



From Debate to Dialogue: Cultivating Intercultural Citizenship through Critical Thinking in Indonesian EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Keywords:

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The integration of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy (ICP) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction plays a vital role in fostering not only linguistic and cultural understanding, but also the development of intercultural citizenship. In the Indonesian higher education context, the incorporation of ICP in courses that emphasize Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) remains limited. However, these components hold significant potential for preparing learners to become active, reflective, and engaged citizens in a globalized world. This study aims to explore how CT and ED are taught in an Indonesian EFL classroom through the lens of ICP, with a particular focus on how these practices contribute to the formation of intercultural citizenship. Employing a survey-based approach, data will be collected through document analysis (syllabi and lesson plans), questionnaires, and interviews. Participants will include twenty-one student teachers and one course instructor. The analysis will be guided by the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework—comprising knowledge, attitude, and skills—to examine how instructional strategies support students in developing the critical awareness, empathy, and responsibility essential to intercultural citizenship. The study is expected to offer practical insights into how EFL pedagogy can move beyond language proficiency to foster a sense of global responsibility and active participation across cultures.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education extends far beyond linguistic mastery (Czerkowski & Berti, 2020). It demands that language learners not only understand the use of language but also the culture that is influential (Baker, 2022). Language, as a cultural artifact, encodes values, beliefs, and worldviews, making its teaching inseparable from the cultivation of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). Yet, in many EFL

contexts, including Indonesia, instruction often prioritizes grammatical accuracy and lexical proficiency while sidelining the sociocultural dimensions of language use (Sun & Zhang, 2021; Rachmawati et al., 2022). In turn, language learners lack the ability to critically and empathetically engage in various texts in the multicultural *setting*.

Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) have emerged as pedagogical tools to address this issue, as they foster analytical rigor and communicative fluency. The ability to think critically is essential in today's global education system (Arthi & Gandhimathi, 2025) and significantly affects student learning quality (Double et al., 2023). Critical thinking encompasses a range of cognitive skills, including analysis, synthesis, interpretation, justification, evaluation, and explanation. However, it extends beyond merely executing these cognitive tasks. There is ongoing discussion regarding what critical thinking is and how to teach it (Normore et al., 2024). Critical thinking "involves students analyzing and assessing possibilities against criteria for judgement," according to ACARA (n.d. b). Students formulate and assess arguments and solve issues by using logic, facts, and evidence to reach well-reasoned conclusions. More precisely, this study accepts a normative definition of critical thinking, best described as the capacity to make thoughtful and reasonable judgements about the caliber of one's own and other people's thinking—a process known as metacognitive appraisal. This includes the ability to assess one's own performance in key cognitive abilities like questioning, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, explanation, evaluation, and justification. Critical thinking facilitates sound evaluative decisions by enabling the drawing of logical conclusions from available knowledge (Ellerton, 2022).

Among the various methods used to enhance students' speaking skills, debate has been recognized as one of the most effective, particularly in EFL contexts (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013). Debate requires students to articulate their thoughts clearly, construct logical arguments, and respond to counterarguments in real time, all of which contribute to the development of fluency, coherence, and confidence in speaking (Chou, 2022). Research has shown that participation in debate activities leads to improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and discourse management (Sundari & Febriyanti, 2023). Effective teaching of debate requires strategic instructional methods that accommodate diverse learning styles and proficiency levels. One effective strategy is role-playing, where students assume different perspectives to explore arguments from multiple viewpoints. Additionally, the integration of technology, such as online debate forums and video analysis, can enhance student engagement and provide additional learning resources. Given the increasing influence of digital communication in education, online debate platforms and hybrid debate models offer new opportunities for students to engage in critical discourse beyond the classroom (McMahon, 2014). Thus, debate serves not only to hone language fluency but also as a vehicle for critical

engagement with diverse perspectives. This shift highlights the need for educators to incorporate multimodal argumentation skills, preparing students to construct persuasive narratives through written, visual, and digital media (Kuhn, 2005). Successful implementation of debate in classrooms requires instructors to navigate linguistic challenges, cultural perceptions, and varying student readiness levels. By employing effective teaching strategies, integrating digital resources, and fostering an inclusive learning environment, educators can maximize the pedagogical potential of debate. With proper implementation, debate can significantly contribute to the overall communicative competence of English learners.

However, their implementation in Indonesian higher education remains predominantly transactional, emphasizing argumentative structures over intercultural reflection (Suhartoyo, 2021). For instance, while ED activities may train students to articulate viewpoints persuasively, they seldom scaffold opportunities to interrogate how cultural contexts shape perspectives on issues like climate justice or digital ethics. Such oversight reflects a broader trend in EFL pedagogy: the decoupling of language from its cultural roots, which limits learners' ability to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries (Djiwandono, 2019).

Intercultural Communication Pedagogy (ICP) offers a framework to reorient CT and ED toward holistic language learning. *Intercultural communication pedagogy* seeks to transform learners into active and conscious participants in intercultural dialogue, moving beyond the simple acquisition of cultural facts to foster genuine understanding and respect. As Zhu (2014) notes, intercultural education serves as a transformative practice, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to coexist harmoniously in a shared space. The need for intercultural communication pedagogy arises from the increasing interconnectedness of society and the resulting frequency of intercultural encounters. Traditional approaches to communication education often fail to prepare individuals for the nuances of these interactions. As Dasli and Simpson (2023) argue, intercultural communication pedagogy has historically relied on essentialist competency models that may ignore the complexities of cultural identity and power dynamics. These models often treat culture as a fixed entity and ignore the ethical dimensions of intercultural relationships, potentially leading to misunderstandings and reinforcing stereotypes. Furthermore, language learning—a key component of intercultural communication—provides a unique opportunity to explore other cultures and reflect on one's own. Integrating language and culture instruction involves raising awareness, developing skills, and providing opportunities for learners to experiment with new cultural norms.

Grounded in Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), ICP emphasizes three pillars: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. When applied to CT and ED, ICP transforms these activities from mere language exercises into platforms for critical intercultural engagement. For

example, debating global migration policies could prompt students to analyze how cultural norms influence national discourses, thereby bridging linguistic practice with intercultural awareness. Supporting this view, Mahaputri and Purnawarman (2021) highlight that understanding cultural differences through conversation analysis helps EFL students develop more effective intercultural communication skills. Rather than merely labeling cultural traits, such approaches train students to recognize and navigate the nuances of intercultural *interaction*.

However, current research on CT and ED in EFL contexts largely overlooks this integrative potential. Studies in Indonesia focus on linguistic outcomes—such as vocabulary acquisition or fluency (Boyle et al., 2024). Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by investigating how teaching activities in Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) contribute to the development of ICC. The research seeks to redefine CT and ED as vehicles for fostering not only linguistic and cognitive skills, but also the cultural agility demanded by 21st-century global citizenship.

METHOD

This *study* employed a qualitative approach. The data were collected and analyzed to address the research objectives. The data collection process involved distributing the online survey through Google Forms and conducting semi-structured interviews. Survey instruments or questionnaires are the predominant data collection tools due to their numerous advantages (Elangovan & Sundaravel, 2021). The questionnaire was written in English and sent online to twenty-one student teachers and a course instructor at one university in Indonesia. The use of Google Forms ensured ease of access, rapid distribution, and efficient collection of responses. The survey comprised three sections: The first section focused on learning critical thinking; the second section explored the learning experience in English debate; the third and final section investigated whether an interconnected *intercultural communication pedagogy* (ICP) would be a viable approach in enhancing English learning. This section sought participants' perspectives on whether ICP principles could be effectively incorporated into EFL instruction to bridge cultural gaps and improve language proficiency. Participants completed the survey at their convenience, ensuring thoughtful and genuine responses.

The semi-structured interviews occurred in conducive environments, fostering a cordial climate for participants to express their views and convictions, thus enhancing the significance, richness, and depth of the research (Galletta, 2013). Semi-structured interviews, when utilized alongside survey questionnaires, are recognized for improving the quality of research data (Vu, 2023). This study employs semi-structured interviews with a course instructor and several student teachers to supplement the input gathered from the survey questionnaire. Interviews were conducted as informal discussions lasting around 10 to 20 minutes, followed by data analysis to corroborate the

survey findings.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading and reviewing all sources to gain a comprehensive understanding. Next, relevant segments of text were systematically coded to identify significant features related to the research questions. These codes were then grouped to form initial themes. After finalizing the themes, each was clearly defined and named to capture its core meaning. Finally, the findings were compiled into a coherent report, supported by participant quotations and connected to relevant theoretical concepts. This thematic approach provided a structured framework to explore how *intercultural communication pedagogy* is integrated within Critical Thinking and English Debate courses in the Indonesian EFL context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 21 student teachers and one course instructor from a private university in Indonesia, all affiliated with the Faculty of Education and Science within the English Education program. The participant cohort primarily comprised advanced undergraduate students, with 17 student participants in their final year of study (eighth semester), two in their third year (sixth semester), and two in their second year (fourth semester). The course instructor, responsible for teaching the *Critical Thinking & English Debate* course, also participated, providing pedagogical insights into curriculum design and implementation. This course is typically offered during the fourth semester of the undergraduate program. To capture a broad range of perspectives, participants included both current students enrolled in the course and those who had previously completed it.

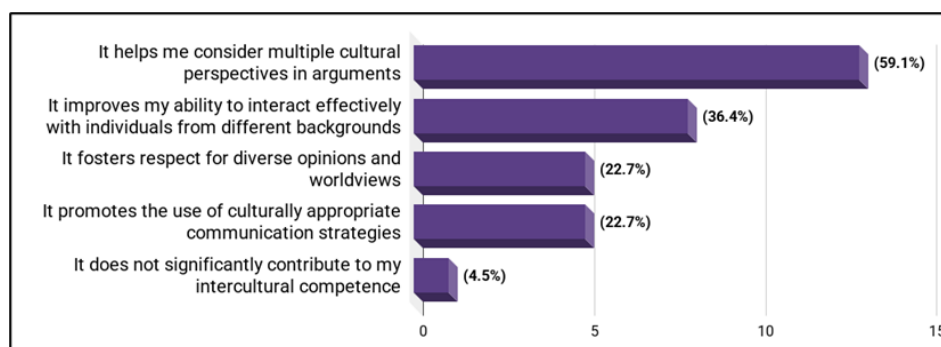
Student teachers widely acknowledged the importance of critical thinking as a foundational skill in teaching and learning contexts. Most students expressed confidence in their grasp of critical thinking concepts. Many reported regular exposure to activities that encourage critical thinking during their studies, though the frequency and intensity of these opportunities differed among individuals. Classroom discussions and debates emerged as the most impactful activities for developing critical thinking skills, followed by problem-solving and project-based tasks. A few respondents reflected that, despite these opportunities, institutional factors—such as clearer curricular guidelines, dedicated instructional time, and explicit modeling by instructors—are needed to fully embed critical thinking into teaching practice.

Student teachers shared diverse experiences regarding their participation in debate course. While a considerable number had taken debate classes and found them enriching, others believed there was still room for improvement in the way the courses were delivered. Among the key challenges encountered, students most frequently cited the difficulty of constructing logical and persuasive arguments, followed closely by the pressure to respond

quickly during live exchanges. Issues such as public speaking anxiety and emotional control were mentioned, though less commonly. Despite these obstacles, students largely agreed that debate learning had strengthened their critical thinking and analytical reasoning, with some also noting increased confidence and effectiveness in presenting arguments. These insights into the students' experiences offer a meaningful backdrop for understanding how debate contributes to the development of intercultural awareness and citizenship in the classroom.

A Metacognitive Appraisal to Enhance Intercultural Communication (ICC), Students Analyzing and Assessing Possibilities Against Criteria for Judgement

The first theme centers on how English Debate (ED) fosters metacognitive appraisal—learners' ability to critically analyze and negotiate cultural perspectives—through its alignment with Critical Thinking (CT) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Responses from student teachers highlighted that engaging in ED enhances their capacity to critically evaluate cultural differences within argumentation, a skill vital for intercultural citizenship.

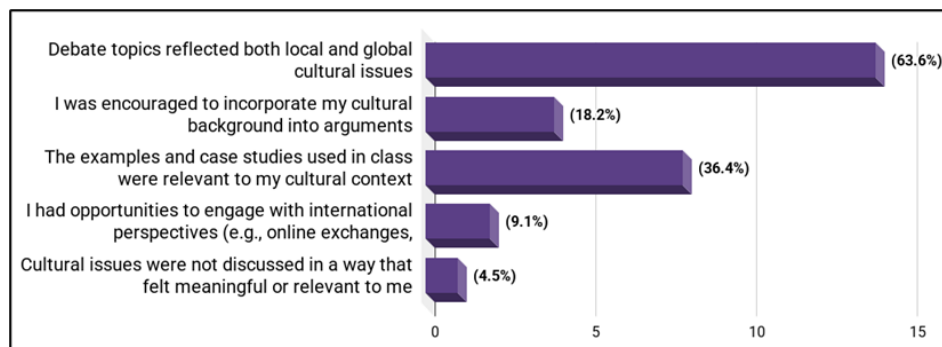


Graphic 1: *Participating in ED can help improve one's intercultural competence*

The majority of participants (59.1%) emphasized ED's role in fostering the ability to consider multiple cultural perspectives during arguments. This reflects CT's emphasis on metacognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, and justification (Ellerton, 2022), where learners evaluate diverse viewpoints against criteria for judgment (ACARA, n.d. b). This suggests that debate serves as a reflective space where students must analyze a given topic from different angles, incorporating not only logical reasoning but also cultural sensitivity. This process requires metacognitive awareness—students must consciously monitor and evaluate their assumptions, arguments, and responses based on intercultural contexts. A smaller proportion (36.4%) emphasized ED's role in enhancing cross-cultural interaction, resonating with ICP's focus on skills like empathy and adaptability. This finding further supports the idea that debate encourages not only cognitive but also social-emotional engagement, which is

a key aspect of metacognitive appraisal. By anticipating counterarguments and cultural nuances, students are required to assess possibilities against certain standards—such as relevance, fairness, or contextual appropriateness—before making a judgment or crafting a rebuttal. Furthermore, some participants reported that debate fosters respect for diverse opinions and worldviews (22,7%), while an equal proportion highlighted its role in enhancing the use of communication strategies that are sensitive to cultural contexts (22.7%). These findings align closely with the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework, particularly the dimensions of *attitude* (openness and curiosity toward other cultures), *skills* (interpreting and relating), and *critical cultural awareness* (Byram, 1997). Through debate, students are required not only to argue logically but also to engage with differing perspectives, which nurtures tolerance, empathy, and the capacity to navigate intercultural dialogue—core values of intercultural citizenship.

A survey question—‘Do you think the Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) activities in your course were culturally relevant?’—revealed critical insights into how these pedagogies align with learners’ cultural contexts, a central tenet of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy (ICP) and its intersection with CT frameworks aimed at fostering ethical global citizenship.



Graphic 2: *The Critical Thinking and English Debate activities reflected cultural relevance*

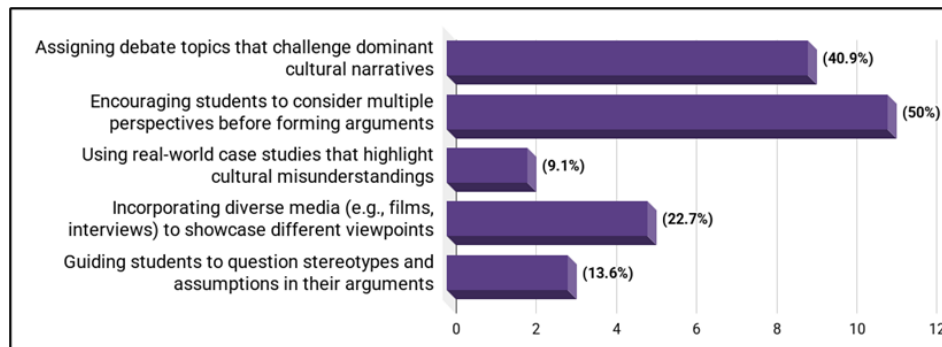
The majority of participants (63.6%) affirmed that debate topics reflected both local and global cultural issues, indicating that the material used in class resonated with real-world intercultural dynamics. This aligns with ICP’s call for culturally responsive pedagogy (Zhu, 2014), where learners analyze issues through dual lenses of familiarity (local) and unfamiliarity (global). This also supports Byram’s (1997) model of ICC, particularly in fostering *knowledge* about one’s own and others’ social groups and cultural practices. A third of participants (36.4%) found examples and case studies culturally relevant to their context, suggesting partial success in localizing content. This alignment with familiar cultural reference points may aid students’ metacognitive processes, allowing them to evaluate ideas more

critically through a culturally informed lens (Ab Kadir, 2018). When students are able to relate abstract debate concepts to their lived realities, they are more likely to exercise reflective judgement—one of the hallmarks of effective critical thinking (ACARA, n.d.). Only (18.2%) felt encouraged to incorporate their cultural background into arguments. This suggests an opportunity for self-reflection and identity negotiation, which aligns with the *attitudinal dimension* of ICC—specifically, openness and curiosity (Byram, 1997). Encouraging students to draw from their own cultural values during argument construction reflects an intentional effort toward metacognitive appraisal, where learners become more aware of the sociocultural filters shaping their thought processes. However, only a small percentage (9.1%) reported having opportunities to engage with international perspectives, such as through online exchanges or multicultural events. While this points to limited direct intercultural interaction, the classroom debate format still served as a simulated intercultural platform, encouraging students to imagine and respond to diverse viewpoints. One participant (4.5%) expressed that cultural issues were not discussed in ways that felt meaningful or relevant, indicating that implementation inconsistencies may exist, possibly due to variation in students' backgrounds or expectations.

The findings indicate that while students are beginning to critically engage with cultural content and perspectives, there remains room to deepen their intercultural experiences—particularly in terms of direct exposure to international viewpoints and stronger encouragement to draw from their own cultural identities during argumentation. To further strengthen the intercultural dimensions of CT and ED activities, course designers and instructors are encouraged to incorporate more explicit intercultural objectives into the curriculum. This may include structured opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges (e.g., virtual collaborations with international students), diverse case studies, and reflective tasks that prompt students to examine their own cultural assumptions.

Understanding Cultural Bias and Perspective in Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED)

Engaging with cultural bias and perspective in Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) entails supporting students in uncovering and critically examining the cultural assumptions behind their thoughts. This process promotes the growth of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and encourages the development of thoughtful, empathetic global citizens.



Graphic 3: *Strategies to encourage critical thinking on cultural perspectives in debates*

When asked how lecturers encouraged critical engagement with cultural perspectives, half of the participants (50%) indicated that they were encouraged to consider multiple perspectives before forming arguments. This aligns with the critical thinking disposition of *open-mindedness* and supports Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence model—particularly the dimension of attitudes, which includes curiosity and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures. Encouraging learners to consider alternative viewpoints lays the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of intercultural interactions and helps mitigate the influence of cultural bias.

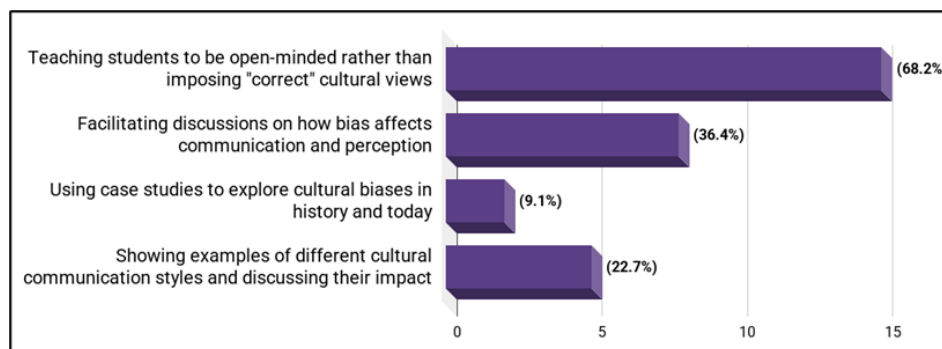
A substantial proportion (40.9%) reported being exposed to debate topics that challenge dominant cultural narratives, indicating that the course facilitated cognitive dissonance—a key trigger in critical consciousness development. This aligns with ICP's objective to help learners confront ethnocentric worldviews and foster critical cultural awareness, which Byram (1997) defines as the ability to evaluate cultural practices critically, including one's own.

Although less frequently cited, other strategies employed by lecturers played a complementary role. About (22.7%) of participants mentioned the use of diverse media, such as films or interviews, which suggests multimodal exposure to global perspectives. This was further supported by interview data from the course instructor, who explained that she sometimes incorporated a variety of media into her teaching, including video clips of public figures such as President Obama engaging in debates. Such resources are intended to model effective argumentation and expose students to culturally rich discourse, thereby enhancing both their critical thinking and intercultural awareness.

Additionally, 13.6% indicated that they were guided to question stereotypes and assumptions in their arguments—another key indicator of critical cultural awareness. These pedagogical strategies reflect an intentional alignment with CT's evaluative criteria, where students are prompted to identify biases and question the validity of their claims based on evidence, logic, and fairness (Ellerton, 2022). The relatively low frequency (9.1%) of

mentions regarding real-world case studies indicates limited use of this approach.

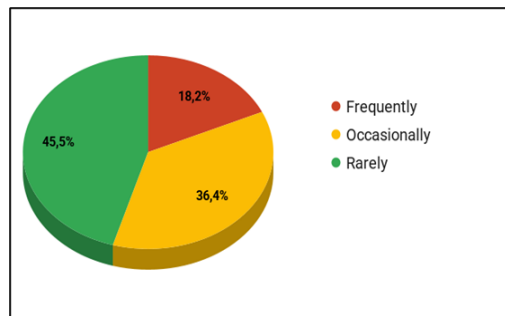
In line with this finding, the course instructor emphasized during the interview that “critical thinking should not be destructive or aimed at tearing things down, but rather constructive—something that produces a habit.” This reflects a pedagogical emphasis on building reflective, sustainable thinking habits that empower students to engage with cultural complexity constructively rather than confrontationally.



Graphic 4: *Activities that helped students reflect on cultural biases*

The findings indicate that the primary strategy employed by instructors to aid students in identifying and reflecting on cultural biases was promoting open-mindedness rather than imposing prescriptive "correct" views. This strategy was identified by (68.2%) of participants and aligns with the attitudinal component of Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence paradigm, encompassing the values of inquiry and openness to otherness. These attributes are seen as crucial for effective intercultural engagement. Furthermore, (36.4%) of students indicated that professors engaged in discussions about the influence of prejudice on communication and understanding. This technique exemplifies Byram's component of *savoir comprendre*, indicating the ability to examine and link cultural meanings through critical thought and debate.

Additionally, (22.7%) of students reported that teachers demonstrated varied cultural communication strategies to highlight the influence of norms and culture on meaning-making. This aligns with the *savoirs* component—factual and sociocultural knowledge crucial for intercultural engagement. Concurrently, (9.1%) recognized the use of case studies to investigate cultural biases within historical or social contexts, a strategy that promotes the development of *savoir apprendre or faire*, the ability to gain new cultural knowledge and apply it in practical intercultural situations. The findings validate the effectiveness of dialogic, reflective, and inclusive pedagogies in improving students' intercultural competence as per Byram's ICC framework (Byram, 1997, 2021).

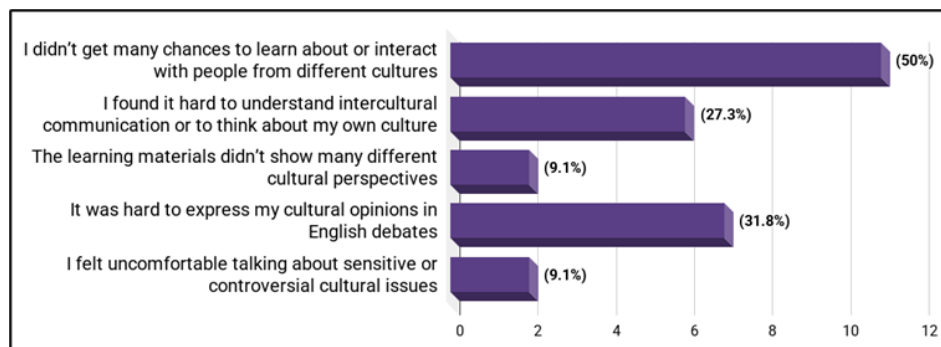


Graphic 5: *Personal engagement in cultural perspective discussions during CT and ED activities*

Based on Graphic 5, the largest proportion of participants reported engaging only rarely (45.5%) in discussions about cultural perspectives during Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) activities. This suggests that while cultural themes were likely present in the course structure, opportunities for active intercultural dialogue may not have been consistently emphasized or fully integrated into classroom interactions. A notable portion of students engaged in such discussions occasionally (36.4%), indicating that intercultural exploration may have occurred in response to specific topics or teaching moments. Meanwhile, a smaller group reported engaging frequently (18.2%), suggesting that some students experienced deeper intercultural engagement.

This distribution suggests that CT and ED have not yet been fully utilized as platforms for sustained intercultural engagement. From the perspective of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy (ICP), meaningful interaction with diverse cultural perspectives is crucial for developing key aspects of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), such as interpreting, relating, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). When students are not consistently encouraged or supported to reflect on cultural dimensions, valuable opportunities for fostering intercultural sensitivity and critical self-awareness may be missed. Therefore, enhancing the intentionality and regularity of intercultural engagement—through more structured and reflective activities—holds significant potential to deepen both critical thinking and intercultural learning outcomes.

The Challenges of Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) in Relation to Intercultural Communication (ICC)



Graphic 6: *Challenges in learning CT and ED related to intercultural communication*

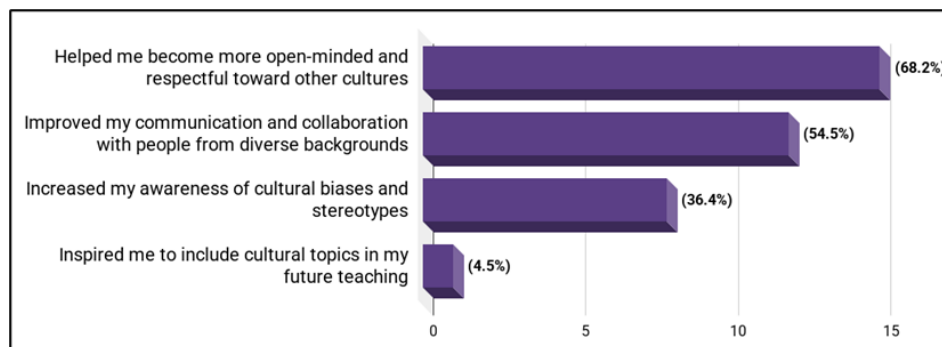
This study examined the obstacles students have in cultivating Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) skills utilizing Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework. The predominant challenge highlighted (50%) was the absence of opportunities to meet with culturally different individuals, highlighting deficiencies in the "skills of discovery and interaction." In the absence of such contacts, students find it challenging to cultivate intercultural openness and adaptation.

The second problem (31.8%) pertained to articulating culturally informed concepts in English arguments, indicative of both linguistic constraints and insufficient "interpreting and relating" abilities. While students may comprehend cultural knowledge, they frequently lack the capacity to arbitrate between different perspectives in a second language—an crucial component of intercultural competence.

Furthermore, (27.3%) encountered difficulties with abstract international notions, presumably attributable to insufficient interest or engagement with different viewpoints, indicating deficiencies in the "attitudes" component. A minority (9.1%) reported that course materials lacked cultural representation, while another (9.1%) experienced discomfort in discussing sensitive topics—underscoring emotional and social obstacles that impede "critical cultural awareness."

These findings point to areas where CT and ED training can be strengthened while underscoring the significant potential to more fully integrate Byram's ICC model. By adopting more reflective, experiential, and inclusive approaches, the learning process can become increasingly effective in fostering students' linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural development.

Supporting Personal and Professional Identity



As shown by Graphic 7: *Personal and professional growth through CT and ED intercultural learning*

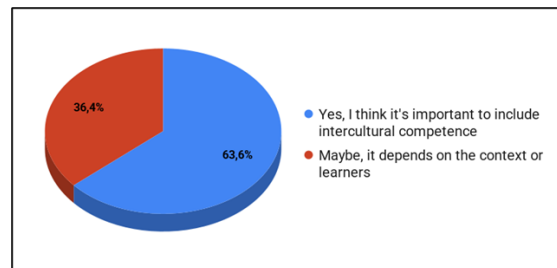
The survey results, most participants agreed that the Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) courses had a beneficial influence on their professional and personal growth as a result of developing intercultural competency. The majority of participants (68.2%) reported that the integrated CT/ED activities fostered greater openness and respect toward cultural others. Given a strong preference for open-mindedness, metacognitive appraisal in CT/ED appears to foster both critical thinking and a thoughtful attitude towards one's own assumptions. Students' open-mindedness (68.2 %) aligns with Intercultural Citizenship theory (Byram, 2021), which emphasizes moving beyond cognitive knowledge to critical-reflective attitudes, and echoes Byram's (2012) finding that self-reflection is essential for identity transformation in intercultural settings.

Over half of the participants (54.5%) reported enhanced communication and collaboration skills with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This finding not only supports the assertion by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) that intercultural competence directly enhances communication effectiveness in multicultural settings, but also aligns with Bandura's (1997) social-cognitive theory, which suggests that such improvements may stem from increased self-efficacy in navigating unfamiliar cultural norms—an essential aspect of professional identity development in EFL teaching contexts.

In addition, more than one-third (36.4%) felt their sensitivity to personal biases and stereotypes had increased. Student teachers became more aware of biases underlining CT's power to reveal hidden assumptions. This heightened awareness is a necessary precursor to empowerment—transforming passive tolerance into active intercultural responsibility (Fantini, 2009).

Although only (4.5%) of participants explicitly selected the option indicating an intention to incorporate cultural topics into future teaching, this does not imply that others were unaffected. Rather, it suggests that most participants experienced growth in other areas of personal or professional development. The low percentage may reflect limited pedagogical modeling

or practical opportunities to connect intercultural insights with classroom application. This highlights a gap between individual awareness and its integration into teaching practices. Nevertheless, none of the participants indicated that the learning had no impact, underscoring the relevance of embedding intercultural competence in CT and ED courses. As Byram (1997) argues, effective language education not only develops linguistic skills but also prepares intercultural speakers capable of meaningful global engagement.



Graphic 8: *Intends to integrate intercultural competence into teaching practices*

Based on graphic 8, when asked, "If you were planning your teaching, do you think you would include intercultural competence to help develop critical thinking in your teaching?" participants' responses revealed a clear yet nuanced divide. A majority expressed strong support for integrating intercultural competence, emphasizing its alignment with global citizenship and critical thinking development. Conversely, a smaller but significant group adopted a conditional stance, arguing that its implementation depends on contextual factors such as learner demographics and institutional settings. This dichotomy underscores the interplay between ideological commitment to intercultural pedagogy and pragmatic considerations in diverse classroom environments.

Majority Support for Intercultural Competence Integration

A significant majority of participants (63.6%, 14 out of 22) affirmed their intention to incorporate intercultural competence into their teaching practices to cultivate critical thinking (CT). 10 participants emphasized the necessity of intercultural competence in preparing students for a globalized society. For instance, Participant number 3 argued:

"Intercultural competence is crucial in teaching, especially in today's globalization era. By understanding cultural differences, students develop critical thinking as they learn to see diverse perspectives, appreciate diversity, and assess information more objectively."

This aligns with Byram's (2021) assertion that intercultural competence is foundational to global citizenship, enabling learners to navigate cultural complexities. The emphasis on objective assessment of information resonates with frameworks like ACARA's "metacognitive appraisal" (Double

et al., 2023), which positions critical thinking as a deliberate evaluation of perspectives against reasoned criteria.

8 participants highlighted empathy and tolerance as key outcomes of intercultural competence. Participant number 21 noted:

"Students learn to think openly about cultures, understand differences in norms and communication, and develop critical thinking on global issues."

This reflects the affective dimension of Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model, where emotional engagement drives critical reflection. Such responses echo Guilherme's (2002) concept of "*critical empathy*"—a fusion of emotional awareness and analytical rigor that fosters inclusive, reflective learners.

Conditional Acceptance: Context-Dependent Implementation

A minority of participants (36.4%, 8 out of 22) expressed conditional support, stressing that intercultural competence integration depends on contextual factors and learners. Participant number 17 cautioned:

"Intercultural competence is important, but it must align with the material and student characteristics. If relevant and able to stimulate critical discussion, it's beneficial. If not, it might be ineffective or confusing."

This pragmatic view was echoed by Participant number 22, who emphasized the importance of context specificity:

"If I teach in an International Class with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, I would prioritize intercultural competence to develop critical thinking."

This mirrors Byram's (2021) observation that ICC thrives in heterogeneous settings but may require adaptation in culturally homogeneous classrooms.

Participant number 17's concern about potential confusion underscores a broader issue identified by Irfani & O'Boyle (2024): Indonesian teachers often lack confidence in designing culture-based materials without institutional scaffolding. This highlights the need for structured curriculum frameworks that guide educators in adapting intercultural content to local contexts while maintaining pedagogical coherence.

These responses indicate that participants acknowledge the educational importance of integrating intercultural competence to enhance critical thinking skills. While a majority advocate for its inclusion to nurture global citizenship and analytical abilities, some highlight the necessity for contextual adjustments and adequate curricular backing. This underscores that effective intercultural pedagogy depends not only on theoretical agreement but also on practical preparedness and institutional facilitation.

Overall, the findings underscore that incorporating intercultural competence within critical thinking and English debate courses plays a vital role in developing both the personal and professional identities of student teachers. Encouraging critical reflection on cultural biases, along with

promoting openness, empathy, and tolerance, is essential in equipping future educators to deliver culturally responsive instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Critical Thinking (CT) and English Debate (ED) can be used as platforms for fostering intercultural citizenship in Indonesian EFL classrooms through the lens of *Intercultural Communication Pedagogy* (ICP). When directed by Byram's *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (ICC), CT and ED activities have the ability to go beyond language practice and help the development of critical intercultural awareness, according to an examination of instructional materials and participant viewpoints. Students were able to interact with a variety of cultural perspectives on issues like global migration and climate justice, which prompted them to consider their own biases and presumptions.

Although there were positive signs of intercultural integration, difficulties arose in putting it into practice. Some students reported that they had few opportunities to engage directly with people from other cultural backgrounds. The absence of such contact made it difficult for students to develop intercultural openness and adaptability. In addition, some students struggled to articulate culturally informed ideas in English arguments, revealing both linguistic limitations and underdeveloped abilities in “interpreting and relating.” While they may possess some cultural knowledge, many lacked the skills to mediate between differing perspectives in a second language, which is essential for achieving true intercultural competence.

Despite these limitations, the study adds to current discussions on how language learning shapes global citizenship. It suggests that CT and ED, when reimaged through an intercultural lens, can become powerful tools for nurturing empathy, cultural sensitivity, and critical thinking. To build on this potential, future research should explore a wider range of educational contexts and introduce more direct intercultural experiences. In practice, educators are encouraged to explicitly incorporate intercultural goals into CT and ED activities to help students connect language learning with broader social understanding.

Ultimately, the results highlight that English language teaching must extend beyond building linguistic proficiency to actively nurture the intercultural understanding essential for students to engage meaningfully in an increasingly diverse and interconnected global society.

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