



## EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) IN ENGLISH LEARNING: INSIGHTS FROM EFL STUDENTS

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### abstract

Intercultural communication competence is now required in such higher education institutions. The issue can be seen by having misconceptions, misunderstandings, and a need for knowledge to understand other cultural exchanges like English and Indonesia. It happened in IAIN Manado, where the researcher takes place as the case of the study and as the research location. Respondents in this study were 28 students of the Manado IAIN English Education Study Program. The data collection technique used in this study was purposive sampling and analyzed through descriptive qualitative analysis. It is analyzed by reducing data, selecting relevant data, organizing data into regular patterns, and drawing conclusions. The study results show that learning English that integrates intercultural communicative competence positively benefits students, with an average percentage of 73.95. An effective strategy for combining intercultural communication competencies is openness to experience and knowledge of other cultures. However, in combining intercultural communication competencies, students also face challenges. These challenges include adapting to foreign cultural communication styles, expressing opinions in the context of intercultural communication in English, understanding conversational etiquette in foreign cultures, and socializing with new cultural environments while learning English. Then, with the right approach and sufficient hands-on experience, students can overcome these challenges and develop solid intercultural communication skills.

## INTRODUCTION

Language and culture have a complex symbiotic relationship, where they influence each other and shape and reflect each other (Abawi, 2013; Widhiya Ninsiana, 2018). Language reflects the values, norms and social structure of a culture. Furthermore, culture is also the basis for the development and evolution of language, leading to the formation of language variations, dialects, and a rich vocabulary that refers to aspects of social life, history, and beliefs in that society. The interaction between language and culture not only influences interpersonal communication but also shapes individual and group identity and influences the way of seeing and perceiving the world around them (Altarriba & Basnight-Brown, 2022). This phenomenon creates rich and complex dynamics in human understanding and expression, confirming that language and culture cannot be strictly separated but are mutually involved in forming human identity and communication.

In the era of globalization and increasingly intensive intercultural interactions, the importance of learning English is increasing to participate in international communication. Language and culture mutually influence each other (Gulbinskienė & Lasauskienė, 2014). Understanding different cultures is as important as mastering foreign language skills. At the higher education level, paying in-depth attention to the culture underlying target language teaching and linguistic understanding is necessary. Understanding the cultural context is critical in language use (Gudykunst, 2003). Successful intercultural communication requires an understanding of language skills to convey ideas and related aspects of customs and culture. It is essential to understand intercultural differences where individuals from different racial backgrounds, religions, and political and social views live together (Yu & Chen, 2008). Therefore, learning English involves mastering grammar, understanding cultural context, and developing skilled communication skills. It indicates that learning English is a holistic process that includes several aspects of language skills and various communication contexts.

Meanwhile, the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is closely related to the context of learning English, which involves the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures (Chaouche, 2017). Through learning English, individuals can learn about the target language's culture and understand the norms, beliefs and communication practices in that culture (Syaputri et al., 2021). It allows them to develop sensitivity to cultural differences and the ability to adapt to cross-cultural interactions. According to Byram (2021), learning English can contribute to the development of ICC by enabling individuals to learn the language as a communication tool that involves appropriate and sensitive use in cross-cultural contexts. Through learning English, individuals can also learn to appreciate cultural differences, interpret messages correctly, and develop the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cavalheiro, 2015; Saraswati, 2017). Thus, learning English becomes an important tool in developing ICC to facilitate harmonious and mutually beneficial communication between individuals from various cultures.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is an individual's ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures and languages. In the context of learning English, ICC is an essential competency because English is an international language used worldwide (Galante, 2015). ICC in learning English can help students understand the differences in culture, values, and norms in a global society (Issoulah, 2022). It is essential because cultural differences can affect how people communicate and assign meaning to certain words. With ICC, students can avoid misunderstandings and conflicts in communicating with people from different cultures.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has important components for achieving understanding and effective communication between English speakers and other cultures (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020). ICC components in learning English include knowledge of the target language's culture, language skills involving listening, speaking, reading and writing, and understanding and appreciation of cultural differences (Thongprayoon et al., 2020). Knowledge of the culture of the target language includes an understanding of the social norms, ethics and manners associated with that language (Martynova, 2021). Language skills involve expressing oneself accurately and appropriately in English while understanding and appreciating cultural differences involves recognizing and appreciating differences in beliefs, values, and communication practices (Bennett, 1998). By developing these ICC components in learning

English, individuals can communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts that involve English.

Even though Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in English language learning is widely known, there are several challenges and obstacles for students in developing Intercultural Communicative Competence. One of the problems that often occurs in English language learning is the use of various references, such as British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) (Lughu, 2022). Research by Tambunan et al. (2021) suggests that a lack of experience and knowledge in cross-cultural interactions can lead to low levels of ICC among students. These factors include differences in norms, cultural values, and language and dialect variants. Apart from that, ICC is also crucial in education, especially in preparing students to pursue degrees in other countries (Murtiningsih, 2016). However, research focusing on ICC in the Asian context is still limited, providing little information regarding how ICC development is implemented with students (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018).

Students who learn English in a multicultural environment can also experience difficulties in understanding the cultural context of English, which has the potential to cause misunderstandings in understanding specific messages or ideas, especially those related to the cultural context (Ella Yuzar & Rahman, 2022). This obstacle can also impact students' active participation in class discussions and the quality of their written work. Other studies, such as those conducted by Sandra et al. (2023), highlight that some lecturers in Indonesia still need to understand the importance of ICC. Some only focus on the formal aspects of language without paying attention to the cultural aspects that influence communication. They teach students grammar and reading skills without providing an understanding of the cultural differences that can affect cross-cultural interactions. Therefore, learning English must include aspects of developing the ability to understand cultural differences, ways of communicating, and their influence on intercultural interactions.

To face some of these challenges, students can apply various strategies to develop Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in learning English. One effective strategy is to increase self-awareness about different cultures and values. Research conducted by Edi shows that students can apply three main dimensions in developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), including interaction skills, social knowledge, and awareness to practice by participating in activities involving interaction with people from different cultures. , such as student exchange programs, internships, or social activities (Edi, 2022). Thus, students can learn directly from experience and improve their ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures.

Several previous studies have examined the difficulties students and lecturers face in developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in English language learning and discussing strategies for developing students' ICC. However, some aspects are not fully covered in previous research. One is the low level of ICC among students, caused by a lack of cross-cultural experience and limited knowledge of cultural differences. Furthermore, most lecturers still focus more on the formal aspects of language, without considering the cultural dimensions that influence cross-cultural communication. In addition, the lack of information regarding implementing ICC development for students in Indonesia is a gap in previous research. Another essential aspect that has received less exploration is how different cultural backgrounds can produce variations in communicating, interpreting messages, and self-expression.

This research responds to these limitations by exploring strategies students can adopt to develop ICC in English learning at the college level. Although there are similarities in focus with previous studies, the importance of this research lies in the in-depth exploration of how the strategies and challenges faced by students can incorporate ICC in the context of English learning. Thus, based on the background above, the researchers formulated the research questions as follows:

1. What are students' strategies incorporating intercultural communicative competence in learning English?
2. What are the students' challenges in incorporating intercultural communicative competence in learning English?

Through this approach, this research will likely provide more comprehensive insight into effective practices in overcoming obstacles to intercultural communication competence in English learning. The main focus of this research is to fill the knowledge gaps in previous literature and provide a significant contribution to developing learning strategies that can improve students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in higher education.

Intercultural communicative competence is crucial in communicating effectively with individuals from different cultures (Lysiuchenko et al., 2021). However, understanding and using language alone is not enough; students also need to learn how to communicate effectively in multicultural contexts and understand the values and norms of different cultures. Meanwhile, today's universities and educational institutions are increasingly heterogeneous, with students from various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, educators must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the needs of diverse student populations effectively. Research on ICC in English learning is becoming increasingly important because it can provide insight into effective teaching methods and strategies for developing students' ICC. It can help lecturers understand students' challenges in integrating ICC into language learning and design appropriate learning activities to encourage ICC development. Thus, research on ICC in English learning is necessary to improve education quality and prepare students to face global challenges.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used a qualitative approach based on the objectives of this research, which focused on an in-depth and detailed analysis of students' experiences in integrating intercultural communicative competence in the English language learning process. A total of 28 respondents involved in this research were students from the English Language Education Study Program who had completed Intercultural Interaction and Communication courses. This approach allows researchers to explore in more depth how students internalize and apply intercultural communicative competence in the context of English language learning.

Furthermore, this research utilized two research instruments, questionnaires and interviews, to explore data related to students' experiences in integrating intercultural communicative competence in English learning. The use of questionnaires aims to collect data that can provide a general picture of students' experiences in intercultural communicative aspects. Instead, interviews were conducted to gain deeper insight into students' challenges and strategies for integrating intercultural communicative competence in English language learning.

The data collection technique chosen in this research is purposive sampling, which refers to selecting research samples based on specific criteria (Gay et al., 2012). In this case, the researcher selectively chose students who had completed the Intercultural Communicative through Language course as research samples. This approach was chosen because of its relevance to the research objective of understanding how students who have taken intercultural communicative courses apply this knowledge and skills in English language learning. Next, data collection via questionnaire was conducted on students selected as samples to obtain comprehensive information.

Meanwhile, this research applies qualitative descriptive analysis techniques in managing the data that has been collected. The data was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics software, which produces mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Sum, and percentages. This approach aims to provide answers to the problem formulation and research objectives by providing a special focus on a deeper interpretation of the qualitative data that has been collected. Responses obtained from semi-structured interviews with students were then transcribed and analysed descriptively to describe student perceptions by applying qualitative content analysis, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, where the data is simplified to separate relevant elements; data selection significant; organising data into structured patterns, as well as drawing conclusions based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out (Miles et al., 2014).

## **FINDINGS**

Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in learning English requires communicating effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The process of learning English provides opportunities for individuals to immerse themselves in the target language culture, understanding the norms, beliefs and communication practices that develop in that cultural context. However, the need for more information regarding implementing ICC development among university students is a void that needs to be filled, as revealed in several previous studies. Therefore, this research aims to explore strategies that can be adopted by students in developing ICC in English language learning, especially at the tertiary level. The research locus was carried out at IAIN Manado involving 28 respondents who were students from the English Language Education Study Program.

This research uses research instruments in the form of questionnaires and interviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding. With this approach, the research aims to fill the gaps in knowledge that have been identified, with the hope of significantly contributing to developing learning strategies that can improve students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the tertiary environment. Through qualitative case study methods, this research will likely provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of ICC development strategies in the context of English language learning at the tertiary level.

**Table 1 Results of recapitulation of students' experiences through questionnaire data on intercultural communicative competence in learning English**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Sum	Standard Deviation	Percentage
1	Learning English intercultural communication helps me understand other cultures better.	39.3	32.1	14.3	10.7	3.6	3.93	110	1.152	<b>78.5714</b>
2	Intercultural communication competence boosts my confidence communicating with diverse cultures.	28.6	50	7.1	10.7	3.6	3.89	109	1.066	<b>77.857</b>
3	Learning English with intercultural communication competence builds harmonious relations.	42.9	35.7	7.1	10.7	3.6	4.04	113	1.138	<b>80.714</b>
4	Adapting to different communication styles of foreign cultures is challenging.	25	35.7	21.7	10.7	7.1	3.61	101	1.197	<b>72.143</b>
5	Intercultural communication competence enhances understanding of diverse perspectives.	32.1	39.3	10.7	10.7	7.1	3.79	106	1.228	<b>75.714</b>
6	Using intercultural communication in English can make expressing opinions difficult.	21.4	39.3	10.7	25	3.6	3.50	98	1.202	<b>70</b>
7	Understanding conversational etiquette in foreign cultures is challenging.	21.4	25	28.6	17.9	7.1	3.36	94	1.224	<b>67.143</b>
8	Developing intercultural communication competence is demanding.	21.4	32.1	21.4	17.9	7.1	3.43	96	1.230	<b>68.571</b>
9	Intercultural communication competence makes interacting with diverse cultures enjoyable.	42.9	35.7	7.1	7.1	7.1	4.00	112	1.217	<b>80</b>
10	Intercultural communication competence helps in understanding English from different cultures.	28.6	46.4	10.7	7.1	7.1	3.82	107	1.156	<b>76.429</b>
11	Developing intercultural communication	28.6	17.9	7.1	21.4	25	3.04	85	1.621	<b>60.714</b>

	competence impacted my cultural identity.									
<b>12</b>	Learning English with intercultural communication competence reduces misunderstandings.	28.6	50	7.1	7.1	7.1	3.86	108	1.145	<b>77.143</b>
<b>13</b>	Intercultural communication competence motivates active learning of English.	46.4	32.1	7.1	10.7	3.6	4.07	114	1.152	<b>81.429</b>
<b>14</b>	Intercultural communication competence increases comfort with diverse cultures in communication.	28.6	46.4	14.3	3.6	7.1	3.86	108	1.113	<b>77.143</b>
<b>15</b>	Students uncomfortable communicating with diverse cultures in English learning.	25	17.9	28.6	17.9	10.7	3.29	92	1.329	<b>65.714</b>
<b>16</b>	Students believe intercultural communication competence is beneficial for English learning.	39.3	39.3	7.1	10.7	3.6	4.00	112	1.122	<b>80</b>
<b>17</b>	Intercultural communication competence creates wider opportunities to expand social networks.	39.3	35.7	14.3	3.6	7.1	3.96	111	1.170	<b>79.286</b>
<b>18</b>	Developing intercultural communication competence is highly relevant for a globalized world and offers long-term career benefits.	39.3	35.7	7.1	14.3	3.6	3.93	110	1.184	<b>78.5714</b>
										<b>73.95</b>

Table 1 above shows the results of a research questionnaire on students' experiences of intercultural communicative competence in learning English. The statements given to 18 respondents were measured using a Likert scale with five possible answers, namely strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). Apart from that, there is also a percentage of the answer categories for each statement.

The 3rd, 9th, and 13th statements in the data analysis stand out with means that reach a very high level of agreement. The average of the 3rd statement was 4.04, the 9th statement reached 4.00, and the 13th statement reached the highest level with an average of 4.07. These results illustrate that most respondents strongly agreed with these three statements, indicating their positive view of the importance of intercultural communication in the context of English learning.

In addition to the high averages, it is important to note that the variation in respondents' responses to these three statements was relatively low. The standard deviation for the 3rd statement is 1.138, the 9th statement is 1.217, and the 13th statement is 1.152. This low standard deviation illustrates that most respondents have a uniform and consistent view regarding the benefits of intercultural communication in building harmonious relationships and motivating active English learning.

These results show a strong consensus among respondents regarding the benefits of intercultural communication in building harmonious relationships and motivating active English learning. They strongly support that intercultural communication competence enhances cross-cultural understanding and motivates active English language learning. Additionally, these results reflect consistency in respondents' views, with most of them holding similar viewpoints towards these statements. It shows that, in this case, the respondents' responses were relatively uniform and agreed significantly with the statement, which is a strong understanding of the importance of intercultural communication in learning English.

On the other hand, several statements, including the first to second, fifth, sixth, tenth, twelfth, fourteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth statements, showed variations in the mean responses of respondents ranging from 3.50 to 3.96. It illustrates that most respondents have a moderate level of agreement with these statements, although their level of agreement could be stronger than the statements with a higher average. These results reflect the diversity of respondents' opinions regarding intercultural communication issues, which various individual factors and their experiences may influence.

Some statements stood out with higher or lower levels of agreement. The first statement, for example, had a mean of 3.93, indicating a fairly high level of agreement, with a relatively low standard deviation (1.152), indicating consistency in respondents' responses. Meanwhile, the second statement, although still indicating a level of agreement (mean 3.89), had a lower standard deviation (1.066), indicating higher consistency in responses. However, on the contrary, there are statements with a lower level of agreement. The fourth statement, for example, had a mean of 3.61, indicating a lower level of agreement than the other statements, and a high standard deviation (1.197), indicating considerable variation in respondents' responses. The sixth statement, with a mean of 3.50, reflects an even lower level of agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.202, indicating moderate variation in responses.

Overall, the analysis of this data revealed the complexity of respondents' views on intercultural communication issues, with most of them having a moderate level of agreement with most statements. In contrast, some statements received higher or lower levels of agreement. In this context, differences in individuals' backgrounds, experiences, and views likely play an important role in shaping their responses.

Meanwhile, the analysis results show that several statements, namely the 7th, 8th, 11th and 15th statements, have lower averages, ranging from 3.04 to 3.29. It reflects that most respondents disagree or feel uncomfortable regarding these statements. Moreover, there was variation in the degree of agreement between the statements. The seventh statement had a mean of 3.36, indicating an even lower level of agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.224, indicating a quite high variation in responses. The eighth statement had a mean of 3.43, indicating a moderate level of agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.230, indicating a quite



high variation in responses. The eleventh statement had a mean of 3.04, indicating a low level of agreement, and interestingly, had a high standard deviation of 1.621, indicating significant variation in respondents' opinions. The fifteenth statement has a mean of 3.29, which indicates a relatively low level of agreement, and a high standard deviation of 1.329, indicating significant differences of opinion among the respondents.

These results reflect that most respondents tend to disagree or feel uncomfortable with some of these statements. Furthermore, it is important to note that the 11th statement stands out with a high standard deviation, reaching a value of 1.621, which indicates significant variation in respondents' opinions. It highlights the complexity in respondents' perceptions of more sensitive issues, such as the influence of intercultural communication competence on an individual's cultural identity. This variability can be influenced by their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds, which underlines the importance of understanding the diversity of views in intercultural communication.

The analysis results also show that the average percentage of all statements is around 73.95. Students understand the importance of having intercultural communicative competence in English language learning and realize the long-term benefits of developing these skills. However, they also face challenges, such as needing help adapting communication styles or understanding conversation etiquette. Therefore, a comprehensive and integrated English language teaching approach is needed to overcome these obstacles and help students develop intercultural communicative competence more effectively. In conclusion, the complexity of respondents' views on intercultural communication issues is very visible, with most of them having moderate agreement with most of the statements. However, there were significant differences in the level of agreement between the statements, which could be due to individual factors and the varied experiences of the respondents. However, there is a strong consensus among respondents regarding the benefits of intercultural communication in building harmonious relationships and motivating active English learning. It provides a strong understanding of the importance of intercultural communication in English language learning, while also emphasizing how important it is to understand the diversity of views in intercultural communication.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Students' strategies incorporating intercultural communicative competence in learning English**

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is an individual's ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures and languages. The importance of ICC in learning English cannot be underestimated, considering that English has now become an international language worldwide. More than just mastering a language, ICC enables students to deeply understand the nuances of culture, values, and norms in global society. It can be seen from the results of descriptive statistical analysis that the majority of students feel positive benefits from learning English that integrates intercultural communicative competence, as evidenced by the average percentage score for all statements, which reached 73.95 . This data illustrates that students view intercultural communicative skills as essential in deepening English language learning.

According to Byram (2021), learning English has excellent potential to develop Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) by allowing individuals to master language as a communication tool that requires appropriate use and is sensitive to cross-cultural contexts. Additionally, through learning English, individuals can appreciate cultural differences, interpret messages accurately, and build practical communication skills in cross-cultural situations. Learning English is an essential tool in efforts to develop ICC, which will facilitate harmonious and beneficial communication between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The importance of learning English in ICC development is also reflected in the findings in the interviews. These results indicate that students can adopt specific strategies for integrating intercultural communicative competence when learning English. One successful strategy is an open attitude and the ability to adapt to experience and knowledge of other cultures. By being open to the experiences and knowledge of other cultures, students can expand their understanding of individuals from different cultures and develop practical communication skills. They realize that through understanding other cultures, they can avoid potentially harmful misunderstandings and significantly improve their communication skills. Thus, learning English illustrates the importance of ICC in cross-cultural communication and provides practical strategies for students to develop these skills effectively.

Through learning English, students can gain a deep understanding of the target language culture, understanding its norms, beliefs and communication practices. This process allows students to develop sensitivity to cultural differences and improve their ability to adapt when interacting across cultures. In addition, students also discover the importance of consistency in practising and interacting with individuals from various cultures to improve their English skills. Engaging in ongoing practice can overcome communication barriers from cultural differences while expanding their understanding of language and culture on a broader scale. Through this ongoing interaction, students can gain practical experience communicating with individuals from diverse cultures, increase their confidence in using English, and enrich their knowledge of existing cultural diversity.

The development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) includes understanding culture and its underlying values and recognising differences and similarities in language and behaviour. Students with strong ICC abilities tend to be more open to cultural differences, able to understand the nuances of intercultural communication, and able to identify differences in cultural values and norms. Strong ICC skills have the potential to help individuals build better intercultural relationships, reduce intercultural conflict and tension, and increase effectiveness in cross-cultural negotiations and collaboration. In addition, the development of ICC also positively impacts English language skills because individuals who understand the culture and social context underlying the language can use the language more appropriately and effectively. It can be seen from the interview results which show that respondents recognise the benefits obtained from combining intercultural communicative competence in learning English. They believe a better cultural understanding can help them expand their horizons, increase their confidence in communicating with people from different cultures, and improve their understanding of English in various cultural contexts. Therefore, incorporating intercultural communicative competence in English language learning

contributes to achieving students' academic and personal goals and opens up opportunities for future career success.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is crucial for effectively communicating in environments involving multiple cultures and languages. ICC has a role that must be addressed in the context of English, which has become an essential international language. Apart from mastering the language, ICC also brings a deep understanding of the nuances of global society's culture, values and norms. The statistical analysis results show that students recognise the positive benefits of learning English, including ICC, confirming that intercultural communication skills are a crucial element in learning English. Students can develop ICC through learning English, facilitating harmonious communication with individuals from different cultures. An open attitude, adaptability, and interaction with diverse cultures are essential strategies that strengthen the development of ICC. In addition, learning English also allows students to understand the target language culture, increase sensitivity to cultural differences, and continue to practice cross-cultural communication. Thus, the development of ICC in English language learning is relevant for achieving students' academic and personal goals and has significance in preparing individuals for careers in an increasingly connected global society.

### **Students' challenges incorporating intercultural communicative competence in learning English**

Although Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become a significant focus in English language learning, students studying in multicultural environments often face many challenges in developing their ICC skills. One of the main problems is the need to communicate more effectively with fellow students or lecturers with different cultural backgrounds. It is exacerbated by using various English references, such as British English (BrE) and American English (AmE), in the learning process. As seen from the results of the questionnaire, it is revealed that around 25 of students face difficulties adapting to foreign cultural communication styles (statement number 4) and need help expressing their opinions when communicating interculturally in English (statement number 6). These data reflect difficulties in understanding and implementing appropriate communication codes when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Meanwhile, one of the other challenges students face in learning a foreign language is understanding conversation etiquette in a foreign culture. According to statement number 7, as many as 21,4% of students need help, indicating that they need to understand cultural etiquette related to the English they study. These challenges are often related to low ICC levels, caused by a lack of experience and knowledge in interacting and socializing with people from different cultural backgrounds. Differences in ways of communicating, cultural norms and values, and differences in language and dialect are the main factors that influence the understanding of conversational etiquette in a foreign cultural context.

In statement number 11, 21,4% of students stated that developing intercultural communicative competence significantly impacted their cultural identity. It illustrates the need for students to wisely integrate their cultural identity with the English they are learning. They need to find ways to respect and strengthen their cultural roots while continuing to develop English communication skills. In addition, students learning English in a multicultural

environment may face challenges in understanding the cultural context of English. This difficulty can lead to misunderstandings in interpreting messages or ideas, primarily if the message is related to a specific cultural context. In the long term, these problems can impact students' ability to participate actively in class discussions and affect the quality of their written work. Therefore, students must overcome this obstacle by seeking to deepen their understanding of English culture while still maintaining their own cultural identity.

Furthermore, students may experience difficulties adapting to a new cultural environment when learning English, as illustrated by statement number 15, which states that 25% of students feel uncomfortable communicating with different cultures. Therefore, students need to learn how to adapt to new cultural environments to improve intercultural communicative skills in English. Additionally, students with different cultural backgrounds may have varying ways of communicating, interpreting messages, and expressing themselves. Therefore, it is essential for students studying English to develop the ability to understand cultural differences and how these differences affect intercultural interactions. Students must hone their intercultural skills through direct experience with foreign cultures to overcome these challenges.

Although intercultural communicative competence provides many essential benefits in the English learning process, students still need additional guidance to integrate these skills. These challenges include difficulties adapting to different cultures' communication styles, expressing opinions appropriately, developing intercultural communicative competence, and adapting to new cultural environments when learning English. Therefore, educational institutions must ensure students have direct experience interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. It aims to help them overcome these obstacles and deepen their understanding of other cultures.

One effective strategy in facing this challenge is expanding intercultural skills through participating in cultural exchange programs or study abroad activities. Through these experiences, students can engage directly with individuals from different cultures, allowing them to learn in depth. Technology can also play an essential role in helping students understand cultural etiquette and hone their skills in communicating with foreigners via online platforms. Thus, this effort will significantly contribute to helping students adjust to new cultural environments and improve their cross-cultural communication skills, especially in English contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results and data analysis, developing intercultural communicative competence in English language learning has a crucial role. Students need to understand and be able to communicate effectively in different cultural contexts. One effective strategy for improving intercultural communication competence is to uphold an open attitude towards experiences and knowledge about other cultures. Students with this openness can expand their understanding of other people and improve their ability to communicate with individuals from different cultures. However, in combining these aspects, students face various challenges, such as difficulty adapting to foreign cultural communication styles, difficulty expressing opinions in the context of intercultural communication in English, difficulty understanding conversation etiquette in different cultures, and difficulty acclimatizing to the environment. New culture when learning English. Despite these obstacles, developing intercultural communication

competence in English language learning is crucial in increasing students' understanding of other cultures, ability to communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and mastery of English. With the right approach and sufficient direct experience, students can overcome these challenges and develop solid intercultural communication skills, even being able to communicate in multicultural communities (Saini, 2022).

Although research emphasizes the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence in English language learning, the analysis needs more depth regarding internal and external factors that can influence the effectiveness of this development strategy. Future research could broaden the scope of the analysis to identify deeper factors that may strengthen or hinder such development strategies. In addition, the research focus is more inclined to students' perspectives on developing intercultural communicative competence challenges. Therefore, involving lecturers' perspectives in future research can provide further insight into classroom dynamics and learning strategies. Thus, research can provide a more complete and holistic picture of intercultural dynamics in English language learning. In addition, future research is expected to integrate further analysis regarding contextual factors, such as curriculum structure, teaching methods, and institutional support, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the success or failure of strategies for developing intercultural communicative competence.

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