on issues like K-pop influence, linguistic mixing, fashion trends, stereotypes, and non-verbal communication but also in their improved academic performance.

The development of students' intercultural competence can be observed in three key areas: enhanced communication skills for effectively navigating diverse cultural contexts, heightened cultural sensitivity allowing for better appreciation of varied norms and values, and increased open-mindedness leading to more inclusive and tolerant interactions. The creation of a published compilation of their work further demonstrates their commitment and insight, contributing to the body of knowledge on intercultural issues. The students' enthusiasm for exploring their perspectives, as we can read in their articles, has culminated in the creation of an intercultural book (ISBN) that documents their insights.

This study is expected to serve as the foundation for more in-depth research in the field of intercultural studies, ultimately enabling students to effectively implement intercultural concepts in their communication efforts.

However, this study has limitations, such as its reliance on self-reported data and a single cohort, which may affect the generalizability of findings. Future research could expand on this by including a comparative analysis of different groups or exploring longitudinal impacts of intercultural courses. Additionally, integrating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could yield deeper insights into how students internalize and apply intercultural principles in real-life scenarios. These steps would pave the way for more comprehensive studies, enriching the understanding of intercultural competence and informing effective educational strategies.

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