

УДК 378.147:811.111:316.72
DOI 10.35254/bsu/2025.72.22

Li Liu

*College of Foreign Languages,
Northwest Normal University,
Lanzhou, Gansu, China*

INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICE IN EFL CLASSROOM CHINA-- COLLEGE ENGLISH INSTRUCTION BASED ON BYRAM'S ICC MODEL

Abstract

This study investigates the application of Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence model in university-level EFL instruction, with a case design for reading courses of second-year non-English majors in China. Using a novel educational approach, the study illustrates how Byram's five components — dispositions, understanding, abilities to interpret/connect, capacities for exploration/engagement, and reflective cultural consciousness — can be applied as effective teaching strategies in practice. Offers valuable insights for EFL educators seeking to integrate cultural competence development with language acquisition in higher education contexts and provides practical implications for cultivating international talent from a critical cultural perspective in the context of globalization.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Byram's model, EFL instruction, higher education, cultural competence, language acquisition, teaching strategies, globalization, international talents, critical cultural awareness, university-level reading course, non-english majors, China

Ли Лю

*Колледж иностранных языков,
Северо-западный педагогический университет,
Ланьчжоу, Ганьсу, Китай*

МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ПРАКТИКА ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ЯЗЫКА В КЛАССАХ EFL В КИТАЕ — ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В КОЛЛЕДЖЕ НА ОСНОВЕ МОДЕЛИ ИСС БАЙРАМА

Аннотация

В этом исследовании изучается применение модели межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции (ИСС) Байрама в преподавании обучения английскому как иностранному (EFL) на университетском уровне с разработкой кейса для курса чтения студентов второго года обучения неанглоязычным специальностям в Китае. С помощью инновационной педагогической структуры исследование демонстрирует, как пять измерений шкалы Байрама — установки, знания, навыки интерпретации/соотнесения, навыки открытия/взаимодействия и критическая культурная осведомленность — могут быть переведены в практические педагогические стратегии. Исследование предлагает ценные идеи

для преподавателей EFL, стремящихся интегрировать развитие культурной компетентности с приобретением языка в контекстах высшего образования, и дает практические выводы для развития международных талантов с критической культурной перспективой в контексте глобализации.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция (МКК), модель Байрэма, обучение английскому как иностранному (EFL), высшее образование, культурная компетентность, овладение языком, педагогические стратегии, глобализация, международные кадры, критическое культурное сознание, курс чтения на уровне университета, студенты неязыковых специальностей, Китай.

Ли Лю

Түндүк-Батыш педагогикалык университети,

Чет тилдер колледжи,

Ланьчжоу, Гансу, Кытай

КЫТАЙДАГЫ EFL КЛАССТАРЫНДА МАДАНИЙ АРАЛЫК ТИЛ ОКУТУУ ПРАКТИКАСЫ - КОЛЛЕДЖДЕ ВУРАМ'S ICC МОДЕЛИНИН НЕГИЗИНДЕ АНГЛИС ТИЛИН ОКУТУУ

Кыскача мазмуну

Бул изилдөө Кытайдагы англис тили эмес адистиктер үчүн экинчи жылдык окуу курсу үчүн окуяны иштеп чыгуу аркылуу университет деңгээлинде EFL окутууда Байрамдын маданияттар аралык коммуникативдик компетенттүүлүгүнүн (ICC) моделин колдонууну изилдейт. Инновациялык педагогикалык негизди колдонуу менен изилдөө Байрамдын беш чен-өлчөмдөрүн — мамиле, билим, интерпретациялоо/байланыш жөндөмдөрү, ачуу/өз ара аракеттенүү көндүмдөрү жана критикалык маданий аң-сезимди практикалык педагогикалык стратегияга кантип которууга болорун көрсөтөт. Изилдөө жогорку окуу жайларында тилди өздөштүрүү менен маданий компетенцияны өнүктүрүүнү интеграциялоого умтулган EFL мугалимдери үчүн баалуу түшүнүктөрдү сунуштайт жана ааламдашуу контекстинде маанилүү маданий көз караш менен эл аралык таланттарды өнүктүрүү үчүн практикалык натыйжаларды берет.

Түйүндүү сөздөр: Маданияттар аралык коммуникациялык компетенттүүлүк (МКК), Байрамдын модели, англис тилин чет тили катары окутуу (EFL), жогорку билим берүү, маданий компетенттүүлүк, тил үйрөнүү, окутуу стратегиялары, глобалдашуу, эл аралык адистерди даярдоо, сынчыл маданий аң-сезим, университеттик деңгээлдеги окуу курсу, тил адистиги эмес багыттагы студенттер, Кытай.

Introduction. In the era of globalization with increasing international contact, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become an essential skill for university students. Intercultural communication has been seen as a core aspect of language learning and development, which it would result in better learners with sus-

tained cultural and linguistic personality The Common European Framework of References for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) encompasses both language and culture in its general competencies: knowledge, skills and know-how, existential competence, and the ability to learn [1]. In foreign language education, the roles of culture teaching and

intercultural education in contemporary time are confirmed and emphasized. Hymes [2] believes that communicative competence means the “appropriate” use of language, and there is inseparable relation between language and culture in foreign-language learning. Nowadays, intercultural language teaching refocuses the goal of teaching and learning by shifting away from a narrower focus on linguistic or communicative competence, and towards a more holistic goal of intercultural competence. According to Risager, the cultural dimension of foreign-language teaching moved from the communicative approach to the intercultural communicative approach to emphasize the language use in different cultural contexts [3].

However, in real classrooms language teaching design still focuses on the language form, neglecting the development of students’ intercultural communicative competence partly because teachers lack effective teaching model and operational methods. EFL teachers are now facing the biggest challenges. Chau argued that teachers had very good awareness of intercultural teaching objectives, fairly good understanding of intercultural teaching but rarely conducted intercultural teaching activities in class. Intercultural instruction was mainly knowledge focused and teacher-centered. Nguyen concurrently found that intercultural teaching was accidental, implicit, and topic dependent because they just followed the course books [4]. To address these problems, the research applies Byram’s ICC Model to reading teaching design in College English class, which is a compulsory course for Chinese non-English major university students. [5]. The purpose of this paper are two-fold: to explore how Byram’s Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model be effectively integrated in EFL reading instruction and to evaluate the effectiveness of Byram’s ICC model in enhancing intercultural competence among EFL learners. The research hopes to bridge

the disconnect between intercultural competence theories and classroom practices. It is also expected to strike a balance between linguistic teaching and culture teaching in EFL context and offer practical teaching strategies, enriching scholarly discourse on culturally responsive language education.

2. Byram’s Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Byram’s (1997) framework of ICC was founded on Hymes’s (1982) theories of sociolinguistic and communicative competence, as well as Habermas’s ideas of sociocultural capability (Byram & Morgan, 1994). Byram (2009) further expanded the concepts of the intercultural speaker and intercultural competence. In the most recent iteration of the model (Byram, 2008), the element of *critical cultural awareness* — or *savoir s’engager* — was placed at the core of the ICC model to highlight its importance in contemporary second and foreign-language education.

According to Byram (1997), intercultural competence is composed of five distinct yet interrelated components, known as ‘savoirs’: knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. These five dimensions aim to define the key aspects of intercultural competence that a foreign language learner should develop in order to mediate across cultural differences. The aims set out by Byram (1997) for each of these savoirs serve as benchmarks for fostering and assessing intercultural competence, especially in foreign language instruction.

The five savoirs are indispensable for cultivating intercultural competence and are closely connected to communicative abilities. They are rooted in three broad categories: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Among these, knowledge and attitudes are considered foundational, yet they can be transformed throughout intercultural interaction via the application of skills (Byram, 1997). Skills such as interpreting/relating and discovering/en-

gaging are practical tools for applying one's knowledge — both in terms of using what is already known and in bridging gaps during interaction to ensure effective communication. The attitudes of the intercultural communicator — shaped by knowledge, skills, and cultural sensitivity — are part of a dynamic system essential for intercultural engagement. Critical cultural awareness is seen as the culmination of the previous four components, as it involves the capacity to reflect critically on both one's own and others' cultures [6].

2.1 Attitude

Attitudes are considered a vital prerequisite for meaningful intercultural exchanges. These include curiosity and open-mindedness, a willingness to temporarily set aside one's own assumptions and suspend judgment when encountering the values, beliefs, and practices of others. Byram (1997) emphasizes that learners must be prepared to analyze both their own cultural behaviors and those of others from multiple viewpoints.

In terms of teaching goals, fostering intercultural attitudes involves encouraging students to seek opportunities for equal, respectful interaction with individuals from other cultures, to question cultural norms, and to navigate the different phases of adapting to a new cultural environment. Furthermore, these goals emphasize sparking learners' interest in exploring diverse perspectives on both familiar and unfamiliar phenomena, whether from their own culture or others' [7].

2.2 Knowledge

Knowledge is described as encompassing two principal domains: *factual understanding of social groups and cultural contexts* in one's own and others' countries, and *insight into the dynamics of social interaction* at both personal and societal levels (Byram, 1997, p. 35). A solid grasp of both self and other is vital to participating effectively in intercultural dialogue.

The second aspect involves an awareness of how socialization shapes behavior, values,

and interaction patterns — a type of knowledge that must be deliberately developed rather than absorbed passively. Byram (1997) argues that knowing cultural facts and traditions is insufficient on its own; learners also need procedural knowledge — the ability to act thoughtfully and appropriately in different cultural contexts. In the classroom, this means that educators should help students understand the underlying causes of differing perspectives, rather than merely accumulating isolated facts — thus enriching the scope and depth of intercultural understanding [8].

2.3 Skills of Interpreting and Relating

These skills entail the ability to interpret cultural practices, artifacts, or texts and connect them meaningfully across cultural boundaries. Interpretation draws on prior cultural knowledge, enabling the learner to mediate between cultures — for example, by translating the meaning of a document from one culture for someone from another, or by identifying commonalities and contrasts between cultural products.

Teaching objectives in this area include enabling students to recognize ethnocentric biases in texts or events, uncover the cultural origins of those biases, and analyze areas of misunderstanding or conflict based on differing cultural frameworks. Ultimately, these skills help students navigate and address intercultural tensions with greater awareness and sensitivity [9].

2.4 Skills of Discovery and Interaction

These refer to the learner's ability to acquire new cultural knowledge through real-time interaction and inquiry. Such skills enable students to uncover the meanings and values embedded in documents, conversations, or social behavior. Thus, teachers should aim to develop students' abilities to:

- Extract cultural meanings through engagement with authentic materials or interlocutors,
- Construct interpretive frameworks applicable across various cultural scenarios,

- Interact using appropriate knowledge, behavior, and attitudes with individuals from other backgrounds.

This skill set empowers learners to become autonomous and adaptable intercultural communicators, capable of making sense of unfamiliar cultural elements through first-hand discovery and exchange (Byram, 1997).

2.5 Critical Cultural Awareness

Critical cultural awareness refers to the capacity to evaluate cultural perspectives, customs, and products — both one's own and others' — using clearly defined criteria. It is regarded as the most pivotal of the five *savoirs*, as it synthesizes and builds upon the other components.

According to Byram (1997), this dimension not only supports the transfer of skills and attitudes across contexts but also plays a transformative role in education. It equips learners to engage with new languages and cultures and adapt effectively to different linguistic and cultural environments [10, p. 444]. Developing this awareness helps individuals see themselves from others' perspectives, shift viewpoints, and approach global interactions with greater objectivity and critical insight.

An instructional design based on Byram's ICC model

ICC is a core competence of English teaching and an important benchmark for cultivating international talents under the background of the new era. The cultivation of this competence can be achieved through the specific teaching of the curriculum. In this part, an instructional design around a reading passage from Chinese college English textbook is taken as an example to show how to cultivate students' ICC under the guidance of Byram's ICC model.

3.1. Teaching material

The teaching material comes from *New Progressive College English Integrated Course* published by Shanghai foreign language education press in 2017, which is one

of most widely-used coursebooks for teaching non-English major students in Chinese universities. The chosen passage is entitled *How My Chinese Mother-in-law Replaced My Husband*. The passage, from the perspective of a Canadian woman who married a Chinese man, is around the cultural shock the woman experienced after the birth of her daughter and her mother-in-law's fulltime presence in her family. Despite being culturally rich, the text heavily relies on implicit cultural values, so it's difficult for students to understand the fundamental reasons of differences and conflicts. Moreover, the text highlights sensitive issues like generational sacrifice, gender equity, and cultural identity, which can trigger personal biases or defensive reactions.

3.2 Teaching objectives

Based on five interconnected dimensions of Byram's ICC model: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness, the following objectives are decided:

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

- 1). Attitudes: Reflect on personal biases and demonstrate openness to differing cultural norms around parenting and gender roles;
- 2). Knowledge: Identify key cultural differences between Chinese and Western parenting practices and familial responsibilities;
- 3). Skills of Interpreting/Relating: Analyze cultural conflicts in the text and relate them to broader intercultural communication challenges;
- 4). Skills of Discovery/Interaction: Actively seek and negotiate cultural information through questioning, observation, and adaptive communication in simulated scenarios;
- 5). Critical Cultural Awareness: Critically evaluate the concept of “入乡随俗” (when in Rome, do as the Romans do) and propose strategies for balancing cultural expectations [11].

3.3 Teaching procedure

Step1: Understanding cultural iceberg (15minutes)

ICC Focus: Attitudes

Activity: Discussion

The three questions are proposed to elicit learners’ initial attitudes about cultural differences and arouse their interest in the topic:

Are you open to a cross-cultural marriage? What are potential challenges in it?

What words or images come to mind when you think of “Chinese parenting” vs. “Western parenting”?

Teacher compiles stereotypes on the board (e.g., “tiger moms,” “permissive Western parents”). The students generate answers on the ground of their prior knowledge and their life experience. Teacher highlights how stereo-

types hinder intercultural attitudes and introduces the text as a tool to “dig deeper.” [12].

Step 2: Exploring cultural differences (35 minutes)

ICC Focus: Knowledge +Skills of interpreting and relating

Activity 1: Guided reading

Students read excerpts highlighting parenting/gender role conflicts and underline phrases depicting parenting/gender norms and think about the question:

What cultural values drive each side’s actions?

Activity 2: Cultural comparison task

Students are divided into groups to identify key cultural differences and complete a cultural comparison chart:

Aspect	Chinese Perspective	Western Perspective	Cultural Roots
Grandparent’s Role	Primary caregiver (possible answer)	Occasional helper (possible answer)	Filial piety vs. individualism (possible answer)
Father’s Duties	Financial provider (possible answer)	Equal co-parent (possible answer)	Traditional gender roles vs. feminism (possible answer)

Table1: Cultural Comparison Chart

Teacher summarizes how norms reflect societal priorities (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism, filial piety vs. autonomy, gendered division of labor). Students build knowledge of cultural systems and relational skills by mapping behaviors to values [13, p 127].

Step 3: Bridging cultural gaps (40 minutes)

ICC Focus: Skills of discovery/interaction + Critical cultural awareness

Activity 1: Role-play

Students act out different roles to negotiate a parenting plan that respects both cultures. The roles include: Canadian mother (advocates for shared duties); Chinese husband (resists diaper-changing, citing “men’s

work”); Mother-in-law (insists on taking over her son’s responsibilities).

After role-play, peers give feedback by answering the two questions:

Did the interaction show respect?

How well did they interpret cultural differences?

Activity 2: Debate

Students are divided into two groups to debate over the saying “入乡随俗” (*when in Rome, do as the Romans do*). The views held by two sides are as follow:

The pro - side view: Parents should fully adopt the host culture’s norms.

The con - side view: Families should blend both cultures to create a new hybrid identity.

Groups present arguments using examples from the text and personal/observed experiences.

Step 4: Post-lesson reflection

To cultivate students' metacognitive awareness and empower them to apply knowledge in real-world contexts, students are required to answer the following questions and finish the homework after the class.

Activity 1: Reflection Worksheet

Students answer the following questions on the worksheet.

What cultural assumptions did you hold before this lesson? How have they changed?

What strategies could you use to resolve a similar intercultural conflict?

Activity 2: Homework

Students are required to write a letter to the author offering advice based on Byram's ICC model [14, p 127].

4. Teaching assessment

Throughout the pedagogical implementation of this case study, a multi-dimensional assessment framework was systematically employed: behavioral patterns were documented through standardized observation checklists, learners' self-perceptions were quantified via structured surveys, qualitative insights were derived from semi-structured interviews (both individual and focus groups), and written competence was evaluated using rubrics for essay assessments. This comprehensive approach generated triangulated evidence to validate instructional effectiveness.

ICC Dimension	Key outcomes	Evidence
Attitude	85% of students demonstrated increased openness by actively engaging in role-plays and acknowledging cultural biases during reflections.	Students used phrases in their reflection like "I realized my initial stereotypes about Chinese parenting were oversimplified." and "I learned to respect the mother-in-law's perspective even if I didn't agree."
Knowledge	82.4% of students accurately identified three or more cultural differences in parenting norms through textual analysis.	Students highlighted key contrasts in their role play, such as "Chinese grandparents prioritize collectivism by being primary caregivers, while Western parents emphasize individualism and equal co-parenting."
Skills of Interpreting/Relating	86.2% of students effectively linked cultural conflicts in the text to broader intercultural communication challenges.	Students related the mother-in-law's function to collectivist principles and recognized how gender expectations represent cultural norms and values.

Skills of Discovery/ Interaction	78.8% of students actively utilized discovery and interaction strategies during role-plays and debates, including asking clarifying questions	Students provided in the interview saying “The role-plays helped me understand how cultural values shape real-life conflicts. I never realized how hard it could be to negotiate parenting roles across cultures until I acted as the Canadian mom!”
Critical Cultural Awareness	83% of students proposed nuanced strategies in debates, such as blending traditions or advocating for hybrid parenting practices.	Students argued for “a balanced approach where parents respect cultural norms but also adapt to the host culture when necessary,” demonstrating critical thinking and cultural sensitivity.

Table 2: Evaluation Outcomes of ICC Components

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the practical viability of Byram’s ICC model in

cultivating intercultural communicative competence within EFL classrooms.

Using a structured case-based approach, the incorporation of Byram’s five components—attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpretation and relation, discovery and interaction abilities, and critical cultural awareness—demonstrated effectiveness in fostering cross-cultural understanding and enhancing language learning [15].

The research underscores the importance of explicit cultural objectives in EFL curricula and offers actionable strategies for educators to balance linguistic and intercultural

goals. By transforming theoretical frameworks into lesson-specific activities—such as role-plays, reflective debates, and cultural comparison tasks—the study addresses the persistent disconnect between ICC theory and classroom practices. However, the reliance on a single case study and textbook limits generalizability, suggesting the need for further exploration in diverse educational settings. Future research could investigate longitudinal impacts or adapt the model for digital learning environments. [16, p 85]. Ultimately, this instructional design contributes to the growing discourse on culturally responsive pedagogy, empowering learners to navigate global interactions with empathy and critical awareness.

Reference

1. Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://www.ejecs.org> (дата обращения: 31.01.2025). – Загл. с экрана.
2. ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://files.eric.ed.gov> (дата обращения: 25.04.2025). – Загл. с экрана.

3. Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://www.ejecs.org> (дата обращения: 10.03.2025). – Загл. с экрана.
4. Canadian Center of Science and Education (CCSE) [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://ccsenet.org> (дата обращения: 25.05.2025). – Загл. с экрана.
5. Издательский дом «Юр-ВАК» [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://publishing-vak.ru> (дата обращения: 25.05.2025). – Загл. с экрана.
6. Байрам М., Морган К. Обучение языку и культуре = Teaching and Learning Language and Culture. – Клеведон: Multilingual Matters, 1994. – 232 с.
7. Байрам М. Преподавание и оценка межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции = Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence. – Филадельфия; Клеведон: Multilingual Matters, 1997. – 144 с. – ISBN 1-85359-378-8.
8. Байрам М. От обучения иностранным языкам к образованию для межкультурного гражданства: Эссе и размышления = From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and Reflections. – Клеведон: Multilingual Matters, 2008. – 288 с. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847690807>.
9. Чау Т.Х.Х., Труонг В. Интеграция межкультурного образования в преподавание английского языка: действия и мнения вьетнамских учителей = The Integration of Intercultural Education into Teaching English: What Vietnamese Teachers Do and Say // International Journal of Instruction. – 2019. – Т. 12, № 1. – С. 441–456. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12129a>.
10. Совет Европы. Общеввропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком: Изучение, преподавание, оценка = Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. – Кембридж: Cambridge University Press, 2001. – 260 с.
11. Гурьянов И.О., Рахимова А.Э., Гусман М.С. Социокультурная компетенция в преподавании иностранных языков = Socio-cultural Competence in Teaching Foreign Languages // International Journal of Higher Education. – 2019. – Т. 8, № 7. – С. 116–120. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v8n7p11>.
12. Хаймс Д. Нарративная форма как «грамматика» опыта: коренные американцы и взгляд на английский язык = Narrative Form as a ‘Grammar’ of Experience: Native Americans and a Glimpse of English // Journal of Education. – 1982. – Т. 164, № 2. – С. 121–142. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748216400203>.
13. Ньютон Дж., Йейтс Э., Шиарн С., Новицки В. Межкультурное коммуникативное обучение языку: последствия для эффективного преподавания и обучения = Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching: Implications for Effective Teaching and Learning. – Отчёт для Министерства образования Новой Зеландии, 2010. – 90 с. – Режим доступа: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz> (дата обращения: 25.05.2025).