

Students' Perception of Intercultural Communication Competence in Developing Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study investigates the students' perception of intercultural communication competence in developing speaking skills through a qualitative research approach. The research aims to explore how students' understanding of cultural diversity, communication norms, and intercultural awareness contribute to the improvement of their speaking performance in English. The participants of this study were second semester of university students enrolled in English learning classes that integrated intercultural communication activities into classroom practice. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and speaking performance documentation. The findings reveal that intercultural communication competence contributes to the development of students' speaking skills, particularly in terms of fluency, accuracy and appropriateness. Students became more aware of cultural differences in communication styles, politeness strategies, and contextual language use, which helped them communicate more effectively and confidently in English. In addition, intercultural learning activities encouraged active participation, critical reflection, and greater motivation to practice speaking. The study concludes that integrating intercultural communication competence into English language learning can create meaningful communicative experiences and enhance students' speaking abilities in both linguistic and sociocultural aspects. Therefore, intercultural-oriented instruction is recommended to support more contextual and communicative English learning practices in higher education.

Keywords: *intercultural communication competence, speaking skill, qualitative research, English learning.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of globalization, international mobility, and digital communication has transformed the way people interact across cultural boundaries. As English functions as a global lingua franca, language learners are increasingly required to communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds rather than exclusively with native speakers of English. Consequently, the goals of English language

education have shifted from developing linguistic competence alone to fostering learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts. This shift highlights the importance of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), which encompasses the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness necessary for successful intercultural interaction (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). In higher education, particularly in English Language Education programs, ICC has become a crucial competency because students are expected to participate in multicultural academic, professional, and social environments.

Speaking is one of the most important yet challenging language skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Effective speaking requires not only grammatical and lexical knowledge but also the ability to interpret and respond appropriately to cultural norms, values, and communication styles. Learners who possess intercultural competence are more likely to communicate confidently, avoid misunderstandings, and adapt their communication strategies in intercultural interactions (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Therefore, the integration of ICC into language learning has been increasingly recognized as an essential factor in improving students' speaking skills and preparing them for real-world communication.

The significance of investigating students' perceptions of ICC lies in the fact that perceptions influence learners' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Students who perceive intercultural competence as relevant and beneficial are more likely to actively participate in intercultural learning experiences and develop stronger communication skills. Understanding students' perceptions can also provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers in designing learning activities that effectively integrate intercultural dimensions into speaking instruction. Given the growing demand for graduates who can communicate across cultures, examining students' views on the role of ICC in speaking development is both educationally and socially relevant.

A considerable body of literature has explored the relationship between intercultural competence and language learning. Byram (1997) proposed the concept of intercultural communicative competence, emphasizing that successful communication requires attitudes of openness, cultural knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness. Deardorff (2006) further developed a process-oriented model of intercultural competence, highlighting the

importance of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills that lead to effective and appropriate communication outcomes. Similarly, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) argued that language learning and intercultural learning are inseparable because language is embedded within cultural contexts.

Several empirical studies have examined the role of intercultural competence in language education. Baker (2015) found that intercultural awareness enhances learners' ability to negotiate meaning and communicate effectively in multilingual settings. Peng, Lu, and Wang (2020) reported that students with higher levels of intercultural competence demonstrated greater willingness to communicate in English and stronger communicative confidence. Likewise, Li (2022) revealed that integrating intercultural content into speaking activities improved learners' interactional competence and engagement in classroom communication. More recently, Zhang and Zhou (2023) found that intercultural learning experiences contributed positively to students' oral communication skills by increasing their awareness of cultural diversity and communicative appropriateness. Hasyim, R., Noni, N., & Nur, S. (2025) stated that research findings demonstrate that ICT-based instruction substantially enhances students' speaking competence, not only in linguistic terms but also in affective and intercultural dimensions

Although these studies confirm the importance of ICC in language learning, most previous research has primarily focused on measuring intercultural competence, examining its relationship with language proficiency, or evaluating the effectiveness of intercultural teaching interventions. Research has also tended to emphasize teachers' perspectives, curriculum implementation, or intercultural training programs. Comparatively fewer studies have specifically investigated students' perceptions of how intercultural communication competence contributes to the development of speaking skills, particularly in EFL higher education contexts. Furthermore, existing studies often examine ICC and speaking ability as separate constructs rather than exploring students' understanding of the interrelationship between them.

The synthesis of previous studies indicates that: (1) ICC is recognized as a critical component of language learning; (2) intercultural competence positively influences communication effectiveness, confidence, and interactional skills; and (3) intercultural learning activities can enhance speaking performance. However, there remains limited evidence regarding how students themselves perceive the contribution of ICC to the development of their speaking skills. This constitutes the research gap addressed by

the present study. While previous studies have established the theoretical and pedagogical importance of ICC, they have not sufficiently explored students' perspectives on the specific ways intercultural competence supports speaking development in English language learning. Understanding these perceptions is important because students are the primary stakeholders in the learning process, and their views can inform more effective instructional practices.

The originality of this study lies in its focus on students' perceptions of intercultural communication competence as a factor influencing speaking skill development. Unlike previous studies that predominantly measured competence levels or evaluated experiences and interpretations of the role of ICC in speaking. By doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how intercultural competence is perceived and experienced by EFL learners within the context of speaking development.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to investigate students' perceptions of intercultural communication competence in developing speaking skills and to identify the aspects of ICC that students perceive as most influential in enhancing their oral communication abilities. To achieve this objective, the study will collect and analyze students' perspectives regarding their intercultural experiences, awareness, attitudes, and communication practices in relation to speaking development. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence that can support the integration of intercultural communication competence into English speaking instruction and contribute to the advancement of intercultural language education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in developing speaking skills. The study focused on understanding participants' experiences, opinions, and interpretations regarding the role of intercultural competence in improving their English-speaking abilities. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and provides rich descriptions of their experiences in intercultural learning contexts.

The participants of this study were undergraduate students enrolled in the English Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo. Participants

were selected were active students in the English Language Education Program, they had completed speaking-related courses, had been exposed to intercultural topics, activities, or interactions during their English learning experiences. A total of 15 students participated in the study. The number of participants was determined based on data saturation, which occurred when no new information emerged from the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. This approach allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine participants' perspectives while retaining the freedom to go deeper into new problems. Getting in touch with participants and outlining the study's objectives, getting each participant's informed consent, Setting up one-on-one interviews, Conducting interviews via video conferencing services or in person, capturing the interviews on audio with consent from the participants, To record further observations, take field notes both during and right after each interview. verbatim transcription for examination of all interview tapes. To guarantee comfort and clarity of expression, each interview lasted roughly 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in the participant's preferred language.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, who was responsible for planning the study, conducting interviews, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions. To guide the interviews, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed. The interview questions focused on: Students' understanding of intercultural communication competence, Experiences interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Perceived influence of intercultural competence on speaking confidence, Perceived influence of cultural knowledge and awareness on speaking performance, Challenges encountered in intercultural communication, Suggestions for integrating intercultural competence into speaking instruction.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data. There were multiple phases to the analysis: In order to fully comprehend the data, the researcher read and reread the interview transcripts multiple times. Initial ideas, significant words, phrases, and statements pertaining to students' perceptions of speaking development and intercultural communication competence were highlighted and given codes. Based on common meanings and recurrent patterns, similar codes were categorized into larger groups.

Categories were further organized into themes representing major aspects of students' perceptions. The themes were reviewed against the original data to ensure

that they accurately reflected participants' perspectives and experiences. The final themes were interpreted in relation to the research objective and existing literature. Representative quotations from participants were selected to support the findings and provide evidence for the identified themes.

To increase the reliability of the results, a number of techniques were used, such as member checking, which involved giving participants the opportunity to go over interview summaries and provide clarification where needed. Repeatedly reading and analyzing the transcripts allowed for sustained interaction with the data. The study process, including data collection methods, coding choices, and theme development, was recorded through an audit trail. Throughout the investigation, the researcher made thoughtful notes to reduce personal prejudice and guarantee that conclusions were supported by the data. To help readers assess if the results could be applied to similar situations, comprehensive explanations of the participants, research environment, and processes were given.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1. Students Activities in speaking class and the Intercultural Aspects

Topic	Activity	Media	Intercultural Aspect
Making an appointment	Role play with AI	ChatGPT + ELSA	Direct vs. indirect speech
Giving opinion	Record video on Flip	Flip + AI feedback	Politeness strategies
Apologizing	Cross-cultural simulation	ChatGPT	Face-saving culture
Small talk	YouTube video analysis	YouTube	Cultural differences in topic preferences

The findings revealed that students perceived intercultural communication competence as an important factor in developing their speaking skills. Through various speaking activities, students became aware of cultural differences in

communication styles and learned to adapt their language use according to different social and cultural contexts.

Four major intercultural aspects emerged from the data: direct versus indirect speech, politeness strategies, face-saving culture, and cultural differences in topic preferences.

Table 2. Students' Speaking Performance

Students	% Fluency	% Accuracy	% Appropriateness
15	30.7	31.5	37.9

The analysis of students' perceptions revealed that Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) contributed positively to the development of their speaking skills. Based on the speaking assessment, three aspects were identified: fluency, accuracy, and appropriateness. The results showed that appropriateness obtained the highest percentage (37.9%), followed by accuracy (31.5%) and fluency (30.7%).

Findings of interview

Most students reported learning English since elementary school. However, they felt that speaking skills improved significantly at the university level due to increased opportunities for discussion, presentations, and technology-assisted learning.

Question 1. Could you briefly describe your experience learning English?

Representative Responses

Student 1: "I have learned English since elementary school, but I rarely practiced speaking until university."

Student 6: "Speaking activities and online platforms have helped me improve my confidence."

Student 12: "I learn English both in class and through social media and YouTube."

Most participants viewed speaking practice and authentic communication as crucial for language development.

Question 2. Have you ever interacted with people from different cultural backgrounds?

Thirteen of the fifteen students reported intercultural interactions through social media, online learning platforms, international webinars, or foreign friends.

Representative Responses

Student 3: "I joined an international webinar and interacted with participants from several countries."

Student 9: "I communicate with foreign students through Instagram and WhatsApp."

Student 14: "I met exchange students at my university."

Question 3. How often do you participate in activities involving intercultural communication?

Table 3. Participation activities involving intercultural communication

Frequency	Number of students
Frequently	5
Occasionally	8
Rarely	2

Question 4. What does intercultural communication competence mean to you?

Students generally defined ICC as the ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with people from different cultures.

Representative Responses

"It is the ability to understand and respect cultural differences while communicating."

"It means communicating successfully without causing misunderstandings."

Question 5. Why is understanding different cultures important when learning English?

Students believed cultural understanding helps avoid misunderstandings and improves communication effectiveness.

Representative Responses

"Different cultures have different communication styles."

"Knowing culture helps me understand how native speakers communicate."

Culture supports effective communication.

Question 6. How has learning about other cultures influenced your understanding of English communication?

Students reported becoming more aware of politeness, communication styles, and cultural sensitivity.

Representative Responses

"I learned that some cultures are more direct than others."

"I became more careful when expressing opinions."

Question 7. What cultural knowledge is necessary for effective communication in English?

Students highlighted politeness, customs, values, and communication styles.

Table 4. the important of cultural knowledge for effective communication

Cultural knowledge	Frequency
Politeness norms	13
Communication styles	11
Cultural values	10
Social customs	12

Question 8. How do you feel when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds?

Table 5. students' feeling when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds

Response Category	Frequency
Excited	8
Curious	5
Nervous but interested	2

Question 9. What aspects of intercultural communication do you enjoy most?

Students enjoyed learning new perspectives and cultural experiences.

Representative Responses

"I like learning different ways of thinking."

"I enjoy hearing stories from people in other countries."

Question 10. Have you experienced cultural differences that made communication difficult?

Ten students reported experiencing communication difficulties.

Common Challenges

Different accents

Different communication styles

Misinterpretation of meanings

Representative Response

"Sometimes I misunderstood jokes because of cultural differences."

Question 11. How important are openness, respect, and empathy in intercultural communication?

All students considered these qualities essential.

Respect and empathy are the foundation of intercultural communication.

Question 12. How do you adapt your communication when speaking with people from different cultures?

Students reported simplifying language, speaking clearly, and avoiding culturally sensitive topics.

Representative Responses

"I use simpler vocabulary."

"I try to speak more politely."

Question 13. What strategies do you use to avoid misunderstandings?

Table 6. strategies used to avoid misunderstanding

Strategies	Frequency
Asking for clarification	12
Speaking slowly	8
Confirming understanding	10
Using simple language	11

Question 14. How do you respond when someone has a different cultural perspective from yours?

Students generally reported listening respectfully and trying to understand other viewpoints.

Representative Responses

"I listen first before responding."

"I respect their opinion even if I disagree."

Question 15. Can you describe a successful intercultural communication experience?

Most students shared positive experiences in online discussions, international webinars, and interactions with foreign students.

Representative Response

"I successfully presented my ideas during an international online seminar."

Discussion

The results show that by improving students' communicative appropriateness, interactional awareness, and cultural sensitivity, intercultural communication competence aided in their speaking development. One noteworthy finding is that students realized that effective speaking entails more than just creating grammatically sound phrases. They understood how crucial it is to choose expressions that conform to social standards and cultural expectations. This result validates Byram's (1997) claim that intercultural and linguistic competency are necessary for effective communication.

The appointment-making activity highlighted the importance of understanding direct and indirect communication styles. Students learned that communication preferences vary across cultures and that effective speakers adapt their language to meet contextual expectations. This adaptability is a key characteristic of intercultural communicative competence.

Similarly, the opinion-giving activity demonstrated how politeness strategies contribute to successful communication. Students reported increased confidence in expressing ideas because they had acquired linguistic tools for maintaining respect and minimizing interpersonal tension. This finding suggests that intercultural awareness can support speaking confidence and interaction quality.

The apologizing activity further strengthened students' understanding of face-saving practices. Students learned that effective communication requires sensitivity to others' feelings and cultural values. As a result, they became more capable of managing interpersonal relationships through language.

Another important finding concerns cultural differences in small-talk topics. Students realized that communication breakdowns may occur when speakers assume that conversational norms are universal. By understanding cultural differences in topic preferences, students became better prepared to initiate and sustain conversations in intercultural settings.

Direct versus Indirect Speech: In the appointment-making activity, students explored how different cultures express requests either directly or indirectly. The findings indicated that students became more aware of the need to adjust their language according to cultural expectations.

Several students reported that they initially preferred direct expressions because they were easier to produce. However, after engaging with intercultural communication tasks, they realized that indirect requests are often perceived as more polite and appropriate in certain cultural contexts.

This awareness helped students develop greater flexibility in speaking and encouraged them to select expressions that were culturally acceptable rather than relying solely on literal translations from their first language.

Politeness Strategies: During the opinion-giving activity, students recognized the importance of politeness strategies when expressing agreement or disagreement. The findings showed that students learned to present opinions more respectfully by using hedging expressions and softening devices such as: "I think...", "In my opinion...", "I understand your point, but...", "Perhaps another perspective could be..." Students reported that these strategies enabled them to participate more confidently in discussions because they could express disagreement without causing conflict.

Face-Saving Culture: The apologizing activity introduced students to the concept of face-saving, which refers to maintaining respect, dignity, and harmonious relationships during communication.

Students reported that before the activity they often viewed apologies as simple expressions such as "I'm sorry." However, they later understood that different cultures have different expectations regarding apologies, explanations, and responsibility-taking.

The small-talk activity exposed students to differences in conversational topics across cultures. Students discovered that topics considered acceptable in one culture may be regarded as too personal or inappropriate in another. For example, questions about

age, salary, marital status, or religion may be common in some societies but avoided in others. Notably, ICC grows gradually over time through linguistic socialization in the classroom community of practice, and small talk plays a crucial role in creating and preserving the relationships and norms of the community.

The students developed greater cultural awareness regarding conversational norms and became more careful when initiating and maintaining conversations with people from different cultural backgrounds. By observing or learning before interacting the students also act thoughtfully, though they have differences (Garner, A. M., & Sharma, B. K. (2022).

Students reported that learning about cultural differences helped them choose appropriate expressions, avoid potentially offensive language, and communicate more effectively with people from different backgrounds. This finding supports Byram's (1997) view that intercultural communicative competence involves the ability to interact appropriately and effectively across cultures. The result also indicates that students became more aware of how communication styles vary among cultures, particularly regarding politeness, indirectness, and social conventions.

The higher percentage of appropriateness compared to fluency and accuracy suggests that intercultural learning contributes substantially to the pragmatic dimension of speaking. Students appeared to understand not only what to say but also how and when to say it in culturally acceptable ways.

Another important finding is that intercultural communication competence contributed to students' confidence in speaking English. Interview data showed that students felt more comfortable expressing their ideas after gaining knowledge about different cultures and communication practices.

Many students indicated that understanding cultural diversity reduced their fear of making mistakes during communication. Rather than focusing exclusively on grammatical correctness, they became more concerned with conveying meaning effectively and respectfully. This shift in perspective encouraged greater participation in speaking activities and increased willingness to communicate.

The results are consistent with earlier research indicating that intercultural awareness lowers fear in cross-cultural contacts and increases communicative confidence. Students who are aware of cultural differences are more equipped to

predict variances in communication style, which boosts their self-assurance in social situations.

The findings also demonstrate that students developed communication strategies that supported their speaking performance. Milliner, B., & Dimoski, B. (2024) in their research found that the utility of information-gap speaking tasks for: (a) practicing communicative strategies; and (b) developing learners' communicative competencies for real-world English as a lingua franca contexts.

Participants reported learning how to adjust their language, clarify meanings, and respond appropriately when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Deardorff's (2006) theory, which highlights that intercultural competence comprises the abilities required to interact successfully and appropriately in cross-cultural contexts, is supported by this outcome. Increased exposure to cultural viewpoints and experiences with intercultural communication seems to help the students in this study acquire these abilities.

These findings suggest that speaking instruction should integrate intercultural communication competence because successful oral communication depends not only on fluency and accuracy but also on the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively across cultural boundaries. The study therefore supports the view that intercultural competence is an essential component of speaking proficiency in contemporary English language education.

The findings indicate that students demonstrated stronger performance in communicative appropriateness than in linguistic aspects such as fluency and accuracy. This suggests that intercultural communication competence played a significant role in helping students use English appropriately according to social and cultural contexts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that intercultural communication competence contributes positively to students' speaking skills by enhancing communicative appropriateness, increasing confidence, and developing adaptive communication strategies. Nurzhanova, Z. D., & Issimova, E. B. (2022) pointed that speaking skill is closely related to the concept of "intercultural communication", without highly developed speaking skills, effective intercultural communication is impossible.

The predominance of appropriateness among the three speaking aspects indicates that intercultural competence particularly strengthens learners' ability to communicate effectively in culturally diverse situations. Therefore, incorporating intercultural communication competence into speaking instruction can help students become not only proficient language users but also competent intercultural communicators capable of interacting successfully in global contexts.

Students experienced intercultural communication mainly through digital environments. Based on the result they like to have the knowledge of intercultural communication through film, game, quiz and the like. Aladini, A., & Gheisari, A. (2025) said that integrating Digital Language Exchanges into language learning curricula can significantly enhance learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, and intercultural competence, lending support to the potential of Digital Language Exchanges to provide a more personalized and interculturally enriching learning experience

Most students reported occasional participation, especially through online activities. They eager to use digital media to find anything they want. Up to 95% of teenagers and students use social media, with roughly one-third reporting they are online "almost constantly". Daily usage averages around 5 hours. The most popular platforms among students include YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram. For the creative students they can create thoughtful content that also earn money from that but for the lazy one they just enjoy what coming up on their social media Effective and respectful communication across cultures.

Culture supports effective communication, in her research Aririguzoh, S. (2022) stated that cultural differences can shape interpersonal communication. It then proposes strategies to enhance cross-cultural communication at every communication step, so it can be said that the differences create gaps in the communication then the relationship may become closer because of the gap.

The students increased awareness of communication norms. Huang, T. L et.al. said that social norm awareness was influenced by social presence perceptions and learning practices (such as community learning and instructional support), which in turn affected norm compliance. Often, they practice speaking by considering culture, they are aware about the norms, it is because they conducted the rules again and again, it was strengthened their understanding about the rules and norms in the target

language culture. The students had positive curiosity toward cultural diversity. Cultural diversity has grown in importance and visibility in today's digitally connected and globalized society. Through school, employment, travel, social media, and online communication platforms, people regularly engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Building successful relationships, encouraging respect for one another, and fostering effective cross-cultural communication all depend on an awareness of and appreciation for cultural variety.

Cultural diversity enhances the learning environment from an educational standpoint by exposing pupils to a variety of perspectives and experiences. It promotes empathy, critical thinking, and tolerance for diversity. Students who interact with people from different cultures have a wider perspective and improve their ability to communicate in intercultural environments. Cultural diversity in language acquisition offers real-world communication scenarios and aids students in comprehending how cultural norms and become more capable of communicating effectively in multicultural settings. In language learning, cultural diversity provides authentic contexts for communication and helps learners understand how language is influenced by cultural norms and values. Deardorff, D. K. (2020) stated building intercultural competence as a way to comprehend and value diversity, build connections with people from different backgrounds, participate in intercultural communication, close societal gaps, and demonstrate cultural diversity.

The students also have much Learning through cultural exchange. In the contemporary globalized world, cultural exchange occurs in various settings, including education, tourism, international programs, workplaces, community activities, and digital environments. Advances in technology and communication have expanded opportunities for cultural exchange, enabling people from different countries and cultures to interact through social media, virtual exchanges, online discussions, and collaborative projects without geographical limitations.

In educational contexts, cultural exchange plays an important role in fostering global awareness and intercultural competence. Students learn about different ways of life, cultural values, communication styles, and worldviews through interaction with peers from diverse backgrounds. These experiences help learners develop empathy, tolerance, and respect for cultural differences while broadening their perspectives on global issues. Conti (2025) stated that Intercultural Education is directly shaped by

how culture itself is understood. It is effectively addresses the challenges of contemporary society, it is essential to begin with a critical reflection on how culture is commonly conceptualised, as these interpretations influence research and teaching practices.

Data from interviews further revealed that students perceived intercultural communication competence as beneficial in several ways. First, they reported becoming more aware of cultural differences in communication styles. Second, they felt more confident when interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Third, they developed a greater understanding of politeness norms and culturally appropriate language use. Finally, students recognized the importance of adapting their communication strategies to different intercultural situations.

The interview data reveal that students generally perceive Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) as highly beneficial for developing speaking skills. Students viewed ICC as a means of understanding cultural differences, communicating respectfully, and participating effectively in global interactions. They reported that intercultural experiences increased their confidence, fluency, vocabulary use, and pragmatic awareness. Most participants also highlighted the importance of openness, respect, and empathy in successful communication. Furthermore, digital platforms played a significant role in facilitating intercultural interactions, allowing students to engage in authentic communication and practice English in meaningful contexts. These findings suggest that integrating ICC into EFL speaking instruction can enhance both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness, preparing students for communication in multicultural and digitally connected environments.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study investigated students' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in developing English speaking skills. The findings indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of ICC and recognize its important role in enhancing their speaking ability. Students perceive intercultural communication competence as more than the ability to understand cultural differences; it also involves communicating effectively, appropriately, and respectfully with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The results reveal that students believe ICC contributes significantly to the development of speaking skills by increasing their confidence, fluency, vocabulary use, and communicative effectiveness. Through intercultural interactions, students become more aware of cultural norms, communication styles, and appropriate language use in different contexts. Such awareness helps them communicate more successfully and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings during conversations. Furthermore, students reported that intercultural experiences encourage them to participate more actively in speaking activities and provide authentic opportunities to practice English in meaningful situations.

The study also found that students demonstrate positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, characterized by openness, curiosity, respect, and empathy. These attitudes support successful intercultural interactions and motivate students to engage in communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, students developed important intercultural communication skills, including adapting communication strategies, understanding diverse perspectives, and responding appropriately in intercultural situations.

Although students reported several challenges, such as understanding different accents, interpreting cultural meanings, and expressing complex ideas in intercultural settings, they generally viewed these challenges as opportunities for learning and growth. The findings suggest that exposure to intercultural communication experiences can help students become more adaptable and effective communicators.

Overall, the study concludes that Intercultural Communication Competence positively influences the development of English speaking skills. Students perceive ICC as a valuable framework that supports not only linguistic development but also cultural awareness, confidence, and communicative effectiveness. Therefore, integrating intercultural communication into English language instruction is highly recommended, as it can create meaningful learning experiences and prepare students to communicate successfully in multicultural and digitally connected global environments.

Implication

Suggestion

The findings suggest that English language educators should incorporate intercultural communication activities, such as cross-cultural discussions, virtual exchanges, role plays, collaborative international projects, and technology-enhanced learning experiences, into speaking courses. Such practices can foster both speaking proficiency and intercultural competence, equipping students with the skills necessary to become confident English speakers and competent global citizens.

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