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Developing intercultural communicative competence in three courses with cultural content in a BA in English programme at a Hungarian university

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory case study seeks to examine the possibilities of incorporating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in three courses, “Communicating across cultures”, “Intercultural communication”, and “American pop culture” on a BA in English programme at a Hungarian university. It also aims to explore good practices of developing EFL BA students’ ICC. The term ICC as proposed by Byram (1997) and the definition and model proposed by Barrett et al. (2014) for intercultural competence (IC) were used to describe and examine course contents. Systematic classroom observation and analysis of the course readings were carried out to explore the features of ICC development present in the courses. The results suggest that the courses “Communicating across cultures” and “Intercultural communication” were characterised by discussing students’ previous intercultural experiences in class. The different topics that were discussed were relevant and developed the students’ intercultural attitudes,

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knowledge, and skills. Contrary to these two courses, the course “American pop culture” aimed at developing the students’ knowledge about the different aspects of American popular culture. Some practices were missing, such as comparing the students’ cultures with the target culture.

Keywords: ICC, IC, EFL, BA level

INTRODUCTION

Culture is considered a focal element of foreign-language teaching (FLT). Foreign-language teachers are, thus, encouraged to prepare learners to interact effectively with people from different cultures (Barrett et al., 2014; Council of Europe, 2001; Dearsdorff, 2004) since there is a growing need for people to be competent in international meetings. Therefore, the development of communicative competence should go hand in hand with intercultural communicative competence (ICC) development. Otherwise, foreign-language students will become “fluent fools” (Bennett, 1993, p. 16) who can speak the target language but are not knowledgeable about the cultural background.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a central element in international business and medical studies; however, it tends to be disregarded in some English-language programmes. Sercu et al. (2005), for example, indicated that language teachers devoted more time to teaching language over culture. In contrast, in her PhD dissertation, Menyhei (2016) emphasised the growing attention paid to the integration of ICC at Hungarian universities. Therefore, the present research was conducted in the Hungarian context. It is worth mentioning that the integration of ICC in English-language courses is important as English is widely used as a foreign language.

The present paper examines the possibilities of incorporating ICC in three courses at a BA in English programme at a Hungarian university. It also explores good practices for developing EFL BA students’ ICC. This study was based on classroom observation and course materials analyses. More specifically, the following research question will be answered:

How is intercultural communicative competence development taught in three courses with cultural content in a BA in English major programme at a Hungarian university?

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

In what follows, the definition of the key concept, ICC, is explored in order to understand what it means and how it can be integrated into English-language teaching. Previous studies are also examined in relation to the incorporation of ICC in tertiary education for English-language students and the teaching materials used to promote students' ICC. Various classroom activities were introduced to be integrated into FLT to develop students' ICC.

Intercultural communicative competence

Many studies have highlighted the interrelation of language and culture. This interrelated nature is further projected in FLT. This is manifested in the book "Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence" (Byram, 1997), where ICC is considered as a new goal for foreign-language learning and teaching. Here Byram describes ICC as the ability

[...] to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. They are able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to themselves and the other and they are able to act as mediator between people of different cultural origins. Their knowledge of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately sociolinguistic and discourse competence and their awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language. (p. 71)

He defines ICC in terms of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness expressed through language.

Various ICC models have been suggested. One of the most recent models is proposed by Barrett and his colleagues (2014). They define intercultural competence (IC) as a combination of intercultural attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding, that are put into practice to achieve successful cooperation with people from various cultures (see Table 4.1). Their IC definition and model are used in the study as they stress the element of action, which is not often highlighted in most other IC definitions and models.

Table 4.1 A summary of the Intercultural Competence Model by Barrett et al. (2014). Adopted from Talbi (2020).

Intercultural Competence (IC)			
Attitudes	Knowledge and Understanding	Skills	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Respect for cultural diversity/multiplicity – Willingness to learn from and about people from different cultures – Willingness to question practices and behaviours that are taken for granted – Tolerance – Willingness to look for opportunities for intercultural interactions – Willingness to empathise with people from different cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awareness of one's own and other people's prejudices and preconceptions – Awareness that people from different cultures have different verbal and non-verbal ways of communicating – Knowledge of the beliefs and practices of culturally different people – Understanding that one's language and cultural orientations have an impact on the way one perceives the world – Understanding the diversity of cultural groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Skills of multiperspectivity – Skills in learning new knowledge about other people's cultures – Skills in interpreting other cultures' practices and beliefs and relating them to one's own – Changing one's own thinking and adapting one's behaviour to new cultural environments – Behaving appropriately and adapting one's behaviour to the culture in question – Acquiring linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse skills; acquiring the skills needed to mediate in intercultural interactions – Skills of communicating with empathy – Acquiring the ability to understand and respond to other people's beliefs and values – Plurilingual skills – Mediating in intercultural exchanges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Looking for opportunities to interact with people from different cultures – Collaborating with culturally diverse people – Discussing differences in their cultures, negotiating a mode of interaction – Challenging behaviours that are against human rights – Communicating appropriately, effectively, and respectfully with people from different cultures.

The terms IC and ICC are used interchangeably by the different authors. Their meanings sometimes cover language competence. However, the language component is important in language education. Therefore, in this study, the term ICC is used since English as a foreign language is used as a means of communication among the teacher and students.

Teaching intercultural communicative competence in tertiary education to English-language students

Although teaching ICC is different in various countries, because of the diversity of the context and of the learners, it is a good idea to see how it is done in different countries. This can throw light how certain practices are achieved and it is interesting to see the similarities and differences.

In terms of language learning and teaching, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (2001) clearly indicates the promotion of linguistic diversity as well as the development of students' ability to relate to many cultures and languages. This is reflected in the suggestions concerning the objectives for curriculum design in foreign-language learning. It is recommended that the purposes should be created to develop students' general cultural competences, namely, knowledge, skills and attitudes. If not all components are addressed, one aspect can be developed, such as raising awareness of how to learn, promoting openness and curiosity about what is new.

Holló and Lázár (1999) underlined that most EFL tutors did not integrate ICC in their teaching practice, even when they stressed its significance in helping students have successful intercultural encounters. The authors, therefore, proposed some intercultural activities that did not require extra time or effort but rather careful planning from the teacher part. They argued that content-based language development courses that usually aim to develop students' English-language skills present a good opportunity to implement ICC content. This can be reached through the supplementary materials besides the coursebook, such as "worksheets, newspaper & magazine articles, handbooks, EFL books with a cultural focus and videos, etc." (para. 2). They even provided a detailed account of how to integrate some intercultural activities, such as "role play, summarising, interpreting (hidden) meaning, formal and informal speaking and writing, discussions" (para. 3). They also recommended activities to develop students' knowledge of their own cultures, such as "socio-cultural comparison and personalisation" (para. 3). They

compared their cultural values and principles with those of the target culture. Besides, they pointed out that teaching cultural/intercultural content does not mean teaching civilisation. Other cultural aspects must be included, for example, “speech and behaviour patterns as well as characteristics of discourse” (para. 2). Culture-related topics can be introduced and connected with the language aim of the course, such as speaking, reading, listening, etc.

In Turkey, EFL students reported the most frequent activities used by tutors to develop their ICC (Mutlu & Dollar, 2017). For example, the teachers shared their experiences in English-speaking cultures with their students or asked them to visualise how life is in the target cultures. However, the students pointed out that other teaching practices could be more efficient such as talking about different cultures, presenting products from the target cultures (e.g. movies, music), creating an interactive approach through asking students about their experiences in the target cultures, and comparing Turkish culture and English-speaking cultures.

Teaching materials for developing intercultural communicative competence

According to Lázár (2011) and Önalán (2005), textbooks can be considered the foundation of the course in terms of what to include or neglect in the syllabus. Therefore, if there is no cultural content in the textbook, teachers will be less likely to design ICC tasks and activities. Similarly, Sercu and her colleagues (2005) stressed the central role of texts in FLT. Their questionnaire study with teachers found that they relied mainly on textbooks to teach ICC while others used other complementary teaching materials. Hence, if the cultural content is limited in the textbooks, teachers are not willing to teach ICC. Therefore, they recommended that in order to teach ICC, teachers should be trained to reflect on the quality of textbooks used in ICC courses and guide them to adapt the materials.

In a study by Young and Sachdev (2011), 105 EFL teachers in the USA, UK, and France were specifically asked about the classroom materials to develop the students' ICC. They agreed that the curriculum did not support ICC development. The textbooks used dealt with the superficial aspect of culture: capital C culture, focusing on geography, food, etc. They, therefore, use other materials such as newspapers or videos from the target culture. The teachers mentioned some examples:

In the UK, newspaper articles about shopping habits in the UK, “metrosexuality” in London (the growing interest in fashion and personal grooming among young

men), global warming; [...] the royal family, and excerpts from a soap opera. In the USA, [...] newspaper articles about a music festival being held in San Francisco, excerpts from a guide to foreign visitors about the social effects of the smoking ban in San Franciscan public places, reports of the anniversary of the death of the 19th century author Mark Twain, and a guide to what to do for Thanksgiving Day. [...] the comedy programme “Friends”, the CBS Evening News [...]. In France, [...] newspaper articles about English restaurants that had received stars from the Michelin Guide, an article describing an alleged conspiracy to murder the late Princess Diana, an article about Prince William’s love life, and an article about how the English weather was changing as a result of global warming. Television programmes [...] included excerpts from an Agatha Christie murder mystery, headlines from the BBC News 24 television channel, and extracts from a recent Hollywood film. (p. 92)

It can be said that those materials develop students’ listening and speaking and promote their socio-cultural and sociolinguistic abilities to interact with people from the target culture successfully. An interesting point not mentioned in other studies was that the materials were chosen because they were up-to-date, matching the students’ expectations. However, it is necessary to consider how appropriate they were to develop students’ ICC. Some of the materials could reinforce stereotypes, and they dealt with the dominant group, neglecting the multicultural features of societies. Even though the participants were experienced teachers, they failed to select materials that would develop the students’ skills and prepare them to deal with potential clashes, but rather focused on raising their awareness about one, supposedly, “monocultural” society.

Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) stressed that teaching materials could be modified to raise students’ awareness about the latent cultural content. They indicated that textbooks were designed to teach grammar and vocabulary, but the teacher could use them by adding an intercultural perspective. For instance, they suggested that “teachers can start from the theme and content in the textbook, and then encourage learners to ask further questions and make comparisons” (p. 16), or the teachers could include vocabulary items that are related to cultural diversity such as dignity, prejudice, stereotypes, and racism.

To integrate ICC in language teaching, Byram and his colleagues (2002) recommended relying on authentic texts:

Including audio recordings and a variety of written documents and visuals such as maps, photographs, diagrams and cartoons... It is a question of challenging the reader by bringing together texts and visual materials which present contrasting views. Learners need to acquire concepts for analysing texts more than factual information. (p. 18)

This approach and the use of such material in this manner can develop students' awareness and critical thinking.

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to ascertain and examine how the ICC of English-language students is developed at the BA level in three courses at a Hungarian university. It also aims at exploring good practices for promoting their ICC. These aims were reached through classroom observation and course materials analysis. Data collection instruments are further explained in the following sections.

Classroom observation

Observation can be defined as a systematic examination of people, behaviour, and events (Simpson & Tuson, 2003) which yield first-hand data. Cohen and his colleagues (2018) state that observation is an effective tool to collect authentic data. Therefore, many research studies that examined cultural and intercultural teaching have relied on classroom observation. Observation is relevant to this study as it investigates how ICC is integrated in the classroom. The observation schedule encompasses four parts: intercultural content, description of the lesson, the teacher's role, and the students' engagement during the lesson. Moreover, information about the goal of the class, the name of the course tutor, and the title of the coursebook were included. The sessions were not recorded. I did not use technical equipment as it would have disturbed the class. I preferred to observe without participating in the activities (Creswell, 2014) so that the note-taking and the filling in of the observation sheet would not be negatively affected.

Selection

The observations in the present research focus on the courses that carry inter-culturally or culturally related content. The course catalogue was checked, and the courses were carefully chosen for observation based on the course description. The acceptance of the teacher to have an observer in the classroom was

also an important factor of selection, as their permission had to be obtained. The courses observed were “Communicating across cultures”, and “Intercultural communication”. The course “American pop culture” was not observed as it was held online due to the pandemic situation. The reason for not observing this course was that the teacher decided to use non-synchronous platforms.

The two courses were observed during the Autumn term in 2019. They consisted of weekly classes of 90 minutes. They were held in English, and the students were both international and Hungarian. I conducted eight classroom observations in each course out of the 12–13 sessions in the term.

Document and course materials analysis

The document and course materials analyses were used to supplement the observations. They explore the texts and topics used to develop students’ ICC since textbooks are the primarily input for students. The documents concerned are the programme curricula, course descriptions and course syllabi used in the three courses. The course materials varied from course to course, but they included, for example, course books or the set readings. Damen (1987) proposes a comprehensive evaluation guide for reading analysis. This guide includes questions about general information, evaluation of cultural content and a summary. To match the aims and the research question of this study, the evaluation guide was modified.

To meet the purpose of the study, the following questions were designed as the criteria of analysis for the readings, mainly coursebooks:

Descriptive information

1. Who is the target population of the book according to the authors, and what are the aims set out by them? And how do these fit the purposes of the course and the course teacher?
2. Was the book the backbone of the course or just part of the input?

Cultural content

3. Did the book provide “only” content or also hints on language use?
4. What elements of ICC did the book help develop in the students?

Summary

5. Did the teacher and the students seem to like the book or not? What did or did they not appreciate in it?

Methods of data analysis

In the present study, thematic analysis was carried out for the classroom observations and course materials analyses. Cohen and his colleagues defined the thematic analysis (2018) as follows, “the researcher reads, re-reads, reflects on, infers from and interprets the raw data” (p. 645). The data were collected according to frequent themes. Certain aspects were examined, such as which ICC components are integrated into the courses, the content of each class, and the students’ engagement. The course materials were also scrutinised according to the criteria of analysis, the aims of the course and research questions. The materials (readings, documentaries, course descriptions) were examined to find out the cultural content and which type of culture is presented. Then, the results of every course material was compared with other course materials to discover the similarities and differences.

RESULTS

The results are categorised according to the courses. The findings of the classroom observation are presented first, and the course materials analyses follow this.

Communicating across cultures

The observations revealed that the content of the course is limited to English-speaking cultures, and the students’ cultures. For instance, the students learned the difference between what is usually said and understood in British and American statements. In some cultures, the phrase “not bad” is understood as poor, but in the USA or Britain, it conveys the meaning of “that is good”. This activity raised students’ awareness about communication in these two cultures. Moreover, the teacher compared the Hungarian and American cultures in terms of greetings, showing the difference between the two. The Americans are expected to give brief answers when asked how they are, while the Hungarians usually respond and fully explain how they feel. Such activities help students to behave appropriately in the target culture.

This course encouraged interaction among students through role plays and group/pair work. For example, in one of the activities, the students were required to do a role play in order to experience intercultural communication. The course tutor gave the students cards of various colours (red, blue, white) representing different imaginary countries, and they were asked to behave according to the instructions on the card. According to one of the cards, the student who received

the White-land card is someone who likes to meet people and uses many gestures. Some students complained about the way their partners behaved (not maintaining eye contact, using a lot of gestures). This role play helped students better understand cultural diversity and differences in non-verbal communication.

This course explicitly aimed to promote students' understanding of the factors that influence people's ability to communicate effectively across cultures, and consequently, develop their ICC. The teacher did not include the development of the students' English-language proficiency in the course aims. However, he revealed that this goes hand in hand with the development of their ICC. To attain these objectives, the students were assigned six passages. The first article, "More than please and thank you" (Hancock, 2010), discusses politeness strategies. They were asked to read the chapter "The many faces of polite: Evaluating performance and providing negative feedback" (Meyer, 2014), which compares politeness strategies in France and the Netherlands in the field of management. These two readings promoted students' communicative consciousness of the politeness conventions in various countries (Barrett et al., 2014) which means that in future intercultural interaction they will be able to express politeness according to the given culture. The book chapter, "Transitions shock: Putting culture shock in perspective" (Bennett, 1998), defines cultural shock, and consequently, explains the stages of transition shock. The students learned how to deal with cultural shock. The next reading presents an extract from "Popular culture: An introductory text" (Lause & Nachbar, 1992). This text identifies the meaning of stereotypes in popular culture and their significance. The students learned to question their stereotypes and highlight cultural diversity (Barrett et al., 2014). The fact that their intercultural attitudes were developed means that at a following course they will be more receptive to further elements of ICC. The fifth text, "How do cultural learnings affect the perception of other people?" (Nemetz-Robinson, 1986), examines the influence of cultural experience on social perception in relation to cues and schemas. This reading helped students to not only challenge their own stereotypes but also critically evaluate people who are from different cultures (Barrett et al., 2014). The last chapter, "Empathy as part of cultural mediation", by Irishkanova et al. (2004), analyses empathy, highlighting its significance as a form of cultural mediation in intercultural encounters. It boosted students' ability to interact with culturally different people by learning how to respond to them (Barrett et al., 2014).

These readings were the basis of discussion in each lesson. However, the teacher explained only “How do cultural learnings affect the perception of other people?” because he believed that the concepts were too complex for the students to understand. In fact, one of the students did not like this reading as he described it as “too theoretical”. The teacher usually supplemented these materials with videos, newspaper articles, and sometimes sharing personal experiences abroad, which the students liked.

Intercultural communication

The group in this course was multicultural, including Chinese, Japanese, Kazakh, Hungarian and Turkish students, among others. The focus of the course was not placed on English-speaking cultures. On the contrary, students’ own cultures were highlighted, and some of their cultural behaviours were discussed. The students were required to report intercultural clashes. For instance, a student said that she discovered that it is unacceptable to blow one’s nose when she went to Japan. However, she was told that she could sniff. However, in Hungary, blowing one’s nose is acceptable while sniffing is not. This incident could inform the students about different types of cultural differences and help them learn how to behave in certain cultures. Moreover, one of the course requirements is to do a presentation. There was an overall agreement among the students to do presentations about their own cultures. They were also asked to bring an object that represents their culture. This activity was an eye-opener to many students for two reasons: learning about unfamiliar cultures and discovering similarities with other cultures. A Turkish student, for instance, brought fragranced cologne used to clean hands. It was surprising for the rest of the students to find that Albanians use the same cologne in the same way. The observation showed that students’ knowledge about their own culture and other cultures was developed.

The results of the observations revealed that the students were particularly excited to share information about their cultures. They also showed interest in learning about the different cultures. They seemed to be aware of cultural diversity and the necessity to be interculturally competent when dealing with others. In one of the activities, the teacher asked them to say what they could be interested in when visiting a new country. The answers were as follows: taboo topics, local cuisine, the relationship between men and women in terms of equality, dress codes. The students were aware of cultural differences in terms of these aspects and the potential misunderstandings. Another student referred

to knowledge of physical distance. In her country (Albania), for example, people can be very close, and she indicated that her Irish friends do not like hugs and touching. In intercultural communication, being aware of nonverbal communication is important. It can be concluded that the students are more interested in people's behaviours from different cultures (small c culture).

The activities were also supported by the coursebook "Intercultural resource pack: Intercultural communication" (Utley, 2004). It is intended for teachers and teacher trainers to develop the students' and future teachers' ICC. As mentioned in the foreword, it is advised to be used in seminars about ICC, which precisely matched the nature of this course. The book comprises six main themes that centre around the following topics: the definition of culture, stereotypes, national and corporate cultures, group culture, and culture and communication. Each theme includes various subsections which contain one or two tasks. The tasks revolve around developing students' cultural awareness and knowledge about other cultures. For instance, in one of the activities, they have to decide the factors that shape their own national or regional culture and another culture they know. According to the author, the activities should be followed by pair or group discussion. For this reason, a language reference suggests some useful phrases and expressions that the students can use in discussions, such as agreeing and disagreeing, making suggestions, summarising, asking and challenging, among many other phrases. This suggests that language development is also identified as a goal, even though it was not explicitly stated in the book. The choice of this coursebook matches the teacher's objective, which is the development of the students' intercultural, communication and presentation skills in English.

This book has twofold objectives, namely theoretical and practical. On the one hand, the students learned about the definition of culture and some of the well-known cultural models such as Trompenaars' and Hall's models. On the other hand, for example, in the cultural dilemma section, one of the activities was about the way the student would respond and behave in some situations which would help them have more successful intercultural interactions. Furthermore, it tackles issues related to both small c culture and big C culture (behaviours when interacting with others, gender characteristics, stereotypes about other nationalities). The book was not addressed to develop students' awareness and knowledge about English-speaking countries solely. Other countries and, consequently, cultures were involved, such as Italy, Sweden, and Germany. In other

activities, the students could choose a culture and talk about it. This creates an opportunity to develop students' awareness about other cultures.

American pop culture

This course is different in its approach from the other two courses as the classes were asynchronous, and I only had access to the course materials. The students in this course were assigned ten book chapters to read. The chapter "What is popular culture?" (Storey, 2009) attempts to familiarise the readers with the different definitions of popular culture. The second reading is the chapter on "Reading" television from a book with the same title (Fiske & Hartley, 2003). It seeks to study and compare TV to literature. It is explicitly stated that critics should analyse and criticise television objectively, using techniques other than those used in theatre. Then, the chapter "Introduction: the crisis of daytime drama and what it means for the future of television" from the book "The Survival of soap opera: Transformations for a new media era" (Ford et al., 2011) underscores that even though watching soap opera is central to American culture, the number of viewers has been decreasing. Therefore, it offers strategies to revive daytime soap opera ratings, such as communicating with different audiences. Hence, this book is intended for scholars and soap opera spectators. students' knowledge about big C culture (e.g., the different American soap operas) is developed. The following reading is "Introduction: Keeping it real—reality TV's evolution" (Edwards, 2013), depicts the popularity of reality TV in American society. The book chapter "Why we overly value organised, competitive team sport" (Anderson & White, 2017) investigates the stereotypes associated with American football and cheerleading, reporting that heterosexuality is related to football players while cheerleaders are assumed to be homosexuals. This reading not only examines stereotypes but also investigates their causes. Hence, students were familiarised with the American stereotypes towards certain sports. Next, they went through the reading "Economy" (Kortoba, 2017), which examines the connection between music and the economy. The following book chapter is "The hidden truths in Black sitcoms" (Coleman & McIlwain, 2005). It summarises the role of African Americans in TV sitcoms for fifty years. The book chapter "Advertising in American society" (Rowman, 2015) discusses the role of advertising in American culture. "Taking South Park seriously" (Weinstock, 2008) examines the contradictory views about the top-rated cartoon, revealing that students were banned from watching it in some American schools because

of its anti-Christian values. It also presents controversial topics such as gay marriage and celebrity worship. The book chapter “Pre-roll” (Allocca, 2018) describes the viral effect of YouTube on American society. Generally speaking, it can be concluded that these readings are limited to the development of students’ knowledge about the American culture. Thus, this contributed to their understanding of IC and ICC.

The readings were central in every task as the students answered reading-related questions. Based on the course materials, the development of students’ language development was not considered among the aims of the course. This was further supported by the course aims, which clearly revealed that the overall goal was to examine American popular culture in theory and practice. This objective was fulfilled by investigating some contemporary topics from practical and theoretical perspectives.

DISCUSSION

The observations revealed that students’ ICC was promoted by examining their own cultures and other cultures, including the English-speaking ones. The two courses, “Intercultural communication” and “Communicating across cultures”, were characterised by cooperation among the students, through pair or group work. It was also found that the tutors integrated activities to develop students’ ICC and awareness of cultural diversity (Barrett et al., 2014; Holló & Lázár, 1999; Mutlu & Dollar, 2017). However, it was noted that the course “American pop culture” lacked interaction among the students and teacher due to the teacher’s choice to use an asynchronous platform. Even though this course did not include any cooperative tasks, it reflects the possibility of teaching an (inter)cultural course online. However, using some of the activities mentioned above or a synchronous online platform can lead to a more successful course.

The examination of the readings used in the three BA courses shows some differences and similarities between the course objectives and the (inter)cultural content presented in the materials. The courses “Communicating across cultures” and “Intercultural communication” aimed to develop students’ ICC; however, the course “American pop culture” was more specific and limited to American culture, which would develop one aspect, namely knowledge about this culture. This matches the CEFRL for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (2001), highlighting that if not all IC and ICC aspects are addressed in the classroom, one component can be promoted, which is, in this case, knowledge. The other

two courses were more general in their focus. The teachers desired to help the students have successful intercultural interaction and have the knowledge and the skills to do so, which was realised through the readings and tasks. As shown in the results section, some readings also promoted students' intercultural attitudes. For example, in "Communicating across cultures", the students dealt with the significance of stereotypes in popular culture, which helped them question and challenge their stereotypes (Barrett et al., 2014). In the "Intercultural communication" course, some tasks also discussed stereotypes and attitudes where the students were asked to match the nationalities with its stereotype. This activity was aimed at creating a discussion on the danger of stereotyping. It is understandable that when seeking to enhance people's intercultural attitudes, the teacher can only include readings and activities about stereotypes. This could be explained by the fact that it is difficult to change one's attitudes about other cultures in one course.

The development of students' awareness about the target countries was successfully realised through the various readings in the three courses. For example, the students learned about sitcoms in the USA (American pop culture), politeness strategies in France and the Netherlands (Communicating across cultures), discovering information about Sweden as an example in the section of cultural briefing (Intercultural communication). The development of one's knowledge about one's own culture was specifically emphasised in the "Intercultural communication" coursebook. The tasks invited the students to talk about their own cultures and experiences on several occasions. Sharing aspects of one's own culture is a useful practice in an (inter)cultural course because it raises one's awareness about their own culture and promotes others' knowledge about various cultures (Barrett et al., 2014; Holló & Lázár, 1999).

The cultural content in the courses varied. However, a small c culture was highlighted in all the readings. For example, the causes of sports stereotypes in the USA are explained, and gender roles in "Intercultural communication". This reflects the essence of ICC, as learning about big C culture is not enough (Young & Sachdev, 2011) to guarantee successful intercultural interaction. These results further reinforce the significance of the textbook as the cornerstone to develop students' ICC (Lázár, 2011; Önalán, 2005; Sercu et al., 2005). It also shows teachers' awareness of the importance of examining small c culture when choosing the set of readings.

Not all the readings aimed to promote students' communicative skills. The students' language proficiency development was explicitly stated in "Intercultural resource pack: Intercultural communication" (Utley, 2004) through the language reference page that includes expressions to be used in pair and group discussions. It was also reflected in the readings of "Communicating across cultures". This matches the definition of ICC suggested by Byram (1997), revealing that the use of language is needed to interact with others and apply intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills. However, English-language proficiency was not considered in "American pop culture", as the aim of the course focussed on culture-related issues. Therefore, it was not addressed in the readings.

IMPLICATIONS

The present study attempted to describe and analyse how the ICC of English-language students is developed in three courses, "Communicating across cultures", "Intercultural communication", and "American pop culture" at a BA in English programme at a Hungarian university. The findings provide insights to EFL teachers regarding the development of their students' ICC, considering the increasing necessity for interculturally competent students. Therefore, this study proposes the teaching activities and approaches that can be used to integrate ICC in courses with cultural content. It also shows the teaching materials applicable in (inter)cultural courses to promote students' ICC. Since the aim of each reading material was examined, teachers can use them according to their students' needs. The results revealed that the teachers focused on a small culture to enhance students' intercultural knowledge and attitudes. It was also found that the tutors of "Communicating across cultures" and "Intercultural communication" aimed to improve students' English-language proficiency along with the promotion of their ICC. These objectives were achieved through the various class readings and activities, such as reporting intercultural clashes and reflecting on one's own culture. The major limitation of this study is that it is focused on one level only, the BA level. To get a deep understanding of how to incorporate ICC in English-language courses, different levels should be included, such as Master's and Doctoral levels.

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