

FOSTERING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: A TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE MODEL IN AN EFL LESSON IN TIMOR, EASTERN INDONESIA

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Abstract

In an increasingly interconnected global landscape, Intercultural Communicative Competence is a critical skillset for EFL students. Nevertheless, pedagogical frameworks for the cultivation of this competence within diverse EFL settings remain under-investigated. This qualitative case study examined the adaptation and implementation of a Teaching and Learning Cycle model to enhance Intercultural Communicative Competence among EFL students in Timor, eastern Indonesia. This study aimed to identify the specific adaptations necessary to align the TLC model with the cultural and educational context of the Timorese EFL classroom, explore the influence of the adapted TLC model on the development of ICC dimensions, and investigate EFL students' perceptions of the adapted model's impact on their cultural awareness. 36 students participated in the study. Series of data set were collected through documentations, classroom observations, teachers' reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis highlights that the components of the adapted TLC model including the needs analysis, syllabus design, and materials development, illustrate a comprehensive effort to align the framework with Byram's (1997) ICC model and the Timorese EFL context. Thematic analysis revealed that the adapted TLC model was effective in addressing Timorese EFL students' linguistic and cultural needs. Students' perceptions further corroborated the model's influence, highlighting enhanced cultural pride and deeper appreciation of global cultural diversity. The adapted TLC model can effectively foster ICC in the Timorese EFL context and in other diverse settings. This study adds to the research on ICC development in EFL pedagogies by providing insights for educators and researchers.

Keywords: Teaching and Learning Cycle, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Adaptation, English as a foreign language, Timor

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has emerged as a critical skill in an increasingly interconnected global landscape (Liu, 2021). ICC has been recognized as a prerequisite for both personal and professional success, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of diverse social interactions (Fantini, 2020). This competence encompasses the capacity to understand, appreciate, and respect the diverse ways individuals from different cultural backgrounds perceive and engage with the world (Fantini, 2020). It moves beyond the acquisition of cultural knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding of how culture shapes behaviour, thoughts, and perceptions (Lim & Griffith, 2016).

At its core, ICC involves the ability to function effectively in cross-cultural settings. It demonstrates appropriate behaviour and communication skills when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, both domestically and internationally (Chen, 2022). This multifaceted competence integrates knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness, requiring sensitivity to cultural nuances and the ability to adapt communication styles and behaviours to suit diverse cultural contexts (Iqbal, 2021). In other words, effective intercultural communicators exhibit empathy and build rapport with individuals of different cultural backgrounds.

The development of ICC is not an innate ability, but an ongoing process of learning, reflection, and practice (Byram, 1997). This necessitates a critical examination of one's culture, including the values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape cultural awareness. Integrating ICC into education, therefore, serves as a bridge for students, fostering an understanding of diversity and opportunities to practice intercultural communication skills, thereby mitigating the potential for miscommunication and conflict (Hoff, 2020; Hua, 2018).

The imperative to enhance the ICC for EFL students stems from the integration of ICC into foreign language (FL) education (Byram, 1997). Byram contends that effective communication between parties from different cultural backgrounds is essential in various contexts, including education, the workplace, business, family, immigration, and tourism. Developing an ICC equips EFL students with transferable skills to interact, negotiate, and build relationships in a variety of settings (Hua, 2018).

In the Indonesian tertiary educational framework, ICC is one of the expected learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2020). Rooted in the curriculum framework, the Association of English Education Program in Indonesia (2021) integrated ICC into the EFL curriculum nationwide. Consequently, the integration of ICC into EFL pedagogy and teaching materials requires careful planning and implementation (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021).

Situated in Timor, Eastern Indonesia, this study investigates an EFL classroom characterized by a distinct linguistic landscape and cultural environment. This setting presents unique challenges and opportunities to foster ICC among EFL students. The student population, originating from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, exhibits diversity in language use (Klamer & Ewing, 2010). While EFL instruction often emphasizes reading and writing skills, teachers may find it challenging to integrate the culture of the target language while accommodating students' varied perspectives. Additionally, research suggests that students in this region predominantly employ metacognitive, cognitive, and social learning strategies, which may necessitate customized instructional approaches (Talok et al., 2024).

The development of ICC among EFL students in Timor is characterized by specific challenges and opportunities. The linguistic landscape, characterized by diverse ethnic regions and spoken languages, offers EFL teachers valuable insights into the language and cultural factors that can enhance English language acquisition education in Timor. It is aligned with the national curriculum framework, a practice that has persisted since the period preceding and following Indonesian independence. The curriculum framework stipulates that English (language) learning is mandatory from junior secondary level onward (Bire, 2016).

However, issues such as racism, large class sizes, diverse abilities and attitudes, limited resources and facilities, technological constraints, and a scarcity of culturally relevant materials can impede effective teaching and learning (Lomi & Mbato, 2020; Nama & Ate, 2022). Moreover, the integration of foreign elements into traditional Timorese society may encounter resistance, necessitating the careful consideration of cultural identities (Poedjiastutie et al., 2021). Conversely, opportunities arise from integrating local languages and cultural aspects into EFL instruction to promote engagement and ensure representation (Misa, 2023). Furthermore, providing targeted professional development for educators can equip them with strategies specifically adapted to Timor's context, thereby maximizing the benefits of ICC for language acquisition despite its limitations (Danibao, 2022).

Recognizing the importance of effective EFL instruction in enhancing the ICC, numerous studies have explored diverse instructional strategies. These include pedagogical and intercultural tasks (Esmaeili and Kuhi, 2023); culturally responsive teaching (Liao & Li, 2023), genre-based approaches (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021), and explicit instruction (Huang, 2021). Notably, Indonesian scholars have applied genre-based approaches to cultivate ICC among EFL students. Within this framework, the Teaching and Learning Cycle (hereafter as TLC) models have been implemented in EFL learning. Addressing the curricular demands and learning needs of an English Language Education Program in Timor, this study aimed to explore the adaptation of a TLC model to promote students' ICC development in EFL learning.

The rationale for this study is threefold: first, to contribute to and refine theories regarding ICC development, the effectiveness of pedagogical models such as TLC, and the influencing factors in this specific EFL context, thereby aligning theory and practice. Second, it serves as a reference for other contexts that face similar challenges, as the findings may be applicable to EFL settings with comparable characteristics. Third, to address the identified need to prioritize intercultural learning in EFL lessons, as recent studies have highlighted the lack of insight into the requirements for intercultural learning (Ottu et al., 2024). Talok et al. (2024) suggested that the practice of EFL learning requires strategies that can facilitate EFL students to comprehend and experience the target language while maintaining awareness of potential language interference in intercultural communication. Therefore, this

study seeks to investigate the adaptations of a TLC model necessary to align with the cultural and educational context of an EFL classroom in Timor and to assess its impact on students' ICC.

Based on the explanation mentioned above, the questions raised in this study were:

1. What specific adaptations to the TLC model are necessary to align with the cultural and educational context of an EFL classroom in Timor, Eastern Indonesia?
2. How does the implementation of the adapted TLC model influence specific dimensions of intercultural communicative competence among EFL students in Timor, Eastern Indonesia?
3. What are the perceptions of EFL students in Timor, eastern Indonesia regarding the impact of the adapted TLC model on their cultural awareness?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Education

The body of literature presents a myriad of conceptualizations regarding ICC, encompassing terms such as intercultural competence, intercultural communication, the 21st century competence or global competence (Wu, 2023), and cross-cultural competence (Herman et al., 2022). Notwithstanding the diverse terminologies, the ICC construct has gained prominence in the field of education, largely driven by the seminal work of Byram (1997). Byram (1997) defines ICC as *"the ability to interact with people from another social group in another language"* (p.97). Byram highlights three pillars: interaction, cultural diversity, and language skills for navigating intercultural communication. Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) hold that ICC as *'a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself'* (p. 12). ICC is not merely a communication skill in the conventional sense; rather, it is a multifaceted ability that demands a nuanced understanding of its intricacies. The underlying rationale pertains to the concepts of effectiveness and appropriateness, which function as critical parameters in the context of intercultural interaction.

To supporting this concept, the British of Council (2018) defines it as *'the ability to understand cultures, including your own, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully.'* It is summarized that the ICC extends beyond language proficiency. It encompasses the ability to communicate effectively by understanding others' social, social and cultural contexts including attitudes, knowledge, skills, and cultural awareness (Munezane, 2021). Given the complexity of these abilities, Foreign Language Education should streamline these traits through effective learning strategies (Huang, 2021).

Drawing on Byram's work, this perspective emphasizes the importance of FLE in facilitating students' ability to communicate effectively in a target language grounded in intercultural communication (Lee et al., 2023). Byram's (1997) ICC model encompasses five key elements: attitudes, knowledge, skills in interpreting and relating, skills in discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. This model has since been widely adopted and expanded in EFL literature. Building on this, intercultural sensitivity and process-oriented frameworks have emerged, underscoring the significance of both individual attributes and the capacity to adapt one's behaviour in intercultural situations (Fantini, 2020).

The growing emphasis on ICC in education has led to its emergence as a crucial component of English language learning, enabling students navigate the complexities of intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2009; Fantini, 2020; Huang, 2021). Research has demonstrated that incorporating ICC into EFL curricula enhances students' linguistic competence, cross-cultural understanding, and overall communication abilities (Hicham et al., 2025). As EFL teachers play a pivotal role in ICC development, fostering ICC development and creating learning environments that promote cultural exploration and reflection are essential (Deardorff, 2009). Effective ICC-focused pedagogies may include diverse materials, cultural-comparative activities, and opportunities for intercultural exchange and collaboration (Byram & Feng, 2004). Despite the challenges in developing and examining ICC, the importance of embracing a holistic, intercultural approach to language learning is widely recognized (Deardorff, 2006).

The Teaching and Learning Cycle Model

The Teaching and Learning Cycle, also referred to as the curriculum cycle, employs a spiral process to learn, emphasizing contextual understanding, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Foley, 2012). Rooted in socio-constructivism of learning, second language acquisition (SLA), and genre pedagogy, TLC leverages Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist theory, which posits that learning is a social process fostered through interaction and

collaboration (Johnson, 2003). The model integrates self-directed learning with collaborative activities and promote support from peers and teachers.

Drawing from linguistics, psychology, and education, the SLA theory underscores the cognitive and social dimensions of second language learning. highlights meaning-making as a core principle within the TLC framework (Krashen, 1982). Genre pedagogy enriches TLC by contextualizing learning, modelling practices, and mentoring autonomous text creation. Thus, this approach enables students to identify and justify the use of genre in various contexts (Jones and Derewianka, 2016; Herman et al., 2025). A typical TLC application involves context preparation, context development, modelling, teacher-led construction, and student-led construction (Sharpe & Thompson, 1998, cited in Foley, 2012).

The TLC model enhances English language skills and ICC through structured, explicit instruction, emphasizes modelling and scaffolding for independent learning. By focusing on collaborative and interactive learning, TLC enhances communication competence and shapes students' attitudes toward diverse backgrounds and fosters ICC development (Gordon, 2022). Reflective assessment practices ensure continuous improvement in both language proficiency and ICC (Fantini, 2012). In summary, the TLC model structures collaborative EFL learning and emphasizes scaffolding with reflection to holistically develop language and communication skills.

EFL education in Timor

Timor's educational system, mirroring Indonesia's, introduced English language instruction before independence, but progress has been hindered by historical disruptions and resource limitations (Bire, 2016). The nation's rich cultural and linguistic diversity necessitates EFL strategies that embrace this heterogeneity (Edwards & UBB, 2018; Sinaga et al., 2025). While approaches such as genre-based teaching exist, context-specific methods are crucial (Afifi, 2020). The TLC model, designed in Australia to improve English literacy, may offer a framework for Timor.

Language policy in Timor intricates with Indonesian as the national language, local languages retaining cultural importance, and English holding special status (Bire, 2016; Bere, 2019). Bire (2016) highlights that during the Japanese occupation, English language learning, especially, was discontinued. This resumed after independence. Compounding this, the post-independence period presents substantial challenges, including a dearth of qualified teachers and educational resources, which hinders the synergistic development of EFL learning (Bire, 2016). These historical and systemic factors have shaped the current landscape of EFL education in Timor, necessitating a critical examination of context-specific considerations.

Timor's cultural and linguistic diversities are inextricably intertwined, enriching the multicultural nature of the region (Edwards & UBB, 2018). This diversity is reflected in the ethnic linguistic, and cultural characteristics of the student population (Metboki, 2025). Consequently, EFL classrooms should be developed and integrated into instructional planning. In summary, Timor's EFL education faces the dual challenge of leveraging cultural and linguistic diversity while navigating a complex language policy landscape. Successfully addressing these interconnected elements is crucial for advancing effective EFL teaching approaches.

Previous studies

The existing body of literature includes numerous studies focusing on genre-based teaching methodologies. However, research specifically examining the integration of TLC in the curriculum cycle to foster ICC remains limited. Recent investigations suggest the potential of genre-based pedagogy to enhance ICC through diverse strategies, often highlighting features such as text and task design (Chen, 2021; Hoff & Habegger-Conti, 2022).

Prior studies that have explored the application of the TLC model have offered valuable insights. Permatasari and Andriyanti (2021) utilized Feez's (1999) TLC model to improve Indonesian EFL students' ICC through cultural text-based teaching. Their findings demonstrated the students' progress in speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. However, a notable limitation is the lack of detailed descriptions of the specific stages of achievement, which weakens the reability of the study. A more explicit illustration of the teaching and learning processes in each stage is required. Similarly, Zhang's (2023) study adapted Feez' (2002) TLC model to cultivate critical reading skills among Chinese students. The four stage framework of this study, encompassing prior knowledge activation, text analysis modelling, guided practice, and independent practice, offers structured support for students' analytical abilities. The study, however, acknowledged the challenges related to time management and language barriers, which impacted student engagement.

Gómez-Rodríguez (2018) implemented Derewianka's (2003) TLC model. It embedded critical thinking tasks within the learning design to enhance ICC skills among EFL students in Nepal. While the study emphasized the

importance of context-appropriate planning and learning methods, it lacked detailed information regarding research methods. In summary, while previous research indicates the potential of TLC in ICC development, there are gaps in the existing literature. Specifically, there is a need for studies that comprehensively document the stages of ICC development, address challenges related to time management and language barriers and provide detailed information on the research methodologies. Further research exploring the effectiveness of adapted TLC models in diverse EFL contexts is critical. Future studies should aim to present contextually relevant perspectives that can inform more integrated approaches to enhance ICC in EFL education.

METHODS

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2009; Ansari et al., 2023; Cahyani et al., 2025). This was selected for several reasons. First, the study's focused on a specific classroom context in Timor necessitates a research approach that provides comprehensive, context specific insights. Unlike general trends, a case study allowed for a nuanced understanding of how the adapted TLC model functions within Timor setting. Second, the adaptation and implementation of a TLC model did not inherently require a complex research framework. The case study approach facilitated the identification of key factors influencing the model's effectiveness, including cultural considerations, student characteristics, and teaching methodologies.

Third, this study sought to explore the responses of EFL students, who were often characterized by shyness and a lack of communication initiative. Case studies were well-suited for gathering rich data on participants' experiences and responses through interactive communication. In summary, the application of a case study design enabled an in-depth exploration of how and why a TLC model can effectively enhance ICC in EFL teaching within the Timorese context.

Research Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at a private university in Timor, specifically within the English education study program. The participants were 36 EFL students with varying levels of English proficiency, ranging from basic to intermediate, based on entrance test results. These students, aged 19-21 years, originated from diverse regions, including Timor, Sabu, Rote, Sumba, Flores, and neighbouring areas. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who had completed prerequisite courses.

The teacher was the first author, while a senior colleague with expertise in TEFL and assessment served as the classroom observer. In classroom interactions, the teacher employed a multilingual approach, incorporating English, Indonesian, and Kupang Malay, to accommodate the students' diverse English proficiency levels and facilitate effective knowledge transfer.

Data Collection Instruments

This study utilized three instruments were used to answer the research questions. Documentation was used to answer the first question, classroom observation and reflective journal for second question, and semi-structured interview for the third question. Classroom observation adapted the protocol from Piburn and Sawada (2000), which comprised four areas, including lesson design, implementation, content, and classroom culture. The teachers' reflective journal adopted Li's (2017) protocol. The reflective question provided questions to inform the TLC implementation, utility of materials, growth of language skills and ICC, and improvement areas. Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview questions were adapted from Georgiou (2011) and Troncoso's (2010) protocol (*see Appendix 1*). The interviews aimed to gather information related to the implementation of the TLC model, the use of ICC materials, and the development of ICC skills based on students' perspectives on their own and other cultures.

Data Collection Procedures

This study utilized multiple data collection techniques. For Rq1, documentation was conducted through corpus data collection of the needs analysis, syllabus design, and materials development stage of the study. The collected data focused on elements relevant to the adaptation of the TLC model. To answer Rq2, data collection occurred at the end of each lesson phase, in alignment with the TLC model. The data included classroom observations and teachers' reflections. Regarding data reduction, data collected from teachers' reflections focused on the implementation of the TLC model and the growth of ICC in students. The targeted data collection pertaining to these areas aimed to yield empirical findings, thereby bolstering the rationale for the application and impact of the TLC model. Additionally, responses from semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 12 representative

students were collected to answer Rq3. The interview was video-taped, then, transcribed using *Cap Cut* - an AI tool. This multi-faceted approach facilitated triangulation, which aims to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Data Analysis

In this study, two data analysis techniques were applied. Initially, it employed a document-analysis approach (Bowen, 2009). The results of this analysis were, then, triangulated to determine the extent to which the components within each data element provided relevant information regarding the adaptation of the TLC model to enhance ICC. In the following, it utilized thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data from teaching observations, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using this technique, adapting the matrix data display model proposed by Henwood and Pidgeon (2003, cited in Saldaña, 2009, p. 254). This model organizes data by listing primary themes alongside supporting data examples and an interpretative summary, linking each theme to the analytical framework or conclusions as in Chen's (2021) work. More importantly, this study prioritized ethical considerations. Conducted at Artha Wacana Christian University with institutional approval, the study ensured informed consent and cooperation from the participants.

RESULTS

This section presents the data findings as themes derived from data sources. The findings were organized according to the scope of the research questions, followed by a qualitative analysis. The data findings are as follows:

RQ 1: Adapted components to TLC model for EFL in Timor

This section details the adaptation of the TLC model to an EFL classroom in Timor, Eastern Indonesia. Aligning with Byram's (1997) framework, key components were integrated to foster the ICC. A needs analysis first contextualized the TLC model by examining students' backgrounds, English language needs, and ICC requirements, addressing real-world communication scenarios. Moreover, the syllabus design mapped out instructional objectives, activities, and assessment to the TLC model framework. Assessment, utilizing formative and summative instruments, such as journals and essays, was mapped to gauge students' ICC development.

Furthermore, the materials design emphasized content organization and activity planning with the TLC model. A spiral approach integrated Timorese's cultural elements with global perspectives to enhance intercultural skills. Authentic resources such as documentaries and journals, exposed students to nuanced sociocultural practices. Similarly, technology, including Mentimeter and Google Form, facilitated intercultural exchange and interaction and formative assessment.

Recognizing the specific Timorese context was crucial. Content was carefully selected to avoid sensitivity, and clear instructions accommodated students' oral culture. Addressing these factors involved exploring diverse resources to identify the appropriate ICC materials. Finally, expert reviews refined the materials, promoting ICC skills, higher-order thinking skills, and interactive technology integration. These approaches highlighted how the study contextualizes the TLC model, tailored to students' backgrounds, language needs, and cultural contexts in Timor.

RQ2: ICC Impact of the Adapted TLC Model

This section presents the data findings regarding the implementation of the adapted TLC model and its impact on specific ICC dimensions among EFL students in Timor. Data were gathered from classroom observations and teachers' reflective journals.

Classroom observations

In the "Preparing the Context" stage, the teacher promoted student participation and strengthened their understanding of writing cultural reports, asking *"What information do people need in a report?"*. The classroom atmosphere was conducive, with students demonstrating, *"appreciation"* and *"explanation"* of background information. It was noted, however, that *"students should be encouraged to ask related questions for these skills"* to further develop discovery and interaction skills.

The "Developing the Context" stage focussed on knowledge construction using authentic cultural sources, as observed *"Using varieties of contexts and information to write a report."* Students collaborated using *"Local*

information texts” enhancing content and *"Identifying the order of information"*. While limited language proficiency led to the allowance of local languages, improvements in ICC were seen, such as the ability to *"reflect on essential questions"* and *"compare factual information"*.

During the "Modeling" phase, students learned to write based on model texts to gain insights into traditional events. The classroom encouraged divergent thinking as *"the teacher's questions triggered divergent ways of thinking"*. The data indicated a correlation between ICC domains, with collaborative learning improving interpreting and relating skills, and cultural concept discovery fostering critical awareness.

In the "Teacher-led Construction" stage, the teacher facilitated collaborative learning. Despite some challenges in communicative interactions, as communication can only occur between students in the group, students' ICC attitudes and skills were developed through group work.

The "Student-led Construction" stage fostered propositional knowledge. However, enriching procedural knowledge has proven challenging. While *"students actively engaged in searching information and writing the report,"* whole-class communicative interaction was lacking.

Overall, the data showed improved ICC traits, with students better able to *"Explain the uniqueness of their cultural events," "Interpret information from sources about cultural events from different places,"* and *"Searching additional information from different sources,"* and "present important facts about their cultural events." Key strategies included encouraging participants, allowing local languages, and promoting collaborative learning. Therefore, the adapted TLC model facilitated the development of various ICC dimensions in the context of Timorese.

Teacher's reflections

In the "Preparing the Context" stage, the teacher's reflection indicated a focus on enhancing students' background knowledge on report writing. Various techniques have been employed to engage students and encourage them to share their knowledge of the Fulan Fehan Festival.

During the "Developing the Context" stage, the teacher noted challenges with students who were new to the stage, compared to those with prior experience. To address this, collaborative learning and fishbone mapping techniques were emphasized to identify the relationships between ideas. The teacher observed that, "several groups seemed interactive in discussing and working very well, while certain ones (groups) need more help to understand the instructions." Teachers' creativity was essential for adapting to students' diverse needs.

In the "Modeling" stage, students designed themes for cultural events, choosing topics collaboratively and using fishbone mapping to organize ideas. The teacher scaffolded the writing process, noting, "Wherever the teacher visited a group, there would be some questions to scaffold their ideas for writing." Collaborative work can facilitate students' sharing of tasks such as information gathering, organizing, and writing.

During the "Teacher-led construction" stage, the teacher emphasized student interaction to develop writing skills from the modeling stage. The teacher noted, "Students were engaged into collaborative learning, sharing, discussing, and organizing ideas." This stage fostered transformative learning experiences and peer awareness from different backgrounds.

In the final "Student-led construction" stage, students' displayed increased motivation, confidence, and engagement. Classroom culture fostered appreciation of learning through interaction. The teacher observed that "this stage of learning emphasizes classroom culture as an axis that unravels the growth of ICC attitudes, knowledge, skills, and cultural awareness."

Overall, the teacher's reflective journal offered insights into the implementation and impact of the adapted TLC model on ICC dimensions. The challenges included engaging diverse students and managing collaborative learning. Strategies such as scaffolding, fishbone mapping, and supportive classroom culture have contributed to students growth in ICC.

RQ3: EFL Students' Perceptions of Adapted TLC Model

This section elucidates students' perspectives on adapted TLC model's influence on their cultural awareness, learning experiences, and responses regarding cultural integration in tasks. It evaluates TLC model's impact on understanding and appreciating cultural differences. Table I presents a synthesis of thematic findings extracted from students' responses to five semi-structured interview questions.

Table 1. Themes of students' responses

Students (S1)	Themes per question
S1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultural exposure through structured writing instruction 2. Cognitive engagement in the writing process 3. Comprehensive cultural understanding 4. Enhanced cultural pride and reflection on regional identity 5. Recognition and appreciation of Indonesia's cultural diversity
S2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrating cultural studies with writing 2. Structured approach to report writing 3. Structured drafting in writing report 4. Enhanced appreciation of traditional cultural practices and events 5. Increased awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity and traditional practices
S3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal and collaborative learning journey in cultural exploration and creative writing. 2. Empowerment through independent learning and creative expression 3. Broad cultural and architectural insights across Indonesia and beyond 4. Expanded awareness and appreciation of one's own culture through new insights 5. Enhanced understanding and awareness of diverse cultures beyond one's own.
S4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging and comprehensive learning to write cultural topics 2. Contextualization and structured preparation in writing 3. Effective use of materials to enhance reading, writing, and summarization skills in a collaborative environment 4. Enhanced understanding and sharing of personal cultural heritage 5. Appreciation of cultural diversity
S5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active engagement in cultural learning and skill development Through writing and group participation 2. Cultural immersion and contextual development. 3. Enhancing writing skills through structured thinking and exploration 4. Recognizing the uniqueness and importance of cultural heritage 5. Valuing the importance and uniqueness of other cultures through writing and peer interaction
S6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Navigating challenges through collaborative learning 2. Significant development of ideas, thinking, and knowledge 3. Valuable cultural insights gained from exposure to diverse traditions and places 4. Challenges and appreciation in understanding and exploring cultural uniqueness 5. Evolving awareness and understanding of other cultures through personal and educational experiences
S7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing report writing skills and understanding cultural differences 2. Organizing cultural information using the fishbone method 3. Cultural awareness and comparison 4. Awareness and appreciation of cultural uniqueness 5. Respect and appreciation for other cultures
S8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding and enjoyment in learning writing and culture 2. Cultural understanding 3. Learning to write 4. Cultural pride and curiosity 5. Respect and appreciation for cultural diversity
S9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced cultural awareness and interest 2. Practical writing models with cultural relevance and accessible language 3. Traditional events and houses 4. Cultural pride and desire to promote cultural richness. 5. Expanded cultural awareness and appreciation through learning and teaching
S10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging learning and future aspirations 2. Preparation and contextual understanding 3. Cultural exploration and future goals 4. Pride and a desire to share cultural knowledge

S11	5. Enhanced appreciation and interest in cultural exchange
	1. Benefits of learning about cultural reports
	2. Writing skill development and aspirations
	3. Cultural and international study
	4. Increased appreciation and awareness of their own culture
S12	5. Appreciation for the diversity and uniqueness of global cultures
	1. Practical skills in report writing and cultural exploration
	2. Cultural reporting through detailed descriptions
	3. Cultural and practical writing skills
	4. Development and exploration of traditional aspects
	5. Appreciation for the development and exploration of cultural practices

Learning experience of the adapted TLC (Q1)

The thematic data on Table 1 underscores students' perspectives on the adapted TLC model revealing three key areas related to their learning experience. First, *literacy development* (S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S12). This area encompasses improved report writing skills in English, facilitated by cultural exposure through structured writing instruction. Collaborative learning fosters idea exchange and enhances understanding of cultural differences. Second, *cultural integration in learnings* (S1, S3, S6, S9, S12) highlights students' positive opinions on experiencing cultural learning within write tasks, leading to improved writing skills through text-based learning. Students perceive this pedagogical approach as novel and engaging, aligning with their future goals. As stated by one student,

"It is so amazing class. And, I think that the new things. Actually, it does not mean I never learn about. But I ever see in the social media...that not at all that I am reading, but I just scroll and, here about the material, I feel like that one thing that I want to learn is already in. So, I feel like I want to learn more about that because [um] I just want to be a tour guide."

Finally, *growth of ICC* (S7) demonstrates enhanced cultural awareness and interest, suggesting the TLC model's utility in promoting intercultural learning and awareness of cultural diversity.

Impacted TLC stage (Q2)

The subsequent data addresses the second research question (Q2), focussing on the specific stages withing the TLC model that impacted students' learning experience. These key stages are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Influencing TLC stages

Student (S)	Influencing stage of TLC model
S1	Stages with writing exposures
S2	Stages with structured approach to report writing
S3	Student-led construction
S4	Preparing the context
S5	Stages with collaborative learning
S6	Student-led construction
S7	Developing the context
S8	Stages for cultural understanding
S9	Modelling
S10	Preparing the context
S11	Student-led construction
S12	All stages

The following analysis explores the underlying thematic reasons of the impact of the TLC stages. The initial theme addresses context preparation (S4, S10). This is favoured for its facilitation of cultural immersion and contextual development, serving as a foundation for English writing skills. As S4 responses,

"From this stage, I enjoy the course because in writing I learn more about how to write the traditional events or houses like [uh]...Pasola festival...and the traditional house in Kefamenanu".

Subsequently, the composition of cultural reports (S1, S2, S3, S6, S7, S9, S11, S12) involves structured report writing and development of ideas and thinking. Within the group of students, there are several individuals who exhibit experiential learning related to the first theme. S7, for example, responses,

‘When reading the people’s culture on the internet, the first I make is the uh... fishbone. Yeah. To develop information and knowledge.’ [S7]

The response suggested that cognitive engagement in the writing process is evident, with students organizing cultural information using fishbone technique. Their engagement in the writing process corresponds to the learning scenario in which cultural information is organized using the fishbone method. Having experienced the practical writing models, imbued with cultural relevance and comprehensible language, further cultivate writing skills. As results, learning from modelling texts enhances understanding of language use in various contexts, fostering self-directed creative writing on cultural topics and the growth of ICC (S8). This leads to enhanced students’ cultural understanding.

Integrating culture into material (Q3)

The students’ perspectives on integrating culture into learning materials revealed several interconnected themes. First, intercultural learning (S1, S3, S6, S9, and S12) emphasizes acquiring knowledge about cultural subjects such as traditional events and houses. To foster a more comprehensive understanding of diverse cultures. This exposure encourages students to delve deeper into local culture and seek broader insights from international studies.

Second, the application of materials (S4) enhances reading, writing, and summarizing skills through collaborative learning, which promotes integrated English language skills development (S2, S5, S8, S12). It was suggested that these exposures enhanced structured thinking and leveraged a learning-focused approach to develop cultural and practical writing skills. Consequently, there is an implication in the growth of ICC (S7, S8), distinguishing between cultural awareness and cultural comparison.

Cultural awareness of own and other culture (Q4-Q5)

This section explores thematic patterns in student responses, focusing on how the TLC model enhances students’ awareness of their own and other cultures.

In their own culture, students demonstrated a heightened sense of pride and reflection regarding their local cultural identity (S1, S8, S9, S10). This involved not only cultivating cultural pride, but also, articulating regional identity, expressing curiosity, and advocating for cultural diversity. Students also showed increased concern for appreciating traditional cultural practices (S2 and S12).

This enhanced cultural awareness is rooted in understanding and valuing one’s heritage (S4, S11). It is suggested that students shift toward sharing their cultural heritage. Similarly, the data highlighted students’ recognition in the uniqueness and significance of their culture (S5, S6, S7). In this regard, the students identified challenges in cultural exploration, such as childhood stereotypes. One student (S6) shared, *“First of all, my parents didn’t want me to know about my culture. I just stay home. Don’t go to our village.”* Despite these challenges, students gained new insights and acknowledged previously unknown aspects of their cultural heritage. As S3 noted, *“We see something different that we don’t know before about our culture. I have been visiting Sumba for many times, but I don’t know the specific about culture.”*

Moreover, the data revealed students’ awareness of other cultures. Initially, one theme underscores the increased recognition and appreciation of Indonesia’s cultural diversity (S1, S4, and S7). This manifested as a greater interest in traditional culture and practices, including martial arts, funeral traditions, and cultural events (S2, S6, and S9). Practical learning experiences and peer interactions in the classroom fostered heightened interest in cultural exchange (S3, S7, and S10). Overall, the learning experience cultivated a deeper appreciation for the uniqueness and importance of global cultures, highlighting students’ expanding understanding of cultural diversity.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore how adaptations of TLC in EFL lessons in Timor can enhance ICC in students. The adaptation of the TLC model proved crucial for fostering ICC among Timorese EFL students. The adapted model integrated key components aligned with Byram's (1997) ICC framework, addressing the specific needs and backgrounds of the students.

The needs analysis stage contextualized the TLC model by examining students' linguistic and cultural profiles, ensuring the instructional design addressed real-world communication scenarios (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2020). Given Timor's complex history and cultural diversity, this contextualization was particularly important (Byram, 2016; Edwards & UBB, 2018). By tailoring the model to students' needs, the adapted TLC approach facilitated the development of ICC traits, such as attitudes, knowledge, and skills of interpreting and relating (Byram, 1997).

The syllabus design and material development further strengthened the alignment of the adapted TLC model with ICC. The approach integrated Timorese cultural elements with global perspectives, echoing recommendations for using diverse materials and cultural-comparative activities to promote ICC. The emphasis on authentic resources highlighted the importance of creating learning environments that foster cultural exploration and reflection (Deardorff, 2009). Moreover, careful consideration of the Timorese cultural context, including appropriate content selection and accommodation of students' spoken language culture, demonstrates efforts to address the unique challenges faced by EFL education in Timor.

The implementation of the adapted TLC model in a specific EFL classroom had a positive impact on the development of specific ICC dimensions among students. Classroom observations and teacher reflections revealed that the model facilitated growth in ICC attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

In preparing for the context stage, the teacher's efforts to promote student participation and strengthen their understanding of cultural reporting align with research emphasizing the importance of creating learning environments that foster cultural exploration and reflection. As results, this stage established a foundation for developing ICC traits, such as explaining the uniqueness of their cultural events and interpreting information from diverse sources,

Moreover, the development of the context and modelling stages, which focused on knowledge construction using authentic cultural sources and writing based on model texts, respectively facilitated the growth of ICC skills, such as identifying the order of information and comparing factual information. This is consistent with the incorporation of diverse materials and cultural-comparative activities to promote ICC.

Furthermore, the teacher-led and student-led construction stages, emphasizing collaborative learning and independent writing, respectively, contributed to the development of ICC attitudes and skills. Despite some challenges in communicative interactions, the data indicated improvements in students' abilities to search for additional information from different sources and present important facts about their cultural events. This aligns with the underlying principles of the TLC model's socio-constructivism and genre pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding, peer support, and autonomous learning in SLA.

Finally, students' perspectives highlighted the model's effectiveness in exposing them to diverse cultural content through structured writing instruction. The students' responses suggest that this exposure fostered their cognitive engagement in the writing process, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of cultural concepts and an enhanced appreciation for their own and other cultures. Their perception of the specific stages within the TLC model corroborated findings from classroom observations and teachers' reflections. The data suggest that preparing for the context and student-led construction stages was impactful, as they facilitated cultural immersion, and contextual development. Opportunities for independent learning and creative expressions.

The students' perspectives on the integration of culture into learning materials revealed the model's effectiveness in promoting intercultural learning. Enhancing English language skills development and fostering the growth of ICC. These findings align with creating learning environments that encourage cultural exploration reflection, and the development of integrated language and communication abilities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study demonstrate the effectiveness of adapting the TLC model to foster ICC among EFL students in Timor, Eastern Indonesia. The adapted model, integrating key components from Byram's ICC framework, addressed the specific needs and cultural contexts of Timorese EFL students. The adaptation process ensured the alignment of the TLC model with the students' linguistic and cultural profiles. This contextualized approach enabled the effective development of various ICC dimensions, such as attitudes, knowledge, and skills of interpreting and relating.

Classroom observations and teachers' reflections highlighted the ability of the models to facilitate the development of ICC traits. These abilities encompass explaining cultural uniqueness, interpreting information from diverse sources, and presenting cultural facts effectively. The students' perceptions further corroborated the effectiveness of the models, revealing their impact on cultural awareness, learning experiences, and the integration of cultural elements into the EFL curriculum. The students demonstrated enhanced cultural pride, reflection on their regional identity, and deeper appreciation of the diversity and uniqueness of global cultures.

These findings contribute to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive account of the adaptation and implementation of the TLC model in a specific EFL context, focusing on its effectiveness in fostering ICC development. For further research, it should explore the long-term impact of the adapted TLC model on EFL students' ICC development and its transferability to other cultural and educational contexts.

Authors' Contributions

YM conceived the idea, designed the project and wrote the manuscript. JAF coordinated the peer review process and finished the manuscript for the publication. MFD participated in the design of the study and helped in writing the manuscript. MN coordinated the validation of the research instruments used in the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview questions

1. What do you experience most from this course?
2. Which teaching and learning stage do you remember most, and why?
3. What materials have you found most beneficial? Why?
4. What is your view on your culture after this course?
5. What is your view on other cultures after this course?