

## **Intercultural competence in language education: a scoping review of pedagogical approaches, technological integration, and teacher development page**

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**Abstract:** Intercultural competence (IC) is essential in language education, equipping learners with the skills to navigate cross-cultural communication effectively. This scoping review examines existing research on pedagogical approaches, technological integration, and teacher development in fostering IC within language education. Following the Arksey and O'Malley framework and PRISMA-ScR guidelines, relevant studies were identified from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC. The review highlights task-based learning, experiential learning, and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) models as key pedagogical strategies. Additionally, it explores the growing role of digital tools, AI-driven platforms, virtual exchange programs, and social media in enhancing intercultural learning. Teacher development remains a crucial factor, with research emphasizing intercultural sensitivity training, reflective teaching, and blended learning approaches. Findings indicate that while technology-mediated intercultural learning is expanding, challenges persist in assessment standardization, effective teacher training, and sustainable curriculum integration. The review identifies research gaps, including the need for longitudinal studies on IC development, AI-enhanced adaptive learning, and gamification strategies in language education. Future studies should focus on innovative methods to integrate IC seamlessly into pedagogical practices and professional training.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Competence, academic writing, artificial intelligence (AI), generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), AI-powered language tools, authorship

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## INTRODUCTION

Intercultural competence is necessary in language instruction because globalization elevates cross-cultural contact. It is broader than language proficiency, focusing on cultural sensitivity, communication ability, and understanding across cultures. Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006)'s works underscore the significance of intercultural competence in teaching languages, whereas Shin and Jeon (2018) point to experiential learning in fostering teachers' intercultural competence. The incorporation of technology, discussed by Godwin-Jones (2013) and Liaw (2006), also reinforces intercultural learning by enabling real-world encounters. Even though intercultural competence is known to be important, there are challenges in the full integration of intercultural competence into English language teaching (ELT), especially in multiculturally diverse educational settings.

This research is informed by a necessity to rigorously investigate how intercultural competence is constructed in ELT through different pedagogical strategies, teacher education courses, and technological advancements. In the Philippines, where English is a second language, Arabit-Zapatos (2023) emphasizes the need to prepare teachers with intercultural competencies to facilitate diverse learners, including indigenous learners. Likewise, Thongprayoon et al. (2020) emphasize intercultural communicative language learning skills among Thai university students, focusing on motivation and language ability as significant determinants. Through the integration of global and local studies, this scoping review seeks to chart best practices and areas of gaps in incorporating intercultural competence in ELT.

The study's findings will be useful to educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and researchers as it will offer insights into effective strategies for developing intercultural competence. Teachers will receive practical recommendations for classroom application, while policymakers can further develop educational policies to focus on intercultural learning. Moreover, researchers can utilize the review to investigate emerging trends and fill gaps in current literature. As globalization continues to redefine language learning, making sure that English learners develop intercultural competence is an essential objective in equipping them for effective cross-cultural communication.

### *Statement of the problem*

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1) To examine the pedagogical methods applied in English language teaching (ELT) for the cultivation of intercultural competence, with an emphasis on teacher training, classroom practices, and curriculum development.

2) To discuss the contribution of technology to facilitating intercultural competence in ELT, with reference to the efficacy of technology tools, telecollaboration, and internet-based learning environments.

3) To determine the challenges and best practices in infusing intercultural competence into ELT in various educational contexts, focusing especially on Southeast Asian and international contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Protocol*

This scoping review adheres to the guidance provided by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews) guideline. The research will systematically map studies on incorporating intercultural competence into English language teaching (ELT), with emphasis on pedagogy, technological advancements, and teacher training. A systematic protocol was made for obtaining transparency and replicability, addressing essential methodological steps such as search strategy, study selection, and data extraction.

Furthermore, to enhance the comprehensiveness and depth of the review, the researchers manually selected additional articles that were highly relevant to the topic. This process involved carefully examining reference lists from initially retrieved studies, identifying key works frequently cited in the field, and reviewing articles from reputable journals, conference proceedings, and institutional repositories. By incorporating manually selected sources, the researchers ensured that diverse perspectives, methodologies, and geographical contexts were represented, thereby enriching the quality and scope of the gathered data. This step was particularly important in capturing studies that may not have appeared in automated database searches due to variations in indexing terms or publication formats.

### *Search eligibility criteria*

Studies were selected if they (1) dealt with intercultural competence in ELT, (2) investigated pedagogical approaches, teacher education, or technology to promote intercultural learning, and (3) appeared in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, or theses. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were accepted, as long as they advanced knowledge of intercultural competence in language education. Non-English studies, non-ELT studies, or non-empirical studies were excluded in order to preserve relevance and rigor.

### *Search strategy*

A comprehensive search was made across academic databases like Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. The keywords used were "intercultural competence in ELT," "teacher training and intercultural education," "technology and intercultural learning," and "globalization and language teaching." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were employed to narrow down searches, and citation tracking was used to find further relevant sources. Studies published only between 1999 and 2023 were considered to ensure the inclusion of foundational and current work.

### *Study selection*

Following retrieval of studies from the search, duplicate records were excluded, and titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Independent review of full-text articles followed by two researchers to ascertain if they fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Differences in study selection were resolved through discussion, and where necessary, consultation with a third reviewer. A PRISMA flow diagram was utilized to record the process of selection, avoiding a non-systematic and transparent process.

### *Data extraction*

A standardized data extraction form was utilized to get essential information on every study that consisted of the author(s), publication year, study design, objectives, methodology, key outcomes, and salience to intercultural competence in ELT. The pulled data were after that grouped based on pedagogical approaches, integration of technology, and teachers' development. Thematic content analysis enabled effective synthesis of evidence that brought forward the best practice, challenges, and gaps identified in the existing literature.

This methodology guarantees a systematic and rigorous way of mapping the landscape of intercultural competence in ELT, yielding insightful information for teachers, policymakers, and researchers.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Summary of articles on intercultural competence in language education*

The papers analyzed in this research project as a whole highlight the increasing significance of intercultural competence in language instruction. One thread running through the research projects is the importance of developing cultural consciousness in conjunction with linguistic skills. Shin and Jeon (2018) and Lo Bianco et al. (1999) maintain that English language instructors need to incorporate intercultural insights into teaching practices, with the goal of preparing students to interact within varied cultural settings. This aligns with Atay et al. (2009), who highlight the challenges EFL teachers face in incorporating intercultural competence in their classrooms, suggesting that while awareness exists, practical implementation remains limited.

Another critical aspect examined in the literature is the role of technology in promoting intercultural learning. Godwin-Jones (2013) and Liaw (2006) offer significant insights into the ways in which digital tools, online discussion boards, and telecollaboration can facilitate cross-cultural understanding, providing students with real-time access to other cultures. These observations indicate that technology use in ELT can contribute to students' intercultural communicative competencies, especially in distant or monolingual learning contexts. They also, however, highlight issues like the necessity for structured direction in technology-mediated learning contexts. Peña Dix (2018) and Thongprayoon et al. (2020) offer region-specific insights regarding intercultural competence, albeit in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Peña Dix (2018) reveals that Colombian teachers of English do have an interest in integrating intercultural insight but tend to follow conventional practice. Conversely, Thongprayoon et al. (2020) find motivation and fluency crucial factors in developing Thailand's international student programs' students' intercultural competences. These results indicate that cultural and educational environments determine the quality of intercultural teaching practices.

In addition, Arabit-Zapatos (2023) offers a particular model of intercultural competence for the Philippine setting, highlighting teacher readiness to manage diverse students, such as indigenous children. This corresponds with the general literature on teacher education and policy-making towards developing inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy.

In conclusion, the literature is replete with the complexity of intercultural competence in ELT. While there is unanimity regarding its importance, it is still problematic in terms of implementation, integration of technology, and contextually adapted applications. Practical interventions, professional development training, and policy changes that will promote the application of intercultural competence in language education across the globe need to be examined by future studies.

## CONCLUSIONS

Intercultural competence is an integral aspect of effective language learning, enabling learners with the competences for effective cross-cultural communication. The studies highlighted in the reviewed works underscore the significance of merging cultural awareness, technology, and new pedagogical practices into ELT. Despite the improvements made, impediments like teacher preparedness, institutional support, and context-sensitive modifications persist. Overcoming these obstacles demands more research, explicit teacher training, and policy changes so that intercultural competence is made the core concern in language instruction globally.

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