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ENHANCING BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS THROUGH INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: AS A STRATEGY TO TEACH NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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Abstrak

Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menentukan bagaimana ICC sebagai strategi pengajaran dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa untuk menghasilkan dokumen bisnis yang efektif dalam konteks global. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini menggabungkan survei kuantitatif dan wawancara kualitatif untuk mengumpulkan data komprehensif dari para partisipan. Temuan utama mengungkapkan bahwa pendekatan ICC menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam keterampilan menulis bisnis siswa. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya mengintegrasikan pelatihan ICC ke dalam kurikulum pendidikan bisnis sebagai strategi untuk mempersiapkan siswa menghadapi tuntutan lingkungan bisnis internasional. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa menumbuhkan kesadaran dan kompetensi antar budaya sangat penting untuk mengembangkan komunikator bisnis yang mahir, sehingga meningkatkan pendidikan bisnis secara keseluruhan dan memfasilitasi komunikasi antar budaya yang efektif dalam lingkungan profesional.

Kata Kunci: Keterampilan menulis bisnis; Kompetensi Komunikasi Antarbudaya; Strategi Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris

Abstract

The primary objective is to determine how ICC as a teaching strategy can enhance students' ability to produce effective business documents in a globalized context. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research incorporates both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data from participants. Key findings reveal that ICC approach exhibits significantly improved business writing skills of students. The study underscores the importance of integrating ICC training into business education curricula as a strategy to prepare students for the demands of international business environments. These findings suggest that fostering intercultural awareness and competence is crucial for developing proficient business communicators, thereby enhancing overall business education and facilitating effective intercultural communication in professional settings

Keywords: Business writing skills; Intercultural Communicative Competence; English Teaching Strategy



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INTRODUCTION

In the global economy, effective business writing is a critical skill that facilitates communication across diverse cultural and linguistic boundaries. As businesses increasingly operate on an international scale, the ability to produce clear, concise, and culturally sensitive written communication has become essential. Business writing serves as the backbone of many organizational functions, from internal reports and memos to external proposals and marketing materials (British Council, 2013). Poorly crafted business documents can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and missed opportunities, underscoring the importance of proficiency in this area. As a result of these phenomena, it is essential to implement strategies that emphasize intercultural awareness, such as Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

Incorporating ICC into business writing education is not merely beneficial but necessary for preparing students for the realities of the global marketplace. By integrating ICC training into the planning and development of learning programs, educators can create a more comprehensive curriculum that addresses both the technical and cultural aspects of business communication (Byram et al., 2013). This approach helps students develop a deeper understanding of how cultural factors influence writing practices and equips them with strategies to adapt their communication to different cultural contexts (Chunrong, 2016). Consequently, students are better prepared to meet the demands of international business environments, enhancing their employability and effectiveness as future professionals.

ICC strategy enhances students' humanistic qualities and integrates these into the development of their cross-cultural communication abilities, which are closely linked to business English education (Gu & Zhao, 2021). Implementing the ICC in business English courses for non-English departments emphasized the creation of various cross-cultural communication activities (Derado, 2015). These activities enabled

students to develop and refine their cross-cultural communication thinking skills, thereby enhancing their ability to interact competently with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Klimova et al., 2019).

Additionally, the ability to promote and develop significant values, skills, and knowledge that improve students' awareness of cultural differences is also needed in every level of education including primary school since it is bilingual-oriented. Moreover, English is also becoming a compulsory subject in primary school. Thus, ICC is important and could be an alternative strategy for teachers to teach English to understand and appreciate one's language and culture before acquiring the target language and culture (Tsatzali & Beazidou, 2023). ICC involves the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts, which includes understanding cultural differences, adapting communication styles, and demonstrating cultural sensitivity (Syarifudin & Rahmat, 2021). As globalization blurs geographical boundaries, professionals must navigate a complex landscape of cultural norms and expectations. Hence, ICC equips individuals with the tools to address these challenges, ensuring their written communication resonates with diverse audiences, and avoids potential cultural pitfalls.

The implementation of ICC as a strategy in business writing curricula also promotes a more inclusive and culturally aware educational environment. By exposing students to diverse perspectives and encouraging them to consider the cultural implications of their writing (Ghezalje & Moini, 2013), educators foster a more holistic and empathetic approach to communication. This strategy not only improves students' business writing skills but also contributes to their overall personal and professional development (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020). As the global economy continues to evolve, the integration of ICC into business writing education will remain a crucial factor in producing competent and culturally sensitive

communicators capable of thriving in an interconnected world (Salynskaya et al., 2021).

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is paramount for effective business communication in foreign languages (Chunrong, 2016; Ibatova, 2020). As businesses expand globally, professionals are increasingly required to interact with colleagues, clients, and partners from diverse cultural backgrounds. ICC encompasses a strategy to strengthen the ability to not only communicate in different languages but also to understand and respect cultural nuances that influence communication styles and preferences (Zheng, 2014). Without this competence, even proficient language skills may fall short in ensuring successful interactions, leading to potential misunderstandings and conflicts that can hinder business operations and relationships.

The components of ICC include cultural and language abilities, metacognitive skills, and strategic competence (Klimova et al., 2019). Cultural abilities refer to an individual's understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural norms, values, and practices of different communities. Language abilities involve proficiency in the language used for communication, including vocabulary, grammar, and appropriate usage. Metacognitive skills are the awareness and regulation of one's cognitive processes in communication, allowing individuals to adapt their strategies based on the context. Strategic competence involves the ability to use appropriate communication strategies to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, ensuring that the intended message is effectively conveyed and understood.

Additionally, incorporating ICC into the development of teaching lesson plans is a strategic approach to preparing students for global business communication (Ho & Ton, 2020). By designing lessons that integrate cultural context with language instruction, educators can create a more immersive and practical learning experience. This includes activities that simulate real-world scenarios where students must navigate cultural differences and apply their

language skills accordingly (Li & Dong, 2021). Through role-playing, case studies, and collaborative projects, students can develop a deeper understanding of how to communicate effectively across cultures, enhancing both their language proficiency and their intercultural sensitivity.

Besides, incorporating ICC as a strategy to teach business writing is also essential to help teachers design their learning at every level of education. In primary education, ICC is expected to support the differential learning approach coined in Kurikulum Merdeka. By perceiving students as individuals with different cultural backgrounds and learning preferences, ICC could aid teachers in embracing students and making them engage in a better understanding of the lesson they learned (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020).

The implementation of ICC-focused lesson plans not only benefits students' communication skills but also supports their overall professional development. By fostering an environment that emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and adaptability, educators can help students build the confidence and competence needed to succeed in international business settings (Ho & Ton, 2020). This holistic approach to language education ensures that students are not only linguistically prepared but also culturally equipped to navigate the complexities of global communication (Murat, 2011). As the business world continues to globalize, the emphasis on ICC in educational curricula will remain crucial for developing the next generation of effective and culturally competent business professionals.

The current gap in Business Writing education lies in the insufficient integration of intercultural aspects within teaching lesson planning. While traditional business writing courses focus on the mechanics of effective communication, such as grammar, style, and structure, they often neglect the critical role of intercultural competence. This oversight results in students being ill-prepared for the challenges of communicating in a globalized business environment, where cultural awareness and

sensitivity are paramount. Addressing this gap requires a curriculum overhaul that incorporates intercultural communicative competence, equipping students with the necessary skills to navigate diverse cultural contexts, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness as business communicators.

To bridge this gap, lesson plans must go beyond conventional language instruction to include activities and content that emphasize cultural differences and their impact on communication. For instance, case studies illustrating real-world business scenarios where intercultural misunderstandings occur can be analyzed to highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity. Role-playing exercises can simulate interactions with international clients, allowing students to practice adapting their communication styles to different cultural norms (Dong & Liu, 2015). Additionally, incorporating guest lectures from professionals with global business experience can provide students with practical insights and firsthand accounts of the importance of intercultural competence in business writing.

Furthermore, assessments should be designed to evaluate not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to effectively communicate in a culturally appropriate manner (Zheng, 2014). This could include assignments that require students to draft business documents for diverse audiences, taking into account cultural preferences and expectations. By integrating these intercultural elements into the curriculum, educators can foster a more holistic understanding of business writing, preparing students to become adept communicators in an international business landscape.

Ultimately, addressing the gap in Business Writing education through the inclusion of intercultural aspects in lesson planning is essential for developing well-rounded, globally competent professionals. As the business world continues to shrink due to globalization, the demand for employees who can navigate cultural complexities with ease will only increase. By prioritizing intercultural communicative

competence in education, institutions can ensure that their graduates are not only proficient in language but also capable of forging strong, effective relationships across cultural boundaries (Zheng, 2014). This approach will significantly enhance students' career prospects and contribute to the overall success of businesses in a diverse and interconnected global economy. Concisely, this study was a means to evaluate the effectiveness of Intercultural Communicative Competence as a strategy to enhance students' business correspondence skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed mixed-method research where the researchers combined the quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain more comprehensive data. The researchers used surveys and interviews as data collection techniques to investigate the impact of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) on non-English department students' business writing skills.

The survey was modified from Derado (2015) which was designed to ask students about their attitudes toward the use of the ICC approach and its impact on their intercultural business writing using Yes/No questions followed by their further comments. The survey was divided into two big sections regarding (1) the implementation of strategy and (2) the effects of incorporating culture in students' Business correspondence. Not only that, but the lecturers of (department) also participated to become interviewees. The purpose of the interview was to evaluate how this strategy may be used to students' intercultural business transfer skills.

Through surveys, 98 students attending the Business Writing course at the English Literature Department at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia, participated in this study. Hence, the participants involved in this study were non-English department students at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the ICC approach in developing students' abilities in intercultural business correspondence, students have been asked to respond to the effects they feel on their ability to participate in business correspondence after using the ICC approach. Furthermore, this research also invites lecturers to reflect on the application of this approach to students' abilities in intercultural business transmission through interview results. The results of student responses can be seen in the following table:

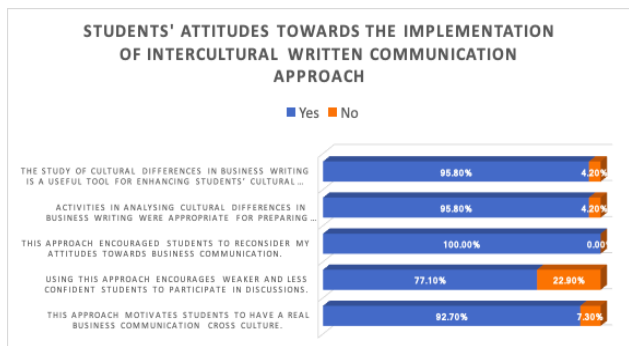
Table 1. Students' attitudes toward the implementation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach

No	Statements	Yes	No
The implementation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach			
1	The study of cultural differences in business writing is a useful tool for enhancing students' cultural awareness.	95.8 %	4.2 %
2	Activities in analyzing cultural differences in business writing were appropriate for preparing students for dealing with cultural issues in written communication.	95.8 %	4.2 %
3	This approach encouraged students to reconsider my attitudes towards business communication.	100 %	0 %
4	Using this approach encourages weaker and less confident students to participate in discussions.	77.1 %	22.9 %
5	This approach motivates students to have a real business communication cross culture.	92.7 %	7.3 %
The effects of incorporating culture in business writing			
6	The implemented approach provided plenty of cultural information about different cultures in communication.	95.8 %	4.2 %
7	The implemented approach allowed students to get a realistic image of different cultures in business written communication	92.7 %	7.3 %

8	The approach of incorporating culture in Business Writing class helped students understand cross-cultural issues in written communication	93.8 %	6.3 %
9	This approach enabled students to write effectively for a global citizen	89.6 %	10.4 %
10	Studying business writing with this approach encourages respect, understanding and courtesy towards people who come from cultures different from students.	99 %	1 %
11	Studying intercultural communication helped students avoid cultural misunderstandings in business writing.	97.9 %	2.1 %
12	Incorporating culture in Business Writing class improved students' competence in business written communication	86.5 %	13.5 %
13	The implementation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach has a significant effect for students in Business Writing	82.3 %	17.7 %

Based on this table, it can be seen that the implementation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach has received quite a lot of attention from the perspective of business writing students. A total of 95.8% of students believe that the study of cultural differences in business correspondence is a useful way to increase their cultural awareness. Meanwhile, a small number of them (4.2%) stated differently, that they were not yet sure if cultural studies could increase their cultural awareness.

Figure 1. Students' attitudes towards the implementation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach



"Applying a cross-cultural approach in business correspondence will enhance our ability as English literature students to communicate effectively with audiences who have different cultural backgrounds. Not only will this increase cultural awareness, but it can also expand business opportunities, build stronger relationships, and achieve success in an increasingly globalised and multicultural business environment." (questionnaire excerpt)

Apart from that, 95.8% of students also agreed that the activity of analyzing cultural differences in business correspondence is suitable for preparing students to face cultural problems in written communication. This is reinforced by the results of interviews with lecturers who teach Business Writing that the activity of identifying and analyzing cultural differences in written business communication styles can give students an idea of issues that may occur during correspondence.

"The activity of identifying and analyzing cultural differences in written business communication styles can give students an idea of issues that may occur during correspondence" (Interview excerpt)

At the next point, 100% of students thought that this approach encouraged them to reconsider their attitude towards business communication. This approach also encourages weaker and less confident students to participate in discussions (77.1% said they agreed and the other 22.9% said they did not).

"I think the application of this method is suitable for myself because I am less confident when communicating directly with other people I don't know." (Questionnaire excerpt)

"I really like this learning method because I can give arguments without having to make comparisons with my friends who are superior in English grammar. I hope that in the next semester there will still be classes that apply methods like this." (Questionnaire excerpt)

Furthermore, students also believe (92.7%) that this approach motivates them to be able to realize real cross-cultural business communication. They want to be able to immediately experience intercultural business correspondence directly.

"This approach has various benefits for students, such as motivates students to have a real business communication cross culture, and encouraging students to reconsider their attitudes towards business communication." (Questionnaire excerpt)

However, there are still 7.3% of students who do not have the same motivation as the majority of these students to interact directly with cross-cultural business people.

Figure 2. Students' perceptions of the effects of cultural inculturation in business correspondence



In terms of the effects felt by students after studying business correspondence using a cultural approach, 95.8% of students view that this approach provides a lot of information about cultural differences in communication. A total of 92.7% of students also agreed that including cultural elements in business correspondence allows them to get a realistic picture of different cultures.

“Cultural differences are very influential in business correspondence because they can provide opportunities for learning cultural differences and also business opportunities that are in accordance with the target's culture.” (Questionnaire excerpt)

“Business writing is a tool for exchanging information by means of correspondence. With an approach to incorporating culture, it will make it easier for us to exchange information about culture, so that we can easily explore the outside world before going into the business world.” (Questionnaire excerpt)

Apart from that, students also thought that this approach helped them understand cross-cultural issues in written communication (93.8%).

“The effect of incorporating cultures in business writing is beneficial in the writing process. If we do not incorporate culture in it then bad things will happen such as misunderstanding and disrespect for other people's cultures. This makes culture very important in the business writing process in avoiding business failure.” (Questionnaire excerpt)

As many as 89.6% of students agreed while another 10.4% disagreed that this approach allows them to write effectively for the global community. In terms of tolerance, 99% of students agree that studying business correspondence with this cultural approach encourages respect, understanding and politeness towards people who come from cultures that are different from the student's culture. This will certainly have an impact on harmony in business communication, and 97.9% of students admit that this approach can help students avoid cultural misunderstandings in business correspondence.

“The implementation of cultural integration in business communication serves as a vital instrument for achieving business success. Internally, understanding the cultural aspects of business communication allows individuals and organizations to gain insights into the values, norms, and cultural practices within the workplace. This aids in avoiding misunderstandings, reducing conflicts, and building stronger relationships with business partners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, a good understanding of culture enables more effective communication. By adapting communication styles to cultural preferences, messages are better understood and received by recipients. Externally, by understanding culture and practicing effective

communication in approaching larger markets, it opens doors to international expansion, global collaboration, and access to new markets. The implementation of cultural integration in business communication is crucial as it is a part of the adaptive nature necessary for business survival. Despite the unique and profound nature of this field, it may sometimes be overshadowed in popularity. However, as a student, I am aware that the implementation of culture in business communication is an essential aspect that must be understood for future prospects.” (Questionnaire excerpt)

Even though there were 13.5% who said no, 86.5% of students agreed that the intercultural approach in business writing classes so far had a significant impact in increasing their competence in written business communication.

“Including culture in business writing can help make the message more relatable and understandable for the intended audience. It shows respect and understanding for different customs and values. It also helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes inclusivity in the workplace. However, it's important to be sensitive and accurate when incorporating culture.” (Questionnaire excerpt)

These results are in line with observations from the lecturer that student competence in writing business letters develops with the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach. This can be seen through the way students write for the global community by using common vocabulary, writing style and avoiding elements of SARA in the business correspondence assignments they have done.

“The Intercultural Communicative Competence technique helped students gain proficiency in business letter writing. It is possible to see how this is done by looking at how students disseminated their writing to the global citizen by using standard writing conventions, appropriate editing styles, and avoiding ‘SARA’ in business writing tasks that they were already engaged in.” (Questionnaire excerpt)

Furthermore, the data shows that 82.3% of students agree that applying the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach has a significant influence on them in business correspondence. Derado (2015) assures that the process of cultural exploration and contrast, which students go through during their studies,

allows them to acquire a higher level of openness to cultural diversity and, thus, improve their cross-cultural communicative competence. This certainly has great implications for students' ability to communicate in business in the future.

Incorporating culture into Business Writing in college is a proactive step to prepare future business professionals for the realities of a global world. By providing an understanding of cultural nuances, cultivating cultural sensitivity, adapting communication styles, contextualizing learning through real-world scenarios, addressing language and terminology, and discussing global business ethics, educators can empower students to communicate effectively and ethically across cultures. Equipped with these skills, graduates will make a positive contribution to cross-cultural interactions in the business world, foster stronger relationships, minimize misunderstandings, and encourage success on the international stage (British Council, 2013).

According to Corbett (2022), the strategy of intercultural communication competence could foster students' ability to communicate to members of one's own community using the language and traditions of the target group. Additionally, it is anticipated that students will acquire the skills necessary to write effectively in multicultural settings around the globe. Therefore, this strategy is a means for lecturers to support students acquire intercultural communication abilities as part of their business writing education.

On top of that, incorporating intercultural communicative competence as a strategy for teaching can be applied to diverse educational levels. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a critical competency that supports teaching materials in lesson planning within specific contexts or themes related to business and contemporary issues (Salynskaya, et al, 2021). This requires ongoing updates to ensure relevance and effectiveness. For example, in English language teaching, especially with expository texts, ICC enables learners to

effectively engage with diverse cultural perspectives and communication styles essential in global business environments. By integrating ICC, educators help students develop the ability to communicate and understand information across different cultural boundaries, enhancing their proficiency in producing well-informed, culturally aware expository texts.

Several strategies can be implemented to promote intercultural understanding in educational settings (Li, 2022; Yao, & Dubabcock, 2023). Here are some effective approaches: (1) Diverse Curricula; (2) multicultural teaching Materials; (2) student exchange programs; (3) Intercultural events and celebrations; (4) cultural competence training for educators; (5) collaborative learning opportunities; and (6) intercultural dialogue and reflection.

Diverse curricula incorporate diverse perspectives, cultures, and histories into the curriculum. Include literature, artworks, and case studies from different cultures to provide a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of diverse backgrounds. Multicultural teaching materials use teaching materials that incorporate multicultural perspectives. This includes textbooks, videos, and digital resources that showcase the contributions, experiences, and challenges faced by different cultures. Besides, student exchange programs facilitate students to have the opportunity to study abroad or interact with students from different cultural backgrounds. This promotes direct exposure to diverse perspectives, fosters empathy, and enhances cultural understanding. Intercultural events and celebrations organize intercultural events, cultural celebrations, and diversity days in educational settings. These activities provide platforms for students to learn about and celebrate different cultures through music, food, art, and performances. Then, cultural competence training for educators provide educators with cultural competence training to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to create an inclusive learning environment. This includes

understanding cultural differences, managing diverse classrooms, and incorporating culturally responsive teaching methodologies. Collaborative learning opportunities bring together students from different cultural backgrounds. Group projects, discussions, and cooperative learning activities allow students to share their perspectives, learn from each other, and develop intercultural communication skills. Lastly, intercultural dialogue and reflection foster open dialogue and reflection on cultural differences and similarities. Create safe spaces for students to discuss their assumptions, stereotypes, and biases, encouraging critical thinking and challenging preconceived notions. By implementing these strategies, educational settings can foster intercultural understanding, promote inclusivity, and prepare students to thrive in diverse and globalized societies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The discussion and results suggest that the strategy of incorporating cultural components into business writing gives students the chance to improve their business writing skills. Students were assisted in becoming proficient business letter writers through the use of the Intercultural Communicative Competence approach. This strategy enables lecturers to establish safe spaces where students may talk about their preconceptions, prejudices, and assumptions. This will promote critical thinking and challenge preconceived ideas. Besides, lecturers can equip students to communicate effectively and morally across cultural boundaries by teaching them about cultural nuances, developing cultural sensitivity, modifying communication styles, contextualizing learning through real-world scenarios, addressing language and terminology, and talking about global business ethics.

Given this, it is crucial to incorporate ICC in teaching business writing as students may be prepared to succeed in varied and globalized communities by being placed in educational environments that support inclusion and

intercultural awareness. Furthermore, using ICC as a business writing teaching technique is also crucial for assisting educators in creating lessons for students at all educational levels. To illustrate this, it is expected of ICC to assist Kurikulum Merdeka's differentiated learning strategy in elementary school. ICC might assist teachers in welcoming students and encouraging them to engage in a deeper comprehension of the material they have learned by viewing students as unique individuals with varying cultural backgrounds and learning styles.

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