



English Teachers' Strategies In Integrating Intercultural Materials To Enhance Students' Cultural Awareness

Weni Wulandari¹, Rahmadi Nirwanto², Zaitun Qamariah³

^{1,2,3}Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Indonesia

E-mail: weniwulandari486@gmail.com, rnirwanto.plk@gmail.com, zaitun.qamariah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-04-15 Revised: 2025-05-21 Published: 2025-06-10 Keywords: <i>Intercultural Materials; Cultural Awareness; Teaching Strategies.</i>	This study aims to examine how English teachers at a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, integrate intercultural materials to enhance students' cultural awareness. This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that teachers adopt a variety of strategies, including the use of authentic materials, cultural comparisons, role-playing activities, and collaborative learning. These strategies are underpinned by (Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence.), and further supported by the cultural categories proposed by (Cortazzi & Jin, 1990) as well as the cultural elements outlined by (Yuen, 2011) The study concludes that the integration of intercultural materials not only facilitates language acquisition but also fosters students' respect, empathy, and understanding of cultural diversity.
Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-04-15 Direvisi: 2025-05-21 Dipublikasi: 2025-06-10 Kata kunci: <i>Materi Interkultural; Kesadaran Budaya; Strategi Pengajaran.</i>	Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat bagaimana guru Bahasa Inggris di sebuah Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri di Palangka Raya, menggunakan materi interkultural untuk meningkatkan kesadaran budaya siswa. Studi ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan studi kasus. Observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen adalah metode pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menggunakan berbagai pendekatan, termasuk penggunaan materi asli, perbandingan budaya, aktivitas bermain peran, dan pembelajaran kolaboratif. Model Kompetensi Komunikatif Interkultural dari Byram (1997) mendukung strategi ini. Mereka juga diperkuat oleh kategori budaya dari Cortazzi & Jin (1990) dan elemen budaya dari Yuen (2011). Menurut penelitian ini, mengintegrasikan materi interkultural tidak hanya membantu siswa belajar bahasa tetapi juga meningkatkan rasa hormat, empati, dan pemahaman mereka tentang keberagaman budaya.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, learning English is not only about mastering linguistic skills but also about understanding cultural contexts. The integration of intercultural materials in English learning helps students develop an awareness of cultural diversity and enhances their cross-cultural communication skills. (Byram, 1997) emphasizes that cultural awareness in language learning enables students to communicate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds and fosters deeper cultural understanding.

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2022, encourages character development and global awareness. This aligns with intercultural education, which promotes the integration of local and global cultural values into the curriculum (Anindhia Rachmadanti, Waspodo Tjipto Subroto, 2025) In

an English language learning context, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that intercultural materials are not only included in the curriculum but are also effectively used in classroom instruction. At a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, English teachers have adopted various strategies to integrate intercultural materials into their lessons. According to (Zeynep Özişik et al., 2019) incorporating intercultural elements into language teaching not only enhances linguistic competence but also broadens students' perspectives on diverse cultural practices and values. To achieve this, teachers at a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, employ strategies such as:

1. Contextualizing language within cultural frameworks

Contextualizing language within a specific cultural framework is an effective strategy. Teachers can use case studies, examples, and texts to showcase cultural diversity and

intercultural interactions in real life. Using authentic materials like films, songs, news articles, and literature from various cultures can help students learn real-world language. It can also broaden their understanding of cultural norms and practices around the world, as stated by (Alfian et al., 2021)

2. Collaborative learning and peer discussions.

This is another approach to encourage students to work together and engage with peers. Students can learn to appreciate others' perspectives and share their own cultural experiences through discussions. According to (Purwantara et al., 2023) collaborative activities like role-playing, debates, and problem-solving tasks are highly effective in fostering intercultural discussions and building empathy among students.

3. Incorporating cultural reflection activities

Teachers can organize activities that encourage students to compare and contrast their cultural principles with those of others. This can be achieved through writing assignments or group projects where students reflect on cultural differences in contexts such as school, family, or society. Reflection helps students understand how cultural awareness affects communication and how intercultural skills can be applied in real life, as supported by (Mulyah, 2023)

4. Using technology for global interaction

Another way to integrate intercultural content is by hosting online conferences or collaborations on digital platforms. Students can use these tools to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds, enabling them to practice English while learning about other cultures in an engaging way. (Xia et al., 2024) note that technology facilitates global connections, giving students the opportunity to interact with others more easily and effectively.

5. Adapting local cultural context

Teachers can also adapt local cultural content to provide students with a more familiar context in intercultural learning. By incorporating stories, traditions, and values from a global cultural perspective, educators can create a learning environment that feels relevant and accessible to students. Research by (*Adapting Local Culture in ELT (STATE OF THE ART)* Hieronimus Canggung Darong

2015,) discusses this approach and finds that including local cultural elements in language lessons helps bridge the gap between students' home culture and the cultures they are learning about.

6. Building intercultural skills through language activities

Lastly, teachers can focus on developing intercultural skills through language activities like storytelling, interviews, and surveys. Students can learn about and discuss cultural differences through these activities, helping them communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. According to (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022) intercultural competence is essential for preparing students for the globalized world. This skill can be developed through thoughtful and well-planned language activities.

In addition to improving students' language skills, these strategies help them become more culturally aware and ready to communicate in multicultural settings. Teachers can create a learning environment that fosters both intercultural understanding and language development.

II. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies employed by the teacher in integrating intercultural materials into English language instruction. The focus of the research is directed toward teaching practices at a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, specifically involving one English teacher and one class as the subjects of the study.

1. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three primary techniques:

- a) Semi-structured interviews with the teacher were conducted to explore the strategies employed, the types of intercultural materials implemented, and the teacher's perceptions of their impact on students.
- b) Classroom observations were carried out to directly examine teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and the use of materials that reflect cultural elements.
- c) Document analysis was conducted on instructional tools such as lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, and teaching materials to identify the integration of cultural elements into the curriculum.

2. Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study were developed based on the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework by (Byram, 1997), the cultural categories proposed by (Cortazzi & Jin, 1990), and the cultural elements identified by (Yuen, 2011). The interview guide and observation sheet were designed to reflect the five components of ICC: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman (2014), which includes:

- Data reduction, by selecting and summarizing key information from interviews, observations, and documents.
- Data display, through narrative descriptions and thematic tables that illustrate patterns of teaching strategies and the integration of intercultural materials.
- Conclusion drawing and verification, to formulate the main findings and relate them to the theoretical framework.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

This study was conducted in Class XI IPA 1 at a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, by collecting data through teacher interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of instructional documents. The aim was to describe the teacher's strategies in integrating intercultural materials to enhance students' cultural awareness.

1. Intercultural Teaching Strategies

Strategy	Findings
Lesson Plan Design/RPP	The teacher included a "comparing cultural practices" component in each unit.
Teaching Methods	A communicative and task-based learning approach was employed.
Strategy Adjustment	Teaching strategies were adapted to the local student context before introducing comparisons with other cultures.

Teacher's Quote: *"I adjust the strategy to the students' level of understanding. If they struggle to grasp foreign cultural contexts, I start with local culture first and then move to comparisons."*

This approach reflects the Skills of Interpreting and Relating component of Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence framework.

2. Integration of Intercultural Content

aspect	Findings
Intercultural Meaning	"Teaching language while fostering cross-cultural understanding."
Frequency of Integration	At least one intercultural activity per week.
Material Sources	Textbooks, online articles, YouTube videos, and teacher-developed worksheets.

The teacher actively developed supplementary materials to bridge the lack of intercultural content in standard resources.

3. Cultural Categories

Cultural Category	Examples of Implementation
Local Culture	Lebaran (Eid), traditional Indonesian greetings..
Target Culture	Thanksgiving, greeting customs in American and British contexts. budaya Amerika-Inggris.
International Culture	Bowing tradition (Japan), Korean culture (K-pop), used to create relatable contexts for students

The combination of these three categories broadens students' perspectives and makes learning relevant to their daily lives.

4. Cultural Elements

Element	Materials Used
Cultural Products	Festival foods, traditional clothing, authentic texts..
Cultural Practices	Celebration rituals, greeting customs.
Cultural Perspectives	Family values, gratitude, and politeness.

All cultural elements were evident in the analyzed documents and classroom activities.

5. Classroom Observations

Observed Aspects	Findings
Intercultural Objectives	✓ The objectives explicitly included cultural competence.
Methods	✓ Group discussions and cultural case studies were used.
Teaching Materials	✓ Cultural articles and short videos were employed.
Teacher-Student Interaction	✓ The teacher actively prompted cultural reflections and questions
Student Reflection	✓ Students compared cultures and engaged actively in discussions.

Students demonstrated high engagement and a deep understanding of cultural differences.

6. Challenges and Solutions

Challenges	Teacher's Solutions
Complex and difficult cultural materials	Simplifying texts and providing translations for better student comprehension.
Lack of local cultural materials	Developing teacher-made worksheets incorporating Indonesian cultural content.
Limited class time	Integrating cultural topics as part of regular weekly activities.

B. Discussion

The research findings indicate that English teachers at a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, have implemented various strategies to integrate intercultural materials into the teaching and learning process. These strategies are not only technical in nature but also reflect pedagogical awareness of the importance of developing students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

1. Implementation of Intercultural Strategies

Byram's ICC model emphasizes five key components: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The findings from this study reveal that the teacher has applied strategies supporting the development of all five aspects:

a) Attitudes: The teacher encourages students to be open-minded and respectful toward other cultures, for instance, by beginning lessons with the local culture before comparing it to foreign cultures.

b) Knowledge: The instructional materials include cultural information from various countries, covering symbolic meanings, social customs, and ethical norms.

c) Skills of Interpreting and Relating: Students are invited to compare cultural practices (e.g., ways of greeting or celebrating holidays) through discussions and presentation activities.

d) Skills of Interaction: Students are given opportunities to actively participate in simulations, role-plays, and group projects that foster intercultural interaction.

e) Critical Cultural Awareness: Reflections during class discussions encourage students to critically evaluate and understand cultural values.

2. Representation of Cultural Categories

According to (Cortazzi & Jin, 1990), language learning materials should encompass three cultural categories: source culture, target culture, and international culture. The findings of this study reveal that the teacher has successfully incorporated all three:

a) Source Culture: Represented through discussions about greetings, the celebration of *Lebaran* (Eid), and everyday customs in Indonesian society.

b) Target Culture: Introduced via content related to Thanksgiving, Halloween, and formal expressions commonly used in British or American culture.

c) International International: Embedded through references to Japanese, Korean, and other global cultures that are relevant to the students' experiences.

The integration of these three cultural categories allows students not only to learn the language as a communication tool but also to use it as a means of understanding the broader world.

3. Integration of Cultural Elements

(Yuen, 2011) classifies cultural content into three elements: cultural products, cultural practices, and cultural perspectives. The analysis of instructional documents such as lesson plans (RPP) and teaching materials indicates that the teacher has explicitly integrated these elements:

- a) Cultural Products: Presented through the use of videos, cultural articles, and images depicting traditional foods and clothing.
- b) Cultural Practices: Introduced through activities such as role-playing greetings from different cultures and discussions on cultural celebrations.
- c) Cultural Perspectives Explored through classroom discussions on values such as politeness, time orientation, and the meaning of family, which serve as the basis for student reflection.

The implementation of these three elements significantly enhances the quality of language instruction, as students are not only exposed to *what* people do in different cultures, but also to *why* those practices are meaningful. This deeper understanding fosters critical thinking and intercultural sensitivity, both of which are essential for developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

4. Impact of the Strategies on Students

Classroom observations revealed that the strategies implemented by the teacher effectively increased student participation, broadened their cultural understanding, and encouraged tolerant and reflective attitudes. Students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm when responding to questions, engaging in discussions, and completing cultural project tasks. These findings suggest that intercultural-based learning can facilitate the development of students' character, particularly in fostering open-mindedness, critical thinking, and communicative competence.

5. Implementation Challenges and Teacher Responses

Despite challenges such as limited availability of culture-based local materials and restricted instructional time, the teacher successfully addressed these issues by creating customized worksheets, simplifying materials, and utilizing digital learning resources. The teacher's flexibility and creativity played a crucial role in adapting the curriculum to ensure that it remained both contextual and relevant to students' backgrounds and experiences.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study reveals that the English teacher at a State Senior High School in Palangka Raya, has implemented intercultural teaching strategies through the use of authentic materials, cross-cultural discussions, role-playing, and collaborative projects. These strategies encompass the three cultural categories proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1990), reflect the cultural elements identified by Yuen (2011), and support the development of students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as outlined in Byram's (1997) model. The integration of intercultural materials has had a positive impact on students' cultural awareness and engagement in the learning process.

B. Suggestion

1. For English Teachers: It is recommended that teachers continue to develop intercultural approaches in their instruction and expand their learning resources by utilizing technology and authentic materials that are relevant to both local and global contexts.
2. For Schools and Policymakers: Institutional support is essential, including professional development programs, the provision of culturally-rich learning materials, and curriculum flexibility to enable more effective integration of intercultural content in English language education.
3. For Future Researchers: Future studies could expand on this research by involving a larger number of participants or by conducting longitudinal research to examine the long-term impact of intercultural material integration on students' character development.

REFERENCES

- Adapting local culture in ELT (STATE OF THE ART) Hieronimus Canggung Darong 2015. 2015.
- Alfian, A., Yusuf, M., & Nafiah, U. (2021). Integrating Islamic Values in Teaching English: Lessons Learned from an Integrated Islamic School. *Elsya : Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v4i1.7322>

- Anindhia Rachmadanti, Wasposito Tjipto Subroto, & D. N. 2024. (2025). Portrait of the Implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in the Sustainable Lifestyle Theme in Elementary Schools. 1–11.
- Byram, 1997). (1997). Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence Multilingual Matters (Series) Byram, 1997.
- Byram. (1997) I. C. (2019). No Title. Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence.
- Cortazzi & Jin, 1990. (1990). Cultural-Mirrors-Materials-and-Methods-in-the-EFL-classroom.pdf.
- Iswandari, Y. A., & Ardi, P. (2022). Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Setting: A Systematic Review. REFlections, 29(2), 361–380. <https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v29i2.260249>
- Muliyah, P. (2023). Portraying Teachers' Strategies in Teaching English for Young Learners. English Education, Linguistics, and Literature Journal (Educalitra), 2(2), 1–10.
- Purwantara, S., Ashari, A., Nurhadi, N., Sariyono, K. E., Syarafina, A. Z., & Afriyani, R. (2023). Teaching the Fundamentals of Geography to Generation-Z Students with Collaborative Learning in Indonesia. The Geography Teacher, 20(1), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19338341.2023.2192749>
- Xia, Y., Shin, S. Y., & Kim, J. C. (2024). Cross-Cultural Intelligent Language Learning System (CILS): Leveraging AI to Facilitate Language Learning Strategies in Cross-Cultural Communication. Applied Sciences (Switzerland), 14(13). <https://doi.org/10.3390/app14135651>
- Yuen, K. (2011). The representation of foreign cultures in English textbooks. 65(October), 458–466. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq089>
- Zeynep Özışık, B., Yeşilyurt, S., & Demiröz, H. (2019). JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES Developing intercultural awareness in language teaching: Insights from EFL lecturers in Turkey *. Turkey. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 15(4), 1436–1458. www.jlls.org