



ENHANCING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND ORAL CULTURAL EXPRESSION: A TWO-PHASE IPA FRAMEWORK USING FILM-BASED CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND THEME-BASED ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

This paper presents a method that combines the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) framework with critical incidents from films to enhance intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and language proficiency in oral cultural expression, addressing challenges in culture and language learning in EFL contexts. IPA's three communicative modes—interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal—integrate assessment, instruction, and learning. Films serve as a rich source of cultural examples, which are then analyzed using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to explore cultural conflicts and resolution strategies. IPA thematic units based on the critical incidents discussed were designed to further reinforce and assess students' communication skills throughout the process. The participants include 24 non-English majors who enrolled in the course Discussion of Cultural Issues. Quantitative data, including ICS scale scores and IPA rubric scores, analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed rank test and qualitative data from reflective reports, film presentation content, and interviews, analyzed through thematic analysis, demonstrate significant improvements in ICC and oral proficiency in conveying cultural ideas. These findings effectively address the challenges in culture and language teaching. Qualitative feedback further supports the approach, and the paper concludes with recommendations for integrating it into language teaching practices.

Keywords: integrated performance assessment (IPA), critical incident technique (CIT), films, intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

1. Introduction

In our interconnected world, effective cross-cultural communication is essential. As interactions between diverse groups increase, developing students' intercultural

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communicative competence (ICC) has become crucial for social, cultural, and economic reasons (Byram, 1997). This need has driven discussions on better teaching methods and culturally relevant materials in foreign language education.

The study under investigation aims to address several challenges in promoting ICC in EFL classrooms. Many classrooms face issues related to ineffective pedagogical approaches, teachers' lack of language skills and a lack of culturally diverse materials, resulting in difficulties in engaging students effectively (Al-Shammari, 2021; Byram, 2021; Corbett, 2022). This problem is often compounded by the dominance of Western cultural norms in educational materials, an overemphasis on language accuracy at the expense of cultural understanding, and the absence of cross-cultural activities.

While several attempts have been made to promote ICC through students' personal experiences (Fantini, 2006; Liu, 2021; Straffon, 2003), this approach has a significant limitation: not all students have relevant experiences to fully engage with the content. For instance, Liu (2021) explored the use of student-authored incidents to enhance ICC, but a potential drawback is that not all students possess personal stories to contribute to such discussions. In the context of Taiwan EFL classrooms, where extensive intercultural contact may not be the norm, it is crucial to develop a teaching methodology for ICC that does not rely on students' personal experiences.

Moreover, assessing students' intercultural communicative competence presents additional challenges. Language barriers often hinder students' ability to express their thoughts in English, leading to frustration and a decline in confidence. Research has also highlighted the complexities of creating assessments that are both culturally sensitive and capable of capturing the broad spectrum of ICC (Deardorff, 2020; Portera, 2020). Consequently, there is a need for more meaningful and effective approaches to assess and promote ICC in language education.

To tackle these challenges, the author employs a novel teaching approach of integrating IPA-3 modes with critical incidents from films to improve culture and language learning. Using films in EFL classes provides authentic language exposure and cultural insights from inner, outer, and expanding circles, engaging students with authentic real-life language and fostering intercultural competence (Chao, 2013, 2021; Lin, 2024; Ismaili, 2013; Kabooha, 2016; Roell, 2010). Critical incidents-brief scenarios of cultural misunderstandings from these films are identified and analyzed by Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to make them valuable tools in intercultural learning (Finch, 2010; Stakhnevich, 2002). This allows these critical incidents to be used to enhance learners' awareness of cultural norms and develop strategies for effective cross-cultural communication. The use of critical incidents from films in this manner overcomes one of the central problems encountered in CIT in the language classroom in Taiwan, this being the lack of personal critical incidents of students to draw upon to engage in cultural learning.

Addressing the challenges of creating ICC also requires increasing opportunities for communication skill development in class and ensuring relevance to real-life experiences to sustain student interest in cultural issues and the course overall. Therefore,

Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) is adopted as a framework to facilitate film discussions and to design follow-up IPA-based thematic communication activities in this study. An IPA framework, which evaluates language proficiency through interconnected tasks assessing interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational skills (ACTFL, 1997), can be effectively utilized in English language education (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Plengkham & Wasanasomsithi, 2023; Tambunan & Kurniawan, 2024). IPA enhances comprehension and internalizes linguistic structures through authentic language input. Learners negotiate meaning, navigate cultural nuances, and develop communicative competence in interpersonal scenarios, while the presentational mode allows them to synthesize linguistic and cultural knowledge. However, research on the application of Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) within the context of Taiwan remains limited. This approach holds considerable promise for enhancing film discussions and designing thematic activities grounded in IPA principles. By integrating IPA strategies, educators in Taiwan could potentially offer more dynamic and contextually relevant learning experiences, fostering deeper engagement and more effective language acquisition.

To explore the effectiveness of this teaching method on students' language and culture learning, three questions were explored.

- 1) Does this film-based critical incident IPA approach improve students' ICC?
- 2) Does this film-based critical incident IPA approach improve students' proficiency in oral cultural expression?
- 3) What are students' perceptions of this film-based critical incident IPA approach?

2. Literature Review

2.1 ICC and Films

ICC encompasses effective communication with individuals from diverse cultures, intertwining language proficiency with an understanding of cultural norms and values. It enables successful interaction in multicultural settings by facilitating the navigation of cultural differences and the building of meaningful connections. Byram's (1997) model highlights three essential elements for ICC: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. To cultivate ICC, students must enrich their cultural knowledge, hone communication skills, and engage in reflective practices regarding intercultural encounters:

1. Knowledge: knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

2a. Skill of discovery and interaction: the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

2b. Skill of interpreting and relating: the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it, and to relate it to documents from one's own culture.

2c. Critical awareness/political education: ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria the perspectives, practices, and products of one's own and other cultures and countries.

3. Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures, and belief in one's own.

Films are widely recognized as excellent tools for developing language skills in English Language Teaching (ELT), offering visual contexts and diverse language input for EFL learners. Educators (Chao, 2013, 2021; Lin, 2024; Ismaili, 2013; Kaboocha, 2016; Roell, 2010) often advocate for using films in intercultural education, as they effectively engage learners and stimulate curiosity about different cultures. This allows for quick acquisition of cultural knowledge and exposure to diverse languages and accents without leaving the classroom. Films also facilitate exercises in interpreting cultural features and fostering intercultural awareness (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000). As Summerfield (1993) states:

"Film helps to create a unique environment for cross-cultural learning because it speaks to our emotions as well as our intellect. Learning about stereotypes, ethnocentrism, discrimination, and acculturation in the abstract can be flat and uninspiring. But if we experience intercultural contact with our eyes and ears, we begin to understand it."

Tomalin & Stempleski (1993) share Summerfield's view on the value of using films to teach culture, saying:

"Films are cultural documents and allow students to explore the different elements of another culture such as its products, for example, literature, folklore, art, music and artefacts, behavioural patterns, such as customs, habits, dress, foods and leisure activities as well as ideas, such as beliefs, values, institutions."

2.2 Using CIT in ICC

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT), pioneered by John Flanagan in 1954, involves collecting direct observations of human behavior to solve practical problems and develop psychological principles. Wight (1995) defines critical incidents culturally as brief descriptions of situations highlighting misunderstandings, conflicts, or cross-cultural adaptation problems.

A critical incident doesn't have to be dramatic, i.e., an extraordinary event that has a profound impact on the people involved, such as being the victim of a serious crime or being fired from your job. It is simply an everyday event that is important for those involved and encourages them to think deeply about their beliefs, values, attitudes, or behavior. For example, an American manager sends a direct, urgent email to Indian colleagues. The tone is perceived as aggressive in India, causing unintended tension due to differing communication styles. This reflection is crucial for developing ICC. Intercultural encounters help learners expand their awareness and understanding of different cultures. However, it is through reflection on these encounters that learners

develop openness and critically examine their values and attitudes. According to Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006), and Fantini (2006), this reflective process, combined with knowledge and skills, forms the foundation of ICC.

In the intercultural communication field, CIT has also been widely used, both for research and in particular as a source of data for intercultural training (Chen et al., 2005; Chang, 2009; Dela Cruz et al., 2006; Thomas, 2010). For example, Chen et al. (2005) used CIT to investigate the conflicts between foreign managers and local Chinese employees in Shanghai with the aim of improving their relationships and productivity. The studies mentioned have shown that the use of CIT can help with the identification of interactional problems or achievements from people's real experiences, the strategies people use for achieving particular purposes, and the identification of important behaviors to be studied.

Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) utilized CIT to examine ethical dilemmas faced by high school teachers, offering insights for educational leaders to create programs enhancing teachers' ethical knowledge and competence in addressing school-related ethical issues. Finch (2010) utilized CIT in ELT to enhance students' awareness by reflecting on past learning experiences in Korean elementary and secondary schools. CIT has furthered professional learning for student teachers and in-service teachers (Chien, 2018; Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2018). Additionally, critical incidents serve as valuable teaching tools to foster cross-cultural awareness and critical thinking in classrooms (Lingley, 2006; Stakhnevich, 2002).

Films are invaluable for CIT-driven critical incidents and are ideal for ICC-focused courses. This study distinguishes itself from previous research by using cinematic examples instead of students' personal experiences, due to the limited availability of authentic personal incidents. By using films, the course provides a unique perspective and a variety of scenarios for analysis, making films the main resource for learning about culture.

2.3 IPA and Language Learning

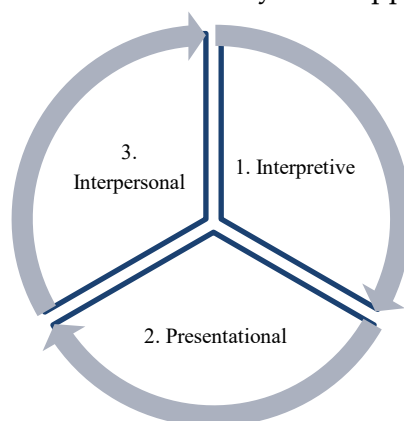
2.3.1 Supporting Theories and Practical Application

IPA is a language learning evaluation method designed to evaluate students' abilities through tasks that mirror real-life communication. It is defined as "*a multitask cluster assessment featuring three tasks, each of which reflects one of the three modes of communication, namely interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational*" (Adair-Hauck et al., 2015, p. 22). By emphasizing practical language use in authentic contexts, IPA supports communicative competence and aligns with current educational goals (Adair-Hauck et al., 2006). This approach takes on a sociocultural perspective as opposed to a traditional cognitive perspective (Donato, 2000) and is rooted in contemporary theories of language acquisition, particularly communicative language teaching and task-based learning (Brown, 2007). Communicative language teaching stresses the importance of using language in real-life situations to enhance communicative competence, while task-based learning engages learners in meaningful tasks that promote authentic language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Together, these theories ensure that IPA prioritizes practical

language skills and real-world application, making the assessment a more accurate reflection of students' ability to use language effectively in varied situations (Ellis, 2003). IPA evaluates students' communication skills in the three modes (Interpretive, Presentational, Interpersonal) outlined in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015). Teachers integrate performance-based assessments to enhance learning. Tasks align with a common theme connected to an essential question, encouraging critical thinking beyond vocabulary memorization. An essential question challenges students to explore the theme's dimensions, reflect on answers, and discuss perspectives. For example, shifting from vocabulary-based teaching to the question "how does food reflect culture?" connects learning to the real world.

After the essential questions, learning targets are identified. At this point, the students will show their performance using tasks based on the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. IPAs are performance-based and they are designed to be used with scoring rubrics, where the teacher determines whether the student's performance has either met or not met the expectations for that task. Figure 1 shows a cyclical approach of how the three modes of communication are integrated into a thematic unit.

Figure 1: IPA Units: A Cyclical Approach



1. The Interpretive task. The interpretive task allows learners to engage with authentic materials and answer information and interpretive questions to assess comprehension.

2. Presentational task. The presentational task asks learners to prepare a written or oral presentation to share their research, ideas, or opinions.

3. Interpersonal task. The interpersonal task engages students in communication about a topic related to the interpretive text. It has two key characteristics: unrehearsed and negotiated. Unrehearsed means students must "think on their feet" without reading from notecards or memorizing. Negotiated means students must listen to others' comments and respond accordingly.

2.3.2 Effectiveness of IPA: Expanding Research Across Contexts

Recent studies (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Plengkham & Wasanasomsithi, 2023; Tambunan & Kurniawan, 2024) underscore the effectiveness of Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) across diverse educational settings. For example, Plengkham & Wasanasomsithi (2023) found that implementing three IPA modules over nine weeks significantly improved the speaking ability of Thai EFL undergraduate students. The study by Kurniawan et al. (2022) also demonstrates that applying the IPA model significantly enhances students' basic speaking skills. Despite positive results in different contexts (Adair-Hauck et al., 2015), research on IPA's effectiveness with EFL students in Taiwan, particularly regarding its impact on intercultural communicative competence, is limited. Therefore, further research is needed to assess IPA's effectiveness across different contexts and learner populations.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) can enhance language proficiency and engagement by focusing on real-life tasks and authentic communication. It supports modern theories like communicative language teaching and task-based learning. This research seeks to build on this by exploring IPA's adaptation at the college level in Taiwan and examining its impact on language and culture learning. This study aims to address gaps and provide new insights into integrating IPA for critical incidents from films to improve language learning outcomes and intercultural competence.

3. Materials and Methods

The potential of IPA, using critical incidents from films, has inspired an innovative course design. This section outlines how film discussions and thematic tasks are structured within the IPA framework and presents strategies to ensure alignment with the study's instructional goals.

3.1 Teaching Plan Design

3.1.1 Course Goals

Through discussion of some specific issues, this course will boost students' understanding of the similarities and differences in cross-cultural behavior, and develop their ability to express themselves orally.

3.1.2 Teaching Material

Teaching material for the course was based on worksheets designed to guide students to explore the issues in the critical incidents taken from three films: (1) *Ramen Shop* (2018), (2) *Welcome to Germany* (2016), and (3) *Outsourced* (2006). These critical incidents were selected based on their ability to stimulate intercultural awareness and reflection, explore intercultural adaptation or identity construction, showcase English from Kachru's concentric circles (1985), and encourage discussion on intercultural conflicts and solutions. These worksheets were created within the framework of the three

communicative modes of IPA in order to foster ICC while at the same time engaging with the aspects of language learning identified as the key goals of the course. The tasks in the worksheets include

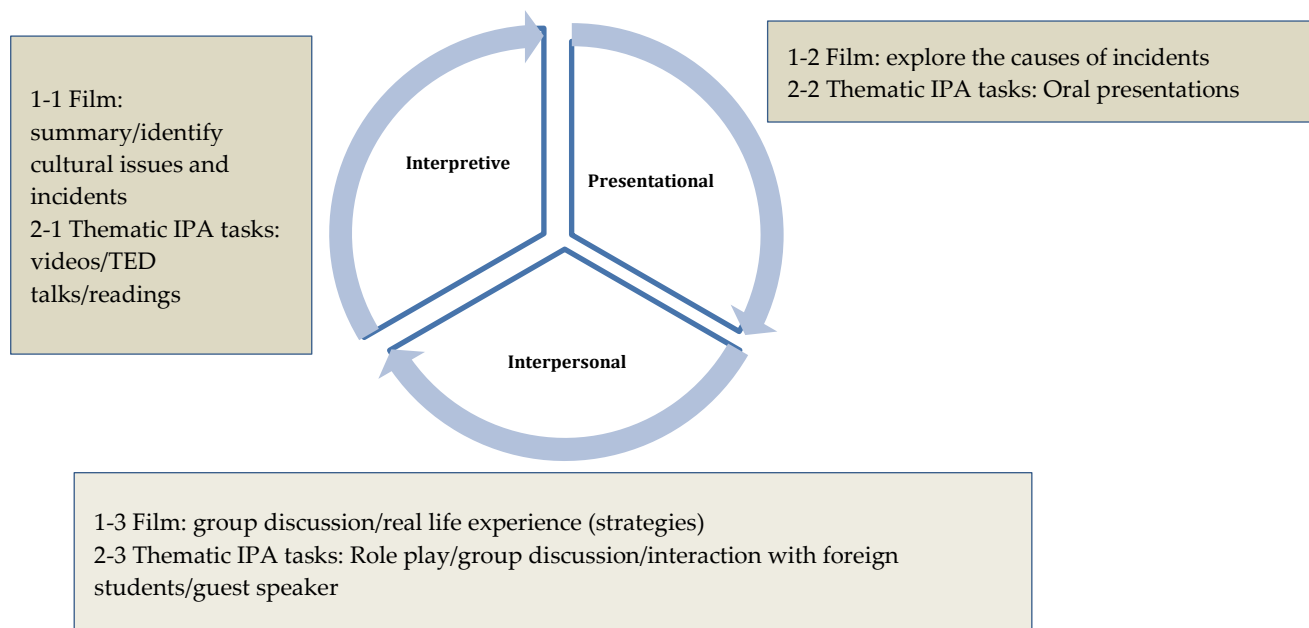
- 1) **Interpretive tasks:** write a summary, identify cultural issues and incidents, and describe the critical incidents,
- 2) **Presentational tasks:** explore the reasons for the incidents,
- 3) **Interpersonal tasks:** discuss strategies for solving the problems and share personal experience.

To reinforce students' communication skills, one thematic topic from each film was chosen within an IPA framework. This allows for deeper examination and practice through discussion and assigned tasks. IPA tasks for each thematic topic include:

- 1) **Interpretive tasks:** studying videos, TED talks, readings
- 2) **Presentational tasks:** oral presentations
- 3) **Interpersonal tasks:** role play, group discussion, interaction with foreign students, guest speakers

The basic structure of the teaching plan design is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Teaching Plan Design



An example of a film session and its subsequent IPA tasks is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Example of Film and IPA Tasks Design

| IPA | Film: <i>Welcome to Germany</i> | Thematic topic for IPA: immigration |
|----------------|--|--|
| Interpretive | Summarize the film and identify cultural issues | Watch videos on discrimination and bias |
| | Describe the critical incidents (What happened?) | |
| Presentational | Why did the incidents happen? | Make an oral presentation on your discussion/role play |
| | Explore incident causes and present ideas | |
| Interpersonal | Discussion of strategies and personal experience | Discuss: Where do stereotypes originate, how do I react to them, and how can I avoid them? |

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Participants

Twenty-four non-English majors were enrolled in a one-semester course titled *Discussion of Cultural Issues*. The participants included 8 males and 16 females, consisting of 8 sophomores, 5 juniors, 6 seniors, and 5 students delaying graduation.

3.2.2 Instruments for Data Collection

The study employed the following instruments to gather data for the three research questions:

- 1) **Intercultural Competence Scale (ICS) (Chao, 2014):** A 30-item scale for RQ1, covering Knowledge (Q1-Q9), Affective Orientation (Q10-Q15), Self-Efficacy (Q16-Q18), Behavioral Performance (Q19-Q25), and Intercultural Consciousness (Q26-Q30).
- 2) **Reflective Writings:** Used to evaluate learning experiences for RQ1.
- 3) **Interviews:** Used to provide qualitative insights for RQ3 and supported RQ1 and RQ2.
- 4) **IPA Rubrics:** Used to assess oral cultural expression in the aspects of vocabulary & expression for cultural ideas, clarity, cultural relevance and sensitivity) in recorded initial and final oral presentations, and film presentations for RQ1 and RQ2.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data, including results from the Intercultural Competence Scale (ICS) and IPA rubrics for presentations, were analyzed using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests and descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from reflective writings and interview responses were examined through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), involving a systematic coding process: familiarization through reading for initial understanding, line-by-line initial coding to identify key ideas, grouping similar codes into broader themes, refining themes to capture major insights, and reviewing and adjusting themes for clarity and coherence. To

ensure a structured evaluation of intercultural communicative competencies, qualitative data were coded and categorized using the dimensions of the ICS and Byram's ICC model.

3.3 Classroom Procedures

- 1) The course started with an introduction and the implementation of an ICC pre-test.
- 2) After the introduction, a lecture on critical incidents was followed by students examining 2-3 cross-cultural misunderstandings. Small groups discussed and explored diverse perspectives on these cases.
- 3) In later film-based classes, the "writing preview notes" activity prompted students to share impressions of the depicted people, countries, or cultures. During screenings, students used a worksheet with questions aligned to the three IPA communication modes to guide discussion.
- 4) After each film discussion, a cultural topic related to the film was explored using an IPA framework. Interpersonal activities included group discussions, interactions with six foreign students, and a guest speaker. Students wrote reflective reports on their language and cultural learning, and oral presentations were assessed.
- 5) In weeks 16–17, students selected a film, presented on critical incidents, and were assessed on summary, cultural analysis, delivery, and reflection. In the final week, an ICC post-test and interviews were conducted (see Table 2 for details).

Table 2: Classroom Procedures

| Week | Content | IPA thematic topic | Activities |
|--------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| W1 | Introduction/ICC Pre-test | | |
| W2-3 | CIT Session | | Group Discussion |
| W4-7 | Film 1 Worksheet 3 IPA tasks | Food Culture | IPA tasks: - Reading - Group discussion - Oral presentation - Reflective writing |
| W8-11 | Film 2 Worksheet 3 IPA tasks | Immigration | IPA tasks: - Group discussion - Videos - Role play - Oral presentation - Reflective writing |
| W12-15 | Film 3 Worksheet 3 IPA tasks | Business Across Cultures | IPA tasks: - Group discussion - Guest speaker - Interacting with 6 foreign students - Final oral presentation - Reflective writing |
| W16-17 | Final Film Presentations | | |
| W18 | ICC Post-test/Interviews | | |

4. Results

The assessment of an intercultural approach, blending IPA and film-based critical incidents, examined students' ICC, language learning, and method perceptions, followed by a discussion of the findings' implications.

4.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence

4.1.1 Results of ICS

Table 3 shows the results of the parametric Wilcoxon signed rank test from the ICS scale. A significant treatment effect was observed in the overall ICS and four dimensions, with significance ranging from $p=.021$ to $.000$. There was no significance in the only dimension of display of intercultural consciousness.

Table 3: Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test from the ICS Scale

| | | Mean | N | SD | Z test | P |
|---|------|------|----|------|--------|---------|
| ICS (Q1-Q30) | Pre | 3.50 | 24 | 0.61 | -3.843 | .000*** |
| | Post | 4.13 | 24 | 0.37 | | |
| Knowledge of intercultural interaction (Q1-Q9) | Pre | 3.06 | 24 | 0.45 | -3.960 | .000*** |
| | Post | 4.00 | 24 | 0.70 | | |
| Affective orientation to intercultural interaction (Q10-Q15) | Pre | 3.94 | 24 | 1.19 | -3.588 | .000*** |
| | Post | 4.74 | 24 | 0.38 | | |
| Self-efficacy in intercultural situations (Q16-Q18) | Pre | 3.62 | 24 | 0.88 | -2.304 | .021* |
| | Post | 4.00 | 24 | 0.70 | | |
| Behavioral performance in intercultural interaction (Q19-Q25) | Pre | 3.43 | 24 | 0.66 | -3.172 | .002*** |
| | Post | 3.99 | 24 | 0.53 | | |
| Display of intercultural consciousness (Q26-Q30) | Pre | 3.75 | 24 | 0.78 | -1.577 | .115 |
| | Post | 4.20 | 24 | 0.66 | | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

In general, the assessment of students' ICC using the ICS showed improvement. The p -values for the four dimensions in the ICS indicate significant improvements, with the greatest advancements observed in the areas of knowledge of intercultural interaction, affective orientation to intercultural interaction and behavioral performance during intercultural interactions. Conversely, the dimension of self-efficacy in intercultural situations demonstrated the least improvement.

4.1.2 Results of Reflective Writings

This study analyzed 72 reflective writings, categorizing them based on the five dimensions of ICS. Some excerpts, including language errors, are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Excerpts Showing ICC in Reflective Writings

| | |
|---|--|
| (a) knowledge of intercultural interaction | <p><i>"The terms of collectivism, individualism, large vs. small power distance, and high and low context cultures are the concepts I learned from this movie and discussion. And I now know how different their communication styles are" (RW S17)</i></p> <p><i>"This interaction is so meaningful, and it helps break my stereotypes about Korea" (RW S1)</i></p> |
| (b) affective orientation to intercultural interaction | <p><i>"To be honest, I don't like to go back to China with her because I can't get used to life in the mountains. It's boring there. The food didn't agree with me. But next time I will be willing to adapt to the different culture and life. I realize adaptation to a new environment is not a bad thing. We might gain something unexpected. Next time, I will try to enjoy the mountain life in China with my mom. (RW S8)</i></p> <p><i>"I really like interacting with foreign students. After this activity, I really want to know their cultures more...I want to be an exchange student and experience the local cultures of foreign countries. (RW2)</i></p> |
| (c) self-efficacy in intercultural situations | <i>"Through this chance to talk with foreign students, I found myself an outgoing student. I can talk about whatever I know. We talk about their countries and Taiwan. We try to find our common interests, like basketball and travel." (RW S5)</i> |
| (d) behavioral performance in intercultural interaction | <p><i>"We talk about their countries and Taiwan. We try to find our common interests, like basketball and travel." (RW S5)</i></p> <p><i>"My family used to host exchange students, and I understand it is very important to learn how to adjust or adapt to new things, like food" (RW S6)</i></p> |
| (e) display of intercultural consciousness | <i>"Before coming to India, Todd should have done research and found information regarding Indian culture. When doing business in another country, it is very important to know and understand the new culture and adjust to/adapt to the new culture's customs and habits. Failure to effectively communicate with others or understand their actions can lead to problems. If I travel or work in other countries, I will do research about their cultures or taboos to avoid offending them." (RW S20)</i> |

Although the statistical results on intercultural consciousness were not significant, excerpts within the five dimensions highlight students' ICC, revealing their knowledge of intercultural interaction, affective orientation, self-efficacy, behavioral performance, and intercultural consciousness.

4.1.3 Interpretations of Cultural Issues in Student-Selected Film Presentations

Students demonstrated effective cultural communication through film presentations, analyzing works like *Innocent Witness*, *Ilo Ilo*, *Dangal*, *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, *Hidden Figures*, and *Cross Road*. Assessments used Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence framework, covering knowledge, interpreting, discovery skills, critical cultural awareness, and attitudes. Examples below showcase significant growth in students' cross-cultural communication competencies.

a. Knowledge

In *Ilo Ilo*, students demonstrated cultural knowledge by understanding the historical context of the film, including the economic challenges faced by Singapore during the 1997

Asian financial crisis. A specific scene that students mentioned as highlighting this was when the protagonist, Jiale, is scolded for wasting food, reflecting the family's financial struggles during that period. In *Dangal*, students demonstrated knowledge of wrestling's historical and cultural significance in India. They discussed its importance, traditional roots, and how the film challenges societal norms through its female protagonists.

b. Skills of Interpreting and Relating

Students were able to interpret non-verbal cues and relate them to cultural norms. For instance, in *Ilo Ilo*, students noted the scene where Terry, the Filipino maid, communicates with Jiale through non-verbal cues and shared activities, which demonstrates the development of a cross-cultural bond between them. In *Innocent Witness*, students mentioned that interpreting the subtle facial expressions of the witness becomes crucial in understanding the full context of her statements. The ability to relate this to the legal context was vital for effective communication. Moreover, students were able to connect the instances of discrimination against the autistic girl in the film to their real-life experiences on campus.

c. Skills of Discovery and Interaction

In *Ilo Ilo*, this competence is evident when students highlighted scenes where Terry introduces Filipino customs to the family, such as the celebration of the Santo Niño festival, which showcases the characters discovering and interacting with each other's cultural practices. In *Innocent Witness*, students remarked that the lawyer engaged in active listening and asked open-ended questions to discover deeper layers of the witness's story. Through interactive dialogue, the lawyer fostered an environment where the witness felt comfortable sharing her perspective, showcasing effective cross-cultural communication skills.

d. Critical cultural awareness

In *Dangal* and *Hidden Figures*, students demonstrated critical cultural awareness by analyzing how the films challenged stereotypes about women's roles in India and African Americans in science. In *Ilo Ilo*, they connected Jiale's mother's discomfort and stereotyping of Terry to similar issues faced by migrant domestic workers in Taiwan, reflecting on prejudices and systemic challenges. In *Innocent Witness*, students recognized the lawyer's sensitivity to Confucian values, understanding how cultural factors influenced the witness's behavior and statements.

e. Attitudes

In *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, students noted that mutual respect emerges as Madame Mallory recognizes Hassan's skills. In *Ilo Ilo*, Jiale's father appreciates Terry's dedication, showing a positive shift toward another culture. These insights highlight the importance of openness and respect in intercultural communication.

4.2 Results from the Presentational Tasks of IPA-Cultural Expression Proficiency

Students' oral proficiency in cultural expression in the aspects of vocabulary & expression for cultural ideas, clarity, cultural relevance and sensitivity was assessed using Predetermined Rubrics in the oral presentational tasks. Results showed significant improvement, with notable gains in cultural expression between the initial and final oral presentations (see Table 5).

Table 5: Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test from Presentations

| | | Mean | N | SD | Z | P |
|---------------------|------|------|----|------|--------|---------|
| Cultural expression | Pre | 3.27 | 24 | 0.71 | -4.271 | .000*** |
| | Post | 4.10 | 24 | 0.55 | | |

*** $p < .001$.

To support this statistical result, Table 6 displays select student excerpts illustrating improved communication in effectively and appropriately using spoken language. These excerpts highlight clearer expression and deeper reflections, as observed through a comparison of the final presentations—focused on exploring issues through interactions with foreign students—and the initial presentations on the same or similar topics. B1, B2, and B3 excerpts from oral reports showcase enhanced abilities to discuss cultural issues with deeper reflections compared to earlier A1, A2, and A3 excerpts.

Table 6: Excerpts Showing Improvement in Oral Expressions

| A | B |
|--|---|
| A1 <i>"They face a lot of difficulties, such as discrimination and communication. Some of them can't speak Chinese. This can cause a lot of problems. Some old people in the countryside are not kind to the workers."</i> (S4) | B1 <i>"Yeah, so after our sessions, we really get what Taiwan's migrant workers go through. It's not just about learning a new language; they face all kinds of challenges. Like, they deal with language barriers, discrimination, and even problems with brokers who exploit them. They also often encounter negative attitudes or prejudice from the local community, like the MRT story (shared by the teacher). I taught her (the Korean student) the story. A 9-year-old boy refused to take a seat taken by a foreign worker because he is a Filipino. His behavior means we need to improve our education to strengthen the awareness and understanding. Parents should also take the responsibility. It's not easy fitting into a new culture, especially when they don't always get much help from the government or other groups. It's a tough situation."</i> (S4) |
| A2 <i>"I do not know much about North Korean defectors. All I know is they have hard life and they try to escape from China to Korea. The speaker in the video tells how they are educated and the discrimination they encounter."</i> (S12) | B2 <i>"I am interested in the topic of North Korean defectors. When I talked to the Korean student, I told her what I learn about defectors and I asked her opinions. She told me that the North Korean defectors in South Korea, especially the women suffer from discrimination by bosses. North Korean children often face rejection and sometimes bullying at school. Most</i> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <i>people welcome the defectors and support them. But still some have negative attitudes toward them because of political reasons and personal reasons. It's not a simple question."</i> (S12) |
| <i>A3. "... Dumplings mean wealth because they look like ancient Chinese money, "yuan bao". And fish means prosperity because the word for fish sounds like 'surplus'. So, we eat these foods to bring luck and good fortune for the coming year."</i> (S24) | <i>B3. "...I found that our cultures have a lot in common when it comes to celebrating the New Year with dumplings. They also eat dumplings during holidays like New Year. They call dumplings "mandu". Dumplings mean unity and prosperity. The round shape of mandu represents wholeness and completeness. The ingredients of jiaozi and mandu are very similar, like meat and vegetables. But they may have tofu in mandu. We all believe that dumplings can bring good luck...."</i> (S24) |

As shown in Table 6, B1 offers deeper vocabulary and cultural insights compared to A1. It discusses challenges faced by migrant workers using terms like "language barriers," "exploitation by brokers," and "discrimination." B1 provides a detailed and empathetic understanding of Taiwan's migrant worker challenges, delving into language barriers, broker exploitation, and local community prejudice with real-life examples. Additionally, B1 highlights the significance of education, parental responsibility, and societal support, offering nuanced perspectives and potential solutions.

A2 acknowledges the challenges faced by North Korean defectors but lacks specific details and depth of understanding. Mention of education and discrimination is vague and does not provide comprehensive insight into the issue. In contrast, from the report of a later presentation. Conversely, B2 demonstrates genuine interest in this topic and actively seeks information from a Korean student. Specific details about discrimination faced by defectors, particularly women and children, are provided, reflecting a deeper understanding of the issue. Recognition of both positive and negative attitudes towards defectors shows a nuanced understanding of the challenges they face.

In A3 and B3, the language used in A3 is concise and direct, while B3 offers a more detailed comparison. Additionally, B3 enriches the cultural context by comparing Chinese and Korean dumpling traditions. Both effectively communicate the cultural significance of dumplings, yet they diverge in language style and cultural content presentation.

B1, B2, and B3 excerpts exhibit a superior ability to analyze and discuss cultural issues compared to A1, A2, and A3. They demonstrate advanced language skills and offer thoughtful reflections. Additionally, they present well-rounded and insightful perspectives, showcasing a deeper understanding of the topic.

4.3 Student Perceptions through Interviews

4.3.1 Fostering Cultural Awareness and Speaking Confidence through Film-Based Learning and IPA Tasks

Students' perceptions of the course approach were gathered through interviews. The focus was on their views on the film-based cultural learning and IPA tasks. Most students agreed that integrating films was engaging and effective for fostering cultural understanding, empathy, and open-mindedness.

S3's statement serves as a compelling illustration of this response:

"Watching movies is a more relaxed approach to understanding cultural issues. It truly ignites my curiosity and fosters a genuine desire for deeper understanding." (personal communication, June 2, 2023)

Student S14 also noted:

"I learned about 'cultural issues' and 'communication issues' in fun ways. This course changed my mind about talking to people from other countries. I now know it's important to understand their culture before we talk. The class video showed me how it can be awkward if we don't. Language and culture are both important for good communication." (personal communication, June, 2023)

Students interviewed expressed that IPA tasks effectively engaged their interest in film discussions, offering diverse speaking opportunities like group discussions, role-plays, and conversations with foreign peers. These activities boosted their confidence in using English in real-life situations and heightened their motivation to learn the language. S16 said:

"Taiwanese students generally lack practice in English speaking; however, it is a crucial and essential skill for the future. Therefore, it's beneficial for us to confront the reality of how inadequate our English skills are. I find oral activities to be very engaging because I have never had the opportunity to discuss with someone in other English classes. Speaking to foreign students from five different countries at a time is really amazing. This is a completely new experience for me." (personal communication, June, 2023)

S7 also explained:

"This class helps me express my thoughts on cultural topics in English with ease. For example, when discussing the role of food in different cultures, I can easily explain how food fosters respect and understanding among foreign students, without worrying about mistakes. The teacher's speaking activities help me practice in advance, boosting my confidence and ability to speak." (personal communication, June, 2023)

Overall, the majority of students offered positive feedback on the film-based approach and the communication tasks utilizing IPA. They concurred that the teaching method has a significant impact on their language and cultural learning.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrated that the film-based critical incident IPA approach effectively addressed the research questions and resolved the identified challenges. By tackling the issue of sourcing engaging and authentic cultural content and overcoming language barriers, the method enhanced ICC and language learning, as evidenced by improved pre- and post-test scores, students' reflective writings, and cultural content in their presentations. Students showed significant progress in oral communication, particularly in conveying cultural content with enhanced language use and greater expressive clarity. As discussed in the theoretical framework, ICC is a vital component of contemporary language learning (Byram, 1997), underscoring the value of this course. The integration of the IPA-3 modes with critical incidents from films proved to be an effective solution for assessing and developing ICC.

Clear and comprehensive explanations of the core values that have contributed to this success are presented to ensure a thorough understanding of this approach. Additionally, pedagogical suggestions for future endeavors are provided.

Firstly, based on feedback received from surveys and interviews, films have proven to be highly effective and ideal tools for cultural learning. As discussed in the theory section, Summerfield, Tomalin & Stempleski have highlighted this. This research adds evidence of the usefulness of films as ESL teaching tools. This is attributed to their frequent portrayal of real-life scenarios, making them rich resources for understanding cultural nuances. The critical incidents depicted in films serve as powerful tools for exploring the representation and interpretation of cultural elements. This has the potential to captivate students' interest, spark curiosity, and foster a genuine desire for deeper cultural understanding. The combination of CIT, previously applied in research involving subjects with real intercultural experiences, has shown that applying CIT to films is an effective teaching method for cultural learning. This integration expands the practical use of films in EFL education. Furthermore, incorporating critical incidents from films is particularly beneficial for students who may lack personal or direct intercultural experiences, providing them with content to reflect upon in writing or share during discussions with classmates. This enhances overall engagement in the learning process. As explored in the Literature Review, CIT has been used in a number of contexts, including ICC and EFL teaching. This study confirms the effectiveness of CIT in the EFL context and demonstrates its effectiveness in combining both the teaching of language and of ICC.

Second, the results indicate that using the IPA framework to organize teaching materials based on critical incidents from films for discussion and design the follow-up thematic tasks to reinforce cultural understanding and learning not only enhanced

students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) but also facilitated effective language learning through the three communication modes: interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal communication tasks. This shows it is possible to combine ICC and language learning in one course, without sacrificing language learning for intercultural communicative competence.

For culture learning, the essence of this lies in the use of critical incidents from films within worksheets designed as part of the interpretive tasks in the IPA framework. The results suggest that employing the IPA modes to craft worksheets that prompt students to delve into pivotal moments in films can systematically guide them to focus on discussion topics, thereby bolstering their engagement. For instance, critical incidents portrayed in films can be used to promote cultural sensitivity and encourage critical thinking when considered with the appropriate focus. The questions regarding what happened in the film help students ponder sensitive cultural issues and prompt discussions on topics like discrimination or cultural identity. The effectiveness of this approach is substantiated by feedback from S19.

The questions in the worksheets really help me to delve deeper into the cultural issues in the films. Sometimes when I finish watching a movie, my first thought is just like, that was a great movie, but what was it really trying to say? I've found that these worksheets provide a structured way for me to revisit the film's themes and ideas, helping me to understand the underlying cultural hints that I didn't realize during the first viewing. They've helped me think more carefully about the social and cultural problems that movies often subtly include. (personal communication, June, 2023)

Using critical incidents as part of interpretive tasks within the IPA framework proves highly beneficial for cultural learning, particularly in fostering engagement, curiosity, and sensitivity. By guiding students to delve deeper into the cultural issues presented in films, structured worksheets spark curiosity by encouraging them to question and explore the underlying messages and social issues embedded in the stories. As one student (S19) shared, the questions helped uncover cultural nuances that might have been overlooked during the initial viewing. This structured approach not only drives active engagement but also nurtures curiosity and cultural sensitivity by prompting students to critically analyze and reflect on diverse perspectives conveyed in the films.

Third, as highlighted by the quantitative and qualitative results, another key to success is that this film-based critical incident IPA approach provides students with ample opportunities to speak and express themselves in English. This effectively addresses the need for more communication training to tackle the language challenges encountered when discussing cultural issues. This approach has been well-received, especially by students who lack regular chances to use English. In particular, presentational tasks, which are crucial for assessing language proficiency and ICC, offer significant benefits across the three communication modes of IPA.

In the interpretive mode, creating presentational tasks, such as writing a film summary, involves engaging with authentic texts as sources of information. This

engagement enhances learners' ability to understand and interpret authentic materials—a critical skill in this mode. In the interpersonal mode, crafting presentational tasks, such as group discussions, requires learners to articulate thoughts clearly, contributing directly to improved interpersonal communication skills. In the presentational mode, tasks involve actively creating content, be it role plays or multimedia presentations. This creative aspect enables learners to demonstrate their language understanding as they craft messages for specific audiences. When presentational tasks incorporate elements of cultural expression, such as a task of delivering presentations on a film of students' own choosing, learners can showcase their understanding of cultural norms, values, and practices in a culturally appropriate manner.

Overall, presentational tasks across the three modes in IPA contribute to the improvement in language and ICC by fostering expression, encouraging feedback, engaging with authentic materials, promoting critical analysis, enhancing cultural understanding, and building practical real-world communication skills. Based on the wide variety of skills fostered by these three different communicative modes of IPA, it is strongly recommended to widely implement the IPA approach in language teaching. This could effectively address the common issue of limited speaking opportunities faced by many Taiwanese students, leading to noticeable improvement.

Lastly, inviting foreign students to engage with local students as part of an interpersonal task received enthusiastic acclaim from most students. This firsthand experience had a profound impact on their intercultural learning, offering a fantastic, and for some, a first opportunity to apply English in real-world communication and immerse themselves in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). This connection to the real world holds the potential to significantly enhance engagement and motivation in their learning journeys. Importantly, through reflective writings submitted by students following this activity, it is evident that they have gained a deeper understanding of strategies used in intercultural communication, such as asking questions, code switching, and demonstrating respect.

This classroom-based interaction experience is especially valuable for students who may feel hesitant or uncertain about meeting foreign students. It assists them in acquiring intercultural experience and building confidence in intercultural settings. Consequently, this increased confidence may motivate them to actively engage in a broader range of local-foreign student activities on campus. Therefore, integrating a purposefully designed activity for such interactions into the curriculum is recommended, as it can enhance students' self-efficacy.

In conclusion, the film-based critical incident IPA approach effectively addresses challenges in language and cultural learning by integrating authentic cultural content and engaging students in critical incident discussions. This approach enhances both intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and language proficiency through the interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal tasks within the IPA framework. Structured worksheets guide students to explore cultural nuances, promoting critical

thinking and reflection on social issues. Additionally, it provides ample opportunities for speaking practice, helping students improve their communication skills.

Presentational tasks, focusing on cultural expression, allow students to demonstrate their understanding of cultural norms, while interpersonal tasks, like engaging with foreign students, foster real-world application and build confidence in intercultural communication. Based on the positive outcomes, this approach proves to be a valuable tool for enhancing language learning and ICC. Therefore, it is recommended for broader implementation in language teaching to enhance speaking abilities and better prepare students for global communication.

6. Recommendations

Despite fruitful learning outcomes, further reflections suggest pedagogical recommendations to enhance teaching practices and address limitations in adopting this approach. First, when selecting films, it is important to consider both ICC-relevant characteristics and production years. It is better to opt for more recent movie content that resonates with students' current lives, as it is more likely to generate engaging discussions. Selecting films for interactive discussions should also prioritize diversity and inclusivity to avoid reinforcing cultural biases or stereotypes. Considering the cultural backgrounds of foreign students involved is essential for creating an enriching and inclusive learning environment. For instance, in the case of having Korean students, including a Korean film can deepen understanding of Korean cultural heritage, making the learning experience more meaningful and relatable for all students.

Second, the success of interpersonal tasks involving foreign students may depend on the willingness and availability of these students. Logistics and scheduling may pose challenges. To maximize cross-cultural learning, encouraging the enrolment of foreign students in the course is advised. This could be achieved by incorporating Taiwanese movies and highlighting Taiwanese culture to attract foreign students while deepening Taiwanese students' understanding of their own culture. An extended and diverse semester-long interaction is likely to enhance students' intercultural experiences and yield more comprehensive insights. To address this limitation, incorporating technology into future course design is suggested, pending further research. This may include using language learning apps, virtual language exchange platforms, and online forums. Such integration offers more chances for language practice and intercultural interaction, enhancing self-efficacy in intercultural communication.

In summary, integrating films, CIT, and IPA modes in EFL education effectively promotes cultural learning, language acquisition, and ICC. IPA modes enable students to express themselves in English while assessing both language proficiency and ICC, with interpersonal tasks improving real-world communication. Recommendations include selecting culturally relevant films and addressing logistical challenges. This approach can be adapted to meet diverse learner needs by selecting film incidents that align with the

course goals and adjusting IPA tasks to accommodate varying levels of proficiency and intercultural awareness.

7. Conclusion

This paper presents an intercultural teaching approach combining IPA's three modes with critical incidents from films for college EFL learners. It links assessment with instruction, using films for cultural examples and CIT to analyze conflicts and solutions. Data show significant improvement in ICC and oral proficiency in conveying cultural ideas, with positive student feedback. The approach enhances both ICC and language learning, while also boosting motivation and participation in discussions, highlighting the benefits of combining IPA with film-based critical incidents. Further research is needed to address potential limitations.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

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