

Implementing CLIL Materials to Promote Intercultural Competence in an English Program in Thailand

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Abstract

This study aimed to design and implement CLIL lesson plans based on Coyle's 4Cs framework and Byram's (1997) model to promote intercultural competence (IC), and to examine the observed development of IC through four types of materials: ready-made, authentic, teacher-brought, and student-brought. The participants were 35 Grade 12 students at a secondary school in eastern Thailand. The study adopted a qualitative research design, employing classroom video recordings and the researcher's reflections as data sources. Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the researcher's reflective journals and the classroom video recordings. The analysis followed a systematic coding process to identify patterns related to IC. The findings revealed that all four types of CLIL materials contributed to students' intercultural competence, particularly in developing attitudes of openness and curiosity. Among these, student-brought materials were found to be the most effective in fostering intercultural engagement, as they encouraged learners to research, present, and reflect on cultural behaviors and practices. The study concludes that integrating diverse materials within the CLIL framework can promote IC and provide meaningful, context-rich language learning experiences in secondary classrooms.

Keywords: content and language integrated learning, intercultural competence, CLIL materials, secondary school students

Introduction

In the 21st century, English has become a global means of communication and is widely used as a lingua franca among speakers from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Seidlhofer, 2011). As English increasingly functions beyond national and native-speaker contexts, the goals of English language education have expanded (Jenkins & Panero, 2025). Preparing students to adhere to native-speaker norms, such as attaining native-like proficiency, might not sufficiently support their use of English outside the classroom. Rather, educators are responsible for preparing students to use English in international settings where interlocutors come from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Prabjandee, 2020, 2025). In these situations, learners are

expected not only to develop linguistic proficiency but also to communicate appropriately and effectively across cultures (Deardorff, 2006). This ability, commonly referred to as intercultural competence (IC) or intercultural communicative competence (ICC), involves understanding cultural differences, demonstrating openness and respect, and interacting successfully with people from multiple cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997).

In Thailand, the importance of intercultural competence has become particularly evident in regions experiencing rapid globalization. This need is especially relevant in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a key economic development zone that has attracted international investment, tourism, and a multicultural workforce (Eastern Economic Corridor Office, 2023). As a result, students in this region are increasingly likely to encounter linguistic and cultural diversity in both academic and everyday contexts. However, English language instruction in Thai secondary schools has traditionally emphasized grammatical accuracy and examination preparation, often with limited integration of cultural content (Baker, 2012). Consequently, although students may acquire linguistic knowledge, they may still lack the intercultural awareness and skills required for meaningful communication in global contexts. This situation highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that can integrate language learning with intercultural development in more meaningful and contextualized ways.

One promising approach to addressing this need is *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL). CLIL integrates language learning with subject content, allowing learners to develop linguistic competence while engaging with meaningful, context-rich topics (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). More importantly, CLIL emphasizes culture as a core component of learning through Coyle's 4Cs framework: content, communication, cognition, and culture, which aligns closely with the goals of intercultural education (Coyle, 2007). Through this integration, CLIL offers strong potential for promoting intercultural competence alongside language development.

Despite increased attention to CLIL's integration of language, content, cognition, and culture, there is a specific research gap regarding its use to foster intercultural competence in Thai secondary schools. In particular, how various types of teaching materials within CLIL lessons support students' intercultural development remains largely unexplored (Tongwanchai & Sritong 2025). Most existing studies in Thailand focus on general CLIL implementation or language outcomes, rather than on the particular contribution of teaching materials to intercultural competence. This is especially true in regions like the EEC, where global engagement heightens the need for these skills.

To address these gaps, this study examines the design and implementation of CLIL lesson plans to promote intercultural competence among secondary school students. It also examines which types of teaching materials, including ready-made, authentic, teacher-brought, and student-brought materials, are most effectively supporting students' intercultural development. In doing so, the study contributes to the literature by providing contextualized evidence from a Thai secondary school in the EEC, delivering practical knowledge of CLIL lesson design, and highlighting the pedagogical value of different material types in developing students' intercultural competence.

Research Objectives

- 1.To design and implement CLIL lesson plans that promote intercultural competence
- 2.To examine the effectiveness of the implemented lesson plans in promoting intercultural competence.

Literature Review

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence has been widely recognized as an essential outcome of English language education in an increasingly interconnected world. Although the concept has been defined in several ways, most scholars agree that it involves the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural and linguistic differences. Byram (1997) conceptualized intercultural communicative competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness, while Deardorff (2006) emphasized effective and appropriate communication in intercultural situations. These definitions suggest that intercultural competence is not limited to learning about other cultures, but also includes the ability to interpret, compare, reflect, and engage critically with cultural differences.

Byram's (1997) model remains one of the most influential frameworks in language education because it provides a clear structure for understanding intercultural learning. The model includes five dimensions or *savoirs*: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Attitudes refer to curiosity and openness toward other cultures, while knowledge involves understanding social practices and cultural groups. The skills dimensions enable learners to interpret cultural meanings, relate them to their own experiences, and interact appropriately in new situations. Critical cultural awareness, the final dimension, encourages learners to evaluate cultural practices and perspectives based on explicit criteria. Together, these components present intercultural competence as a developmental and reflective process rather than a fixed body of cultural facts.

Why is IC important in the English classroom?

In English language classrooms, intercultural competence has become increasingly important because English is now used as a global lingua franca rather than as the property of a single native-speaker community (Jenkins & Panero, 2025). Baker (2011) argues that learners need more than grammatical accuracy or native-like pronunciation; they must also be able to communicate respectfully and appropriately with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. UNESCO (2013) likewise emphasizes that intercultural understanding is central to building inclusive and peaceful societies. However, despite broad agreement on its importance, intercultural competence is still often treated as an additional topic rather than a central learning goal in English instruction, partly because of uncertainty about how to teach and assess it systematically. However, integrating IC into the classroom presents a significant pedagogical challenge due to "conceptual ambiguity" in its definition and assessment (Sincicrope et al., 2007; (Tran & Pham, 2017). To address this, many researchers adopt Byram's (1997) framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which defines the construct as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different backgrounds using a second language. This involves a strategic

blend of linguistic knowledge and paralinguistic strategies to achieve specific communicative goals. Despite this clear theoretical foundation, the practical application of IC in ESL/EFL curricula remains fragmented, often treated as an elective add-on rather than a core competence required for global citizenship.

Implementing CLIL to Promote Intercultural Competence

The development of intercultural competence within CLIL classrooms is distinctive because it integrates linguistic learning with the negotiation of cultural meanings embedded in academic subject matter (Cenoz et al., 2014). Unlike traditional language teaching, CLIL shifts the focus from isolated linguistic forms to context-rich and meaningful communication, in which cultural awareness is not an optional addition but a central dimension of learning (Coyle, 2007; Coyle et al., 2010). The integration of intercultural competence in this study is grounded in the synergy between Coyle's 4Cs Framework and Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence. Within the CLIL paradigm, the four dimensions of Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture create conditions in which intercultural learning becomes intellectually demanding and pedagogically purposeful. This aligns with Deardorff's (2006) Process Model, which views intercultural competence as an ongoing developmental process requiring reflection, adaptability, and critical thinking rather than the accumulation of surface-level knowledge. In this sense, CLIL provides a meaningful context for learners to move beyond factual awareness toward deeper understanding of social, cultural, and political perspectives.

CLIL environments are also well suited to fostering Byram's five *savoirs*. As students engage with diverse subject matter, they develop skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) as well as skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). At the same time, collaborative tasks and classroom discussion can support the development of attitudes of openness and curiosity (*savoir être*), which are essential for negotiating meaning across cultural boundaries (Sudhoff, 2010). When designed deliberately, CLIL lessons can therefore create opportunities for learners to compare perspectives, question assumptions, and engage critically with cultural content.

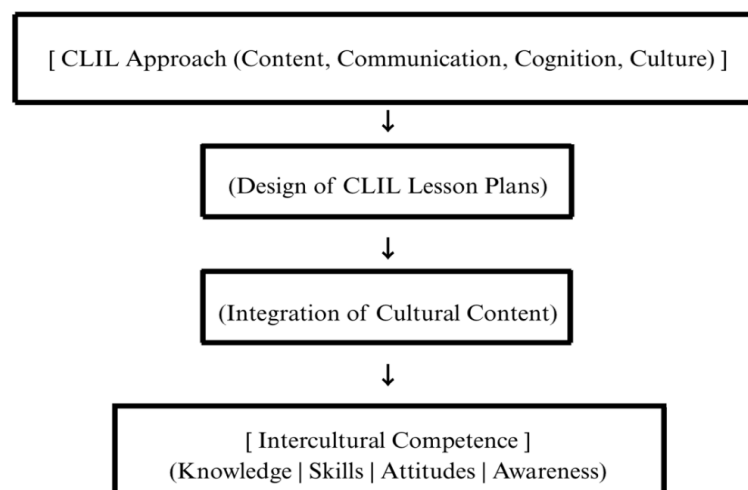
Previous studies highlight both the promise and the limitations of CLIL implementation. For example, the CulCLIL model shows that integrating cultural heritage content can strengthen students' analytical understanding of their own and others' identities while encouraging introspection and meaningful dialogue (Lemut Bajec et al., 2025). However, Koro (2018) points to a persistent challenge: instructional materials often function merely as triggers for cultural discussion, but the discussion itself may remain at a superficial level. This suggests that exposure to cultural content alone is insufficient to ensure the development of intercultural competence.

A key issue in the literature is the degree of intentionality in fostering intercultural competence. Although Coyle et al. (2010) emphasizes the value of authentic materials and multicultural texts, Koro (2018) argues that intercultural learning is often incidental rather than systematically planned. This tension highlights the importance of teacher scaffolding and curriculum design. Without explicit intercultural objectives, carefully sequenced tasks, and structured reflection, the full potential of CLIL may remain unrealized. In globalized contexts such as Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor, therefore, CLIL should be implemented as a deliberate

pedagogical space that nurtures critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) and moves learners from initial curiosity toward informed, evaluative, and reflective global perspectives.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Integrating Coyle's (2010) 4Cs Framework and Byram's (1997) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence



Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the development of intercultural competence (IC) in a CLIL classroom, using systematic video-recorded observations to capture real-time intercultural awareness (Deardorff, 2006). Data were processed through thematic analysis, involving inductive coding of student interactions and the subsequent mapping of these codes onto Byram's (1997) IC framework. To ensure research trustworthiness, the study utilized data triangulation by cross-referencing video recordings with reflective journals and observation notes, while peer review and consistent coding procedures were employed to strengthen the credibility and dependability of the findings.

Context of the study

This study was situated in a secondary school within Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a strategic industrial zone characterized by rapid globalization and a multicultural social landscape. While the current English language curriculum in this context effectively develops the four macro-skills through active learning and textbook-based instruction, it often lacks the depth required to address the intercultural dimensions of language use. The school's location in a primary economic and tourism hub necessitates more than linguistic proficiency; students frequently interact with a diverse international population, including expatriates and tourists from China, Japan, and Europe. Consequently, traditional pedagogy is insufficient for preparing learners for these complex intercultural encounters.

Participants

The study employed purposive sampling to select 35 Grade 12 students (10 males, 25 females) from an English Program in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). The sample was selected primarily for its linguistic and cognitive suitability for the CLIL framework (Coyle et al., 2010). With the majority of students at a CEFR B1 level and a small group at B2, the cohort possesses the necessary linguistic threshold to engage in the cognitively demanding and reflective tasks required to cultivate Intercultural Competence (Byram, 1997). This proficiency ensures that the participants can navigate the dual demands of content learning and intercultural analysis, which are central to the study's objectives.

Research instruments

The researcher used three research instruments to collect the data and find the outcomes following the purposes of the study: CLIL lesson plans based on the 4Cs Framework and Byram's IC model, using four different types of materials: ready-made, teacher-brought, authentic, and student-brought. Video recordings of classroom lessons and researcher reflections. The descriptions of each instrument are as follows.

Lesson plans

The CLIL lesson plans were designed for an optional English course consisting of 100-minute sessions. The researcher developed the lesson plans using four types of materials ready-made, teacher-brought, authentic, and student-brought materials based on the 4Cs Framework adapted from (Coyle et al., 2010) and the concept of intercultural competence proposed by Byram (1997). In line with these theoretical foundations, each lesson was systematically designed to integrate the four core CLIL dimensions of content, communication, cognition, and culture while simultaneously fostering students' intercultural understanding. The lesson plans specified learning aims, intended outcomes, language objectives, cultural focus, classroom procedures, scaffolding strategies, and assessment methods, thereby demonstrating that CLIL was implemented as a structured pedagogical approach rather than as an incidental addition to language instruction. Across the four instructional units, students engaged with intercultural topics through reading, viewing, discussion, comparison, presentation, and reflection, using English as a medium for exploring cultural perspectives, interpreting meanings, and expressing informed opinions. The lessons generally followed a sequence of lead-in, input, language support, task, output, and reflection, which enabled learners to activate prior knowledge, develop target language, engage critically with cultural content, and reflect on cultural similarities and differences. In this way, the lesson plans operationalized CLIL in a coherent instructional design that promoted language development, higher-order thinking, and intercultural competence.

CLIL Lesson 1: Cultures around the world

In the first CLIL lesson, the researcher implemented ready-made materials to promote intercultural competence. These materials consisted of students' textbooks typically used for fundamental subjects. The selected textbook presents updated information on current events, with each unit divided into four parts: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Each section integrates vocabulary, grammar, and

content specific to that skill. The researcher selected the reading section as the primary material to develop students' intercultural competence. The passage, titled 'From My Culture to Yours,' explores the experiences of a Japanese girl studying in the USA. Through this text, students examined differences in personality traits between Americans and Japanese, as well as school activities and culture shock.

CLIL Lesson 2: The differences of cultures between Korean and American cultures

In the second CLIL lesson, the researcher implemented Teacher-brought material to promote intercultural competence. The lesson began with a digital gamification tool, Bamboozle, to review film-related vocabulary, followed by a pre-viewing worksheet to scaffold linguistic and conceptual understanding. The core instructional medium was the film *Minari*, which portrays a Korean-American family's pursuit of the "American Dream." This authentic material served as a vehicle for students to analyze and compare American and Korean cultural values. Specifically, the lesson focused on intergenerational conflict between the grandmother, representing traditional Korean heritage, and her grandchildren, who embody American cultural norms. Despite the linguistic complexity of navigating bilingual dialogue with English subtitles, this material challenged students to engage in active interpretation, moving beyond surface-level language to achieve a more nuanced critical cultural awareness.

CLIL Lesson 3: Table manners

The third CLIL lesson the researcher used authentic material which is a video about table manners in Western culture and authentic cutlery. The video "Dining Etiquette: How to Master the Basic Table Manners" by Jamila Musayeva offers a practical and elegant guide to Western dining etiquette, covering posture, napkin use, proper handling of cutlery, polite table behaviour, and how to navigate unfamiliar foods. Through clear demonstrations and explanations, Jamila emphasizes how good table manners reflect respect, confidence, and social awareness. Connecting this to intercultural competence, understanding and practicing these dining customs can foster more respectful and effective communication in multicultural settings. When individuals are aware of and adapt to diverse cultural expectations, such as dining cutlery, they demonstrate sensitivity, openness, and the ability to navigate social norms across cultures, which is essential in both global professional and social interactions.

CLIL Lesson 4: The dos and don'ts of this country

In the third CLIL lesson, the researcher had students bring materials, such as posters or presentations, that they had prepared in advance by researching cultural behaviours and practices from various countries. These materials focused on gestures and actions that are considered polite or impolite in specific cultural contexts. In addition to gestures, students were encouraged to include related cultural elements such as greetings, traditional foods, national symbols, and their personal reflections or opinions. The purpose of this activity was to help students become more aware of cultural differences and the varying meanings that gestures and nonverbal communication can hold across cultures. By presenting their materials to the class, students practiced communication skills, deepened their intercultural understanding,

and engaged in meaningful discussions about respect and sensitivity in global interactions.

Video records

The video records were used to observe the classroom environment while implementing CLIL lessons, materials in the English classroom and to observe the phenomenon in each activity. They were recorded in every session of implementing CLIL lessons and materials in the classroom to see learners' feedback and any struggles found along the way of teaching. The videos were recorded using a phone camera. The camera was put at the back of the classroom to see the environment while integrating each activity. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school director, and informed consent was secured from all participants. The aims of the study, research procedures, and duration of data collection were clearly explained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and participants were assured that the recordings would be used solely for research purposes and would not affect their English course grades.

Expert Validation

Prior to implementation, the CLIL lesson plans underwent a rigorous validation process to ensure content validity and pedagogical appropriateness. Three experts specializing in English Language Teaching (ELT), Intercultural Communication, and CLIL methodology reviewed the materials using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The validation focused on the alignment of the lessons with Coyle's 4Cs Framework and Byram's ICC model, specifically evaluating the relevance of intercultural themes and the clarity of language objectives. Based on the experts' feedback, minor revisions were made to enhance instructional flow and cultural sensitivity. The final evaluation confirmed that the lesson plans were pedagogically sound and suitable for the cognitive and linguistic levels of Grade 12 students.

Ethical Consideration

Strict ethical protocols were followed to ensure the protection and privacy of all participants. Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the school administration, followed by the acquisition of informed consent from all 12th-grade participants. The students were provided with a comprehensive explanation regarding the study's objectives, the four-week duration, and the nature of the video-recorded sessions. To ensure voluntary participation, students were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. To mitigate potential bias or pressure, the researcher guaranteed that the findings would remain confidential and would have no impact on the students' formal academic grades or school records. This approach created a safe environment for learners to express their cultural perspectives freely, ensuring that the pedagogical intervention remained separate from summative academic assessment.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted during the first semester of the 2023 academic year over the course of the CLIL implementation. The process consisted of several steps. First, the researcher designed and implemented CLIL lesson plans based on the 4Cs Framework and Byram's model of intercultural competence, incorporating four types of materials: ready-made materials, authentic materials, teacher-brought materials, and student-brought materials. Second, each classroom session was video recorded using a phone camera positioned at the back of the classroom to capture the overall classroom environment, including instructional delivery, student engagement, peer interaction, and significant classroom events. After each lesson, the researcher wrote reflective notes on classroom dynamics, student responses, and the pedagogical effectiveness of the lesson plans and materials in promoting intercultural competence. These reflections focused on four intercultural dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness. For data analysis, all video recordings, field notes, and researcher reflections were reviewed repeatedly and analyzed using thematic analysis. Initial codes were generated from recurring patterns in students' behaviors, interactions, and responses related to intercultural competence. These codes were then grouped into broader categories and interpreted according to the study's conceptual framework, particularly Byram's dimensions of intercultural competence. Through this process, the researcher identified how each type of material contributed to students' intercultural development within the CLIL classroom.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study in relation to the two research objectives: 1) to design and implement CLIL lesson plans that promote intercultural competence 2) to examine the effectiveness of the implemented lesson plans in promoting intercultural competence. Rather than reporting the findings lesson by lesson, the results are organized into themes to provide a more holistic account of patterns that emerged across the four lessons. This thematic organization also allows the findings to be linked more explicitly to the research objectives. The findings are drawn from classroom observations, video recordings, students' worksheets and presentations, and the researcher's reflective journals.

Characteristics of CLIL lesson plans that promoted intercultural competence

To address the first research objective, the findings revealed that CLIL lesson plans that effectively promoted intercultural competence shared four major characteristics: 1) the integration of content, communication, cognition, and culture; 2) the use of culturally meaningful and varied materials; 3) opportunities for intercultural comparison, interpretation, and reflection; and 4) active student participation through collaborative and expressive tasks. These characteristics were observed across the four lessons despite differences in topics and materials.

Integration of content, communication, cognition, and culture

A key characteristic of the lesson plans was the integration of the four dimensions of CLIL: content, communication, cognition, and culture. In all four lessons, students were not only asked to learn English vocabulary or grammar but also to use language as a tool for understanding cultural practices and perspectives. For

example, in the lesson based on the textbook passage *From My Culture to Yours*, students learned comparative structures while discussing differences between American and Japanese culture. They produced sentences such as “Japanese are more reserved than Americans” and “Americans are more outgoing than Japanese,” showing that language learning and cultural understanding were developed simultaneously.

Similarly, in the lesson based on *Minari*, students used English to summarize the film, describe cultural conflicts, and express opinions about adaptation and identity. In the table manners lesson, students learned vocabulary related to utensils and dining etiquette and then applied this language to compare practices across countries. In the gestures lesson, grammatical structures such as *do/don't + infinitive* and modal expressions supported students in explaining appropriate and inappropriate non-verbal behaviors in different cultural contexts. Across lessons, language was consistently embedded in meaningful cultural content rather than taught in isolation.

Use of culturally meaningful and varied materials

Another important characteristic was the use of materials that exposed students to culturally rich content in different forms. The lesson plans incorporated ready-made, teacher-brought, authentic, and student-brought materials, each of which contributed differently to intercultural learning. The textbook passage introduced cultural comparison in a structured and accessible way. The film *Minari* offered students an emotionally engaging representation of migration, family, and cultural adaptation. The dining etiquette video and real cutlery provided direct exposure to Western table manners, while student-created posters and presentations on gestures enabled learners to bring culturally relevant content into the classroom themselves.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of these lesson plans did not depend on a single material type, but rather on how materials were used to connect language learning with cultural exploration. For example, students responded actively when discussing culture through familiar and concrete topics such as food, greetings, gestures, and family behavior. The materials made intercultural content visible, discussable, and personally relevant.

Opportunities for comparison, interpretation, and reflection

The lesson plans also promoted intercultural competence by creating opportunities for students to compare cultures, interpret meanings, and reflect on differences without judgment. In the first lesson, students were encouraged to compare the United States and Japan in terms of language, beliefs, values, cuisine, religion, and traditional clothing. Their group presentations demonstrated that they could identify cultural similarities and differences and explain them using comparative forms. In the teacher-led discussion, students were also asked what they would do if they experienced culture shock, and some responded that they would “adapt to that culture” and “try to understand that we are all different,” indicating reflective engagement with intercultural situations.

In the *Minari* lesson, students interpreted the changing relationship between David and his grandmother as a process of adaptation and acceptance. They identified issues such as financial difficulty, cultural differences, and generational conflict, and discussed how the characters gradually adjusted to one another. In the dining etiquette lesson, students explained why certain practices, such as saying *Itadakimasu* in Japan

or waiting for elders to start eating in Korea, reflect cultural values such as gratitude and respect. In the gestures lesson, students reflected on why it is important to know what one “should do and not do” in different cultures in order to avoid misunderstanding and show respect. These findings indicate that the lesson plans moved students beyond factual knowledge toward interpretation and reflection.

Active student participation and personal expression

A final shared characteristic was the strong emphasis on student participation. Across the four lessons, students were asked to discuss, search for information, present findings, answer questions, and reflect on what they had learned. Rather than being passive recipients of cultural information, they were active participants in meaning-making. For instance, in the dining etiquette and gestures lessons, students worked in groups to research a particular culture, prepare visual support, and explain cultural practices to their classmates. In the film lesson, students summarized the plot, interpreted character development, and wrote reflections. In the textbook lesson, students discussed cultural values and presented cross-cultural comparisons in groups. These tasks encouraged students to use English for authentic communicative purposes while building intercultural awareness. Overall, the findings suggest that CLIL lesson plans were most effective in promoting intercultural competence when they integrated language and culture through meaningful topics, offered varied and culturally rich materials, encouraged reflection and comparison, and engaged students actively in collaborative and expressive tasks.

Types of materials that promoted students’ intercultural competence

To address the second research objective, the findings showed that all four types of materials ready-mades, teacher-brought, authentic, and student-brought contributed to students’ intercultural competence, although in different ways. Ready-made materials provided a structured foundation for introducing cultural knowledge and supporting language practice. For example, the textbook passage and worksheets helped students understand key concepts such as culture, diversity, and culture shock, while also practicing vocabulary and comparative grammar. However, their intercultural impact became stronger when the teacher extended them through questioning and discussion.

Teacher-brought materials, especially the film *Minari*, supported empathy and interpretation. Students identified themes such as immigration, cultural conflict, adjustment, and family relationships. They discussed David’s changing relationship with his grandmother as an example of adaptation and acceptance, and several students described the film as “very sad,” suggesting emotional engagement with the characters’ experiences. These findings indicate that teacher-brought materials helped students develop intercultural attitudes and interpretive skills by engaging them with culturally and emotionally complex content.

Authentic materials promoted intercultural understanding through exposure to real-world practices. The video on Western table manners and the use of real cutlery introduced students to dining etiquette as a culturally shaped practice. Students learned about posture, napkin use, and the use of forks, spoons, and knives, and then compared these practices with their own experiences in Thailand and other Asian cultures.

Their group presentations further showed that they could explain and compare table manners across several countries, including Korea, Japan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and China. This indicates that authentic materials supported intercultural knowledge and respectful comparison of cultural norms.

Among the four types, student-brought materials appeared to promote the most comprehensive development of intercultural competence. In the lesson on gestures and non-verbal communication, students independently researched cultural practices in Japan, Thailand, the United States, Korea, and China, selected visuals, prepared posters, presented their findings, demonstrated gestures, and responded to questions. These activities required them to identify cultural meanings, compare practices across contexts, and reflect on appropriate behavior in intercultural situations. During the reflection stage, students stated that learning about gestures is important because they need to know “what we should do and not do to show respect for other cultures.” This suggests that student-brought materials not only supported cultural knowledge, but also fostered openness, learner agency, and emerging critical awareness.

When interpreted through Byram’s (1997) model, the findings show evidence of development across all five dimensions of intercultural competence. Students demonstrated knowledge (*savoirs*) by identifying cultural practices, values, and norms; attitudes (*savoir-être*) by showing curiosity, openness, and respect toward cultural differences; skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir-comprendre*) by comparing cultures and explaining the meanings behind cultural behaviors; and skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir-apprendre/faire*) by researching, presenting, and discussing cultural information collaboratively. Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*) was present at an emerging level, particularly when students reflected on the importance of adapting behavior and avoiding misunderstanding in intercultural contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that the integration of the 4Cs within CLIL lessons, together with the use of varied and culturally meaningful materials, effectively supported students’ intercultural competence. While all four material types contributed to this development, student-brought materials were found to be the most effective because they encouraged students to take an active role in researching, interpreting, and presenting cultural knowledge.

Discussion

What are lesson plans that promote IC like?

The findings of this study indicate that lesson plans promoting intercultural competence (IC) are those that intentionally integrate cultural content with language learning through meaningful, engaging, and reflective activities. Developed based on Coyle’s 4Cs Framework, the CLIL lesson plans supported the concurrent development of content and language learning (Coyle et al., 2010). Luprichová (2019) noted that CLIL can increase learners’ motivation to study foreign languages and promote their communicative competences for future study and work in international settings. In addition, Coyle et al. (2009) emphasized that CLIL provides an appropriate framework for exploring the relationship between language and cultural identity, as well as examining learners’ attitudes, values, and behaviours.

This study also drew on Byram's Intercultural Competence Model (1997), which highlights the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for intercultural communication. The findings show that effective lesson plans included clear cultural objectives aligned with language goals, integrated diverse materials, and created opportunities for interaction, comparison, and reflection. Through activities such as discussing culturally rich films, comparing table manners across countries, and presenting gestures from different cultures, students developed curiosity, openness, and respect toward cultural differences. Overall, the findings suggest that CLIL lesson plans are most effective in promoting IC when they combine language learning with authentic cultural exploration, reflective tasks, and opportunities for personal expression.

Which types of materials bring out the most of students' IC?

Among all material types, the stronger impact of student-brought materials may be explained by the greater degree of learner agency they provided. When students selected their own cultural content, prepared posters, demonstrated gestures, and responded to peers' questions, they became active contributors to intercultural learning rather than passive recipients of teacher-selected information. This finding aligns with Simon (1996) stated that the meaning of knowing has shifted from merely remembering and repeating information to being able to locate and use it effectively. Similarly, Doyle (2023) emphasized that meaningful learning requires students to search for information, organize it, and evaluate its sources in order to construct understanding. In this study, such learner-centered processes appeared to create richer opportunities for cultural comparison, interpretation, interaction, and reflection.

By contrast, ready-made materials such as textbooks were useful for establishing a basic foundation of intercultural knowledge, but their intercultural potential depended more heavily on teacher scaffolding. Shu (2024) argued that textbooks can promote intercultural competence when they integrate linguistic content with authentic cultural knowledge, diverse intercultural contexts, reflective comparison, and interactive tasks. In this way, textbooks can foster learners' cultural understanding, empathy, respect for diversity, and ability to communicate effectively across cultures. Likewise, Amante et al. (2016) suggested that EFL textbooks can support intercultural competence when teachers use them critically and supplement them with materials that reflect cultural values and multilingual realities. However, they also noted that textbooks often need to be enriched with more international cultural content and deeper representations of intercultural interaction. This implies that teachers play a crucial role in compensating for the limitations of textbooks by incorporating additional cultural resources.

Teacher-brought materials, such as the film *Minari*, and authentic materials, such as the dining etiquette video, occupied a middle position. These materials offered emotionally and socially meaningful content that encouraged students to interpret cultural meanings and make respectful comparisons across cultures, yet they still relied substantially on teacher direction. This finding is supported by Wardhany (2022), who found that English-language films can enhance EFL learners' cultural competence, particularly in relation to attitudes, knowledge, skills, and cultural awareness. Similarly, Yue (2019) argued that foreign films are valuable resources in English language teaching because they improve language skills while also cultivating intercultural communicative competence through exposure to authentic cultural settings and human

interactions. In the same vein, Xue and Pan (2012) contended that film appreciation lessons support both language and culture learning by exposing students to authentic English use and helping them develop intercultural communication competence.

At the same time, the findings indicate that the development of intercultural competence was uneven across its dimensions. While students demonstrated strong evidence of intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills of interpreting and relating, critical cultural awareness was less prominent. Most student reflections focused on identifying what is polite or impolite and how to avoid misunderstanding, rather than critically examining deeper cultural assumptions, values, or power relations. This suggests that future CLIL lessons may need more explicit scaffolding for critical reflection if the goal is to move students beyond respectful understanding toward a fuller development of critical cultural awareness.

Implications and Conclusion

The study showed that integrating diverse material types is important for promoting intercultural competence in CLIL classrooms, as each type contributed in different but complementary ways. Ready-made materials provided structure and helped organize lessons, but their contribution to intercultural development was limited unless supported by reflection and discussion. Previous studies have similarly noted that textbooks can offer intercultural representations and support communication skills, yet they rarely foster deeper intercultural competence on their own (Haerazi & Nunez, 2022; Risager, 2018; Sobkowiak, 2015). In contrast, teacher-brought and authentic materials connected classroom learning to real-world cultural contexts, encouraging students to analyze cultural practices more critically and develop greater openness toward other societies (Bernal Pinzón, 2020). Student-brought materials, such as posters and presentations, further strengthened this process by giving learners a more active role in researching, presenting, and reflecting on cultural knowledge.

Through this combination of materials, students developed important intercultural abilities, including empathy, cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and critical thinking. These findings suggest that CLIL-based instruction becomes more effective when supported by a variety of materials rather than relying on a single source. A key contribution of this study is that it demonstrates the complementary roles of different material types in fostering intercultural competence in a secondary CLIL classroom. Among them, student-brought materials were found to be the most effective because they promoted deeper cultural exploration, learner agency, and critical reflection. By contrast, ready-made materials were useful mainly as a foundation for learning but were less effective in generating meaningful intercultural discussion on their own.

Limitations of the Study

Despite offering valuable insights into the integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for developing intercultural competence (IC), this study had several limitations that should be acknowledged and considered in future research. First, the sample was limited to Grade 12 students in a single secondary school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to learners from other educational levels, regions, or cultural backgrounds. Second, the study was conducted over a one-month period, which may not have been long enough to capture the sustained development of intercultural competence, as this complex ability typically emerges

through ongoing exposure to diverse cultural experiences and repeated intercultural interaction. Third, the study relied primarily on qualitative data, including classroom observations, student worksheets, presentations, and reflective notes. While these sources provided rich and contextualized insights into students' learning processes, the absence of standardized quantitative measures, such as pre- and post-intercultural competence scales, limited the ability to assess changes in students' development more systematically and statistically.

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