The Implementation of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Evaluation: An Analysis of English Summative Assessment

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Assessment plays an important role in supporting an effective and responsible learning process. Thus, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) component in the summative assessment of English in one of the vocational high schools in Yogyakarta. The qualitative approach with thematic content analysis method were implemented in this research and the data were collected from 30 students of odd semester summative exam questions and analyzed using the theoretical framework which includes of three main components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The results showed that six questions contained ICC elements, namely one question reflected the knowledge component and five questions reflected the skills component. No questions were found that represented the attitude component. This finding indicates that although there have been efforts to integrate ICC in assessment, its implementation is still limited and has not been applied systematically. The dominance of the skills component indicates a focus on the ability to interpret and understand cross-culturally, but the absence of the attitude aspect indicates that intercultural sensitivity has not been adequately measured. Futhermore, it can be concluded that the application of ICC in summative assessment is still partial and emphasizes the cognitive aspect. This study emphasizes the need to develop more comprehensive assessment instruments that cover all ICC components to support students' intercultural awareness in accordance with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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Introduction

The main essence of assessment lies in how assessment can contribute to the main goal of education, those are the development of independent, effective, and responsible learning for each student (Black, 2015; Berisha et al., 2024; Gu & Yu, 2020). It is clear that assessment stands as a core component in the learning process, the success of the assessment can influence the learning process in the classroom (Butakor & Ceasar, 2021; Laksono & Widiyatmoko, 2022; Ombay et al., 2024). In terms of assessment, there are formative assessments and summative assessments that can be implemented into the learning process to provide information regarding student achievement (Hattie, 2003). However, the purpose of using the two assessments is different (Gezer et al., 2021).

Both formative and summative have a crucial role in education as a mechanism for measuring knowledge and as a facility for providing feedback and information on decisions in learning (Mekonen & Fitiavana, 2021; Fook & Sidhu, 2010; Ghaicha, 2016). Additionally, the implementation of a summative assessment will provide formal certification of the knowledge and skills acquired. (Vicente et al., 2021). However, the main problem in summative assessment occurs when students receive the results of their grades, making their assessment points mandatory, and providing feedback to this type of assessment (Thompson & Meer, 2021). Moreover, Summative assessment in English language learning also provides important benefits as a final evaluation tool that not only measures students' academic achievement, but influences their emotional condition in facing the overall learning process (Grefa, 2025). In addition, Wiemann & Mamadiyorova (2025) provide the view that summative assessment strategies can improve learning effectiveness by providing a comprehensive picture of student achievement and helping teachers make more appropriate instructional decisions. In general, Bearman et al (2016) identified that there are three main objectives of summative assessment, the three distinctive purposes can be seen in Figure 1 below;
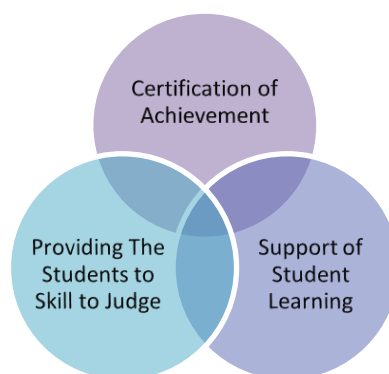

Figure 1. Distinctive purpose of summative assessment

In terms of certification, refers to the process of assessing whether students have acquired the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to progress to the next stage. Supporting the students is defined as how the educator provides feedback, guidance, and resources to help students improve their aspects of learning based on summative assessment results. The last aspect serves as an opportunity for learners to reflect on their performance and develop the capacity to assess their work effectively. Thus, it is important to know that assessment is recognized as the main thing to guide student learning, not just a form of evaluation of their performance at a certain time (Houston & Thompson, 2017).

Summative assessment is related to how it provides information about student achievement or achievements in an educational environment. In contrast, Prastikawati et al. (2024) explained that formative assessment functions as a means to monitor student learning

development continuously, as well as help teachers adjust learning strategies to be more responsive to student needs in the classroom. At this rate, summative assessment refers to a competency that teachers must master to determine, interpret, and communicate the level of student performance in a field (Yildirim et al., 2024; Muslimah et al., 2024; Broadbent et al., 2018). What needs to be underlined is Summative Assessment as a form of assessment that is conceptualized as a specific purpose in placing students in a program that fails to help teachers build a strong foundation for their work at school. Additionally, it is important to know that Summative assessments that are effectively prepared by teachers function as indicators of learning quality, because they can provide an objective picture of student achievement and become the basis for making evaluative and sustainable educational decisions (Brownlie et al., 2024). Therefore, summative assessments are used to ensure that previously established standards have been met (Shute & Kim, 2014).

The implementation of the Pancasila student profile in the Merdeka Curriculum is one of the reference dimensions and important elements that clarify character traits, to build each other by interacting with each other so that it requires simultaneous growth, not partial development (Fauzan et al., 2023; Irawati et al., 2022). The profile of Pancasila Student (*Profil Pelajar Pancasila*) in the Merdeka curriculum has the function of developing students who can act in accordance with Pancasila values which consist of several dimensions: 1) Faith in God Almighty; 2) Global Diversity; 3) Mutual Cooperation; 4) Independent; 5) Critical Reasoning; and finally; 6) creativity (Irawati et al., 2022). It is very important to pay attention to the development of students, especially based on the profile of Pancasila students. One of the important aspects that must emerge in today's young generation is global diversity (Aziz & Abdulkarim, 2023; Fitriyani et al., 2023). As a result, the aspect of global diversityis the framework for the world's citizens (Kim, 2021), for Indonesian citizens this framework of diversity helps tounderstand intercultural understanding to improve the self-image of individuals in social life (Aziz & Abdulkarim, 2023). To facilitate the knowledge related to intercultural understanding, linguistic variations should be integrated into English language teaching to reflect the native use of the language in various cultural environments, which is part of the concept of intercultural communicative competence (Portera, 2014).

Many researchers from around the world have become interested in Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in recent times (Álvarez, 2020; Chen & Wei, 2025; D'Orazzi et. al., 2025), although conceptually ICC is defined in various ways. One well-known definition put forward by Byram (2020) related to ICC is defined as an individual's ability to interact effectively with people who have different cultural backgrounds in a foreign language, involving aspects of intercultural, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence. ICC is a combination of two different aspects, communicative competence and intercultural communication as a model for forming intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2020). He also added that ICC is an individual's ability to interact with people who belong to social groups in different languages. In addition, this makes someone who is studying a foreign language who has good ICC able to communicate using the target language with people who have different cultures well, because they have a good understanding of the cultural perspective (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022).

In terms of ICC, Nemouchi and Byram (2025) define intercultural competence as the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. They emphasize that this competence includes not only knowledge of other cultures, but also communication skills and an open and reflective attitude toward cultural differences. In addition to this, it shows that the ICC can view different cultures from the perspective of informed understanding (Corbett, 2022). Intercultural

Communicative Competence has three main domain aspects: (1) Attitude or Belief Component which is related to how an individual's cultural conditions influence the attitudes, beliefs, and values of various existing cultures (2) Knowledge Component which is defined as a world view and various types of knowledge culture of individuals and groups, and the last is (3) Skills Component which focuses on the ability to determine and use culturally appropriate strategies when working with different individuals and groups in society (Sue et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Byram (2020) developed the ICC model which considers knowledge, values, and skills as integral and important elements in this competency. The identification of the five main components of this competency can be seen in Figure 2 below:
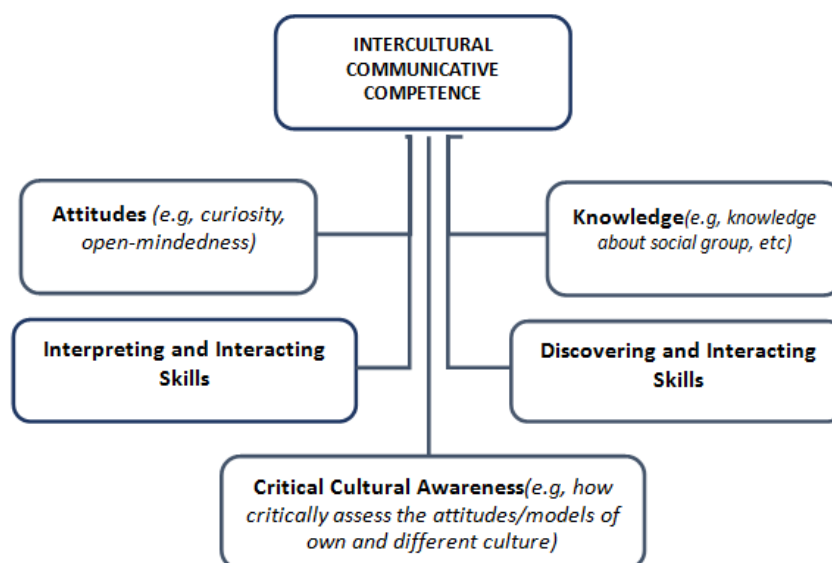

Figure 2. The main components of ICC by Byram (2020)

This component is also supported by Sevimel-Sahin (2020). Geert et al. (2010) recommend a combination of other aspects, awareness, knowledge, and skills which can develop the development of this competency. Knowledge and Skills are sub-components found in all ICC models, but awareness and attitudes are more optional (Mykytenko et al., 2022). Additionally, Sercu (2005) concluded several things through summary results based on the components of intercultural communicative competence from Byram (2020). The summary of component ICC by Sercu (2005) can be seen in Table 1 below

Table 1. The summary of ICC's Component by Sercu (2005)

No.	Components of ICC	Description of the component
1.	Knowledge	The general knowledge about a specific culture, the ability to access the knowledge of interaction based on an individual or society, and the recognition of self and others.
2.	Skills or Behavior	The general ability to interpret and relate to different cultures, acquire new knowledge, and access knowledge as well as skills.
3.	Attitudes	Positive attitudes regarding learning ICC, value to others, and critical engagement related to the unknown or foreign culture.

It is important to pay attention to how ICC is developed optimally by observing how a person acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, this can equip students with the necessary knowledge related to ICC, to create a solid foundation in developing abilities and abilities productively in the communication process (Dvorianchykova et al., 2022). The notion of ICC is important to implement in the classroom, especially in teaching foreign languages. Correspondingly, the development of ICC aims to equip individuals to be able to

interact effectively and harmoniously in diverse cultural contexts in the era of globalization (Sarwari et al., 2024)

To interact with other people with diverse cultures, foreign language learning needs to develop, not only in terms of communication competence, intercultural competence needs to be implemented as well (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022). Thus, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) exists as a competency that emerged to facilitate individuals interacting effectively with people who have different languages and cultures, as well as responding flexibly and appropriately to their behavior and attitudes (Fantini, 2012; Meyer, 1991). As a result, ICC can be incorporated into English language teaching, as a reflection of language use in different social and cultural conditions (Fantini, 2012; Iswandari & Ardi, 2022; Rose & Galloway, 2019), especially to be implemented in the global diversity aspect which correlates with an individual's cultural differences (Aziz & Abdulkarim, 2023).

In the research entitled Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Journalism Students by Mykytenko et al (2022), it was found that ICC is an important integral part of journalism students, based on language as an important unit of culture. This shows that the acquisition of ICC in cultural learning is very important today. Additionally, Iswandari & Ardi (2022) added in their systematic research review that ICC is very important for educators' cognition which later can provide successful implementation of ICC in learning.

The results of several previous studies on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) have focused more on its integration into teaching materials or classroom interactions. However, there are still very few studies that explore how ICC components are applied in standard assessment instruments, especially in summative assessments. This study makes a unique contribution by analyzing the presence of ICC components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in summative assessment items used in one of the vocational high schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Thus, by identifying the ICC aspects that appear in the exam questions, this study reveals a dimension of intercultural education that has not been widely explored, namely its relationship to evaluation practices.

From the previous elaboration, this study aims to determine the extent to which the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) components are implemented in English summative assessment questions at the vocational high school level that implement the Independent Curriculum. The findings of this study can be a reference for educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers in improving the quality of English assessment by incorporating ICC components. Moreover, this study encourages the use of evaluation models that are more responsive to the cultural context in foreign language learning, so that it can foster students' intercultural understanding both at the national and global levels.

Method

A qualitative research method was implemented in this research, to reveal opportunities in the investigation of the event or issue being studied (Lim, 2025; Maxwell, 2021). Thus, thematic content analysis was used in this research as data analysis (Neuendorf, 2018) from data taken from documents that align with this research. The implementation of content analysis in this research is used as a systematic method for identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns of meaning in communication data, whether in the form of text, images, or other media, so that researchers can understand the context and content of messages in depth and objectively (Krippendorff, 2018). Words and phrases contained in the communication data are systematically identified and categorized to summarize the content. The frequency and grouping of these code units into categories helps researchers gain meaningful understanding and insights into patterns in the data (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017).

There are steps in conducting thematic content analysis (Yildirim et al., 2024), as part of the data analysis through thematic content analysis in this research, a series of fundamental theories of the main components of Intercultural Communicative Competence were established by Byram (2020) and Sercu (2005) relating to; Knowledge; Skills or Behavior; and Attitude as the structure of the analysis. Next, the results of the data that have been obtained based on 30 summative items test in the odd semester from one of the vocational schools in Yogyakarta, will be analyzed focusing on the main components of the ICC. The analysis process is carried out through the ICC aspects contained in the assessment items from the data source, such as objectives, descriptions, and component criteria. After the analysis results are obtained, the analytical framework is carried out by coding the data from the analysis results into a table containing the details of the questions that have been coded and the ICC aspects implemented. The process are explained in Figure 3 below.
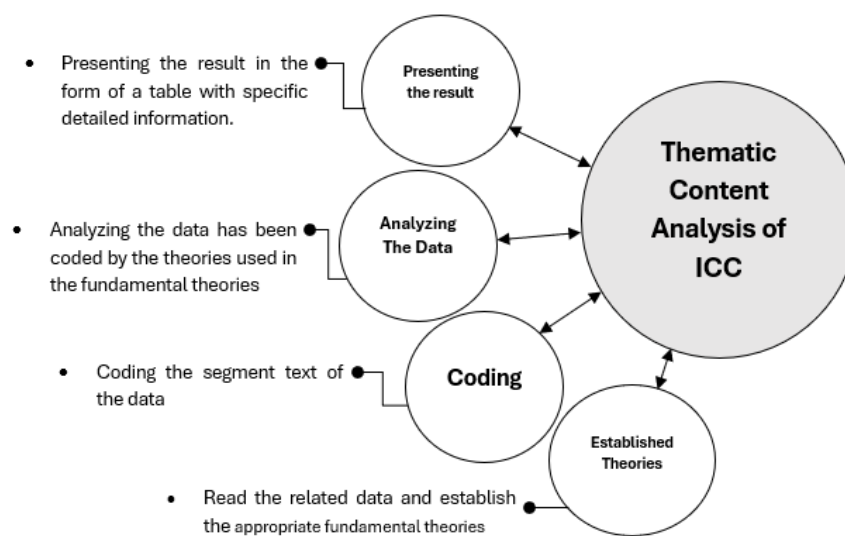

Figure 3. The Process of Content Analysis

In general, there are 6 steps in this study. First, the researcher collects summative question documents which the researcher then reads and understands thoroughly. Furthermore, the researcher establishes the fundamental theory of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) from Byram (2020) and Sercu (2005) as an analysis framework. In the next stage, the coding process for the question items in the summative assessment is based on the ICC aspects (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes). In the final stage, the researcher creates an interpretation table of the analysis results and concludes the level of ICC implementation in the summative assessment. This process is carried out to identify the extent of implementation of the ICC components in the summative assessment of English at the vocational school level.

The stages in this study play an important role in ensuring the validity and depth of the content analysis process (Figure 4). According to Yildirim et al. (2024), a structured and theoretically based content analysis approach allows researchers to systematically identify patterns, accurately categorize data, and draw meaningful conclusions. By following the stages starting from data collection, coding, to interpretation based on the established ICC theory, this study is not only descriptive, but also analytical and relevant to the theoretical framework. Each stage is very important to maintain consistency, transparency, and objectivity in evaluating educational content, especially in measuring intercultural communication competence.
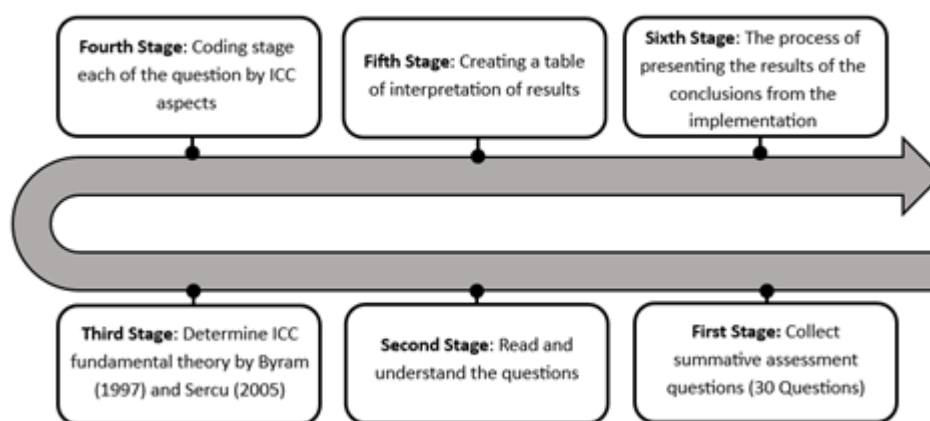
Figure 4. Research Stages

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis by implementing the theory of Byram (2020), as well as the model by Sercu (2005) which summarizes the components of ICC. It was found that of the 30 total questions in the summative assessment, 6 of them were indicated to have aspects of the ICC component. In the emergence of ICC components theories, the skills aspect is the component aspect with the most frequent presentations compared to other aspects. The results of this data were obtained by analyzing the objective question item by item, then interpreted using the ICC theory by Sercu (2005) and Bryam (1997). Among six of the ICC components that emerged in the question items, the component of skills is the highest variable based on the analysis, while the knowledge variable is the lowest components appeared in a single item test. Thus, after finding the frequency value and type of variable component according to the question, the researcher classifies it based on the item code and context of the description of the ICC component dimensions. The analysis results can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Data Interpretation Analysis

No.	Item Code	Question Objective	Variable Components	Context in ICC
1.	Q-P1/09	To find specific information about a place.	Knowledge	How the students mentioned a general knowledge about the cultural place
2.	Q-P1/12	To find specific information regarding implicit information	Skills	How the students discover a piece of information about a different culture
3.	Q-P1/16	To analyze information related to the main topic	Skills	How the students acquire new knowledge about culture from another country
4.	Q-P1/17	To describe a meaning related to the given context.	Skills	How the students interpret the meaning related to the terms from another country
5.	Q-P1/18	To elaborate a specific information based on the main topic.	Skills	How the students acquire the specific information related to the culture of another country
6.	Q-P2/02	To describe a specific object	Skills	How the students interpret an object or documents of the representative from another culture.

The results of the analysis above show that the summative assessment items have implemented the components of Intercultural Communicative Competency. The results of

the analysis of the question item with code Q-P1/09, have the context of how students complete the question item by finding information related to cultural places in Indonesia, the embodiment of the knowledge component appears in this question item, The knowledge dimension component is realized from the understanding of an individual or social group and their groups, based on their own country or the country of the interlocutor, related to the interaction process between individuals in society (Byram, 2020).

Meanwhile, data with codes Q-P1/12, Q-P1/16, Q-P1/17, Q-P1/18, and Q-P2/02 were identified as having ICC Skills component variables. Through the results of the analysis, the five test items have similarities in presenting cultural differences/representatives of foreign cultures, where students are expected to be able to interpret the information in the text related to the questions, with topics related to culture that they did not know before. Sercu (2005) explains that the skills component is an aspect of efforts to interpret a culture and relate to it. Additionally, in terms of skills and relating, this is dependent on their understanding of the culture they know (their own culture) and other cultures (Foreign Culture) (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022). A more detailed description of the questions that have identified ICC components can be seen in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3. Summative Item Test Based on The ICC Component

Item Code	Variable Components	Question Test	Indicator
Q-P1/09	Knowledge	Where is Parangtritis Beach located?	In this part of the test, students can mention where is Parangtritis Beach located based on the text.
Q-P1/12	Skills	Why in Bali they have a small temple in front of their houses?	This part of the question required students' understanding of another culture based on the text they got.
Q-P1/16	Skills	Based on the passage above, what is the purpose of pouring water?	For this question of the test, students may describe the purpose of an activity from another culture, especially in the Songkran Festival.
Q-P1/17	Skills	What is the meaning of "Songkran"?	Students can describe the meaning of Songkran based on their understanding related to foreign culture.
Q-P1/18	Skills	Why do they describe the festival as the world's biggest water fight?	Students can describe why Songkran can be described as the biggest water fight.
Q-P2/02	Skills	After you look at the pictures above. Now try to describe the picture in your own words. The more complete and more specific the description you provide, the better score you will get!	Students can describe an object in the test based on the local culture specifically.

The results have been explained through the analysis of the previous tables, generally, the ICC Component has been implemented through the details of the summative assessment. The ICC components that emerge in the item questions details have criteria, objectives, concepts, and characteristics under the definition of ICC's Component itself. In the question item with code Q-P1/09, which has the question form "Where is Parangtritis Beach Located", students will explore their answers, by providing specific information on the location of Parangtritis Beach. This is in line with ICC's Component Knowledge, which provides a general overview of specific cultural insights. The ability of students to access their knowledge related to cultural places is needed in this question. Byram (2020) describes the knowledge component in ICC, providing details of how important cultural differences and similarities are in communication, especially across cultures themselves.

The elaboration of skills component within the question items, each of the items has similarities in relation to the definition and characteristics of the skill component itself. In question item Q-P1/12 "Why in Bali they have a small temple in front of their houses?" students will provide their description through the answers given, regarding how they access their understanding of a culture they did not know before. The interpretation of their answers will be related to the access to new information they get through the text, where intercultural competence is very closely related to the text.

The aspects of the skills component also appear to have appeared in question item Q-P1/16. Q-P1/17, Q-P1/18, which accesses students' understanding of external cultural contexts. Students will describe the purpose, meaning, and definition of the "Songkran Festival", which cannot be found in Indonesia. Students will once again access their understanding related to foreign cultures, and acquire new knowledge related to intercultural contexts. Sercu (2005) describes a model of the Skills component in ICC through Byram's (2020) theory with an individual's ability to interpret and relate information related to a foreign culture, as well as how the individual gains access to new knowledge and operates this information through communication and interaction that has been obtained previously. Question item Q-P2/02 is also indicated to have implemented the ICC's Component in the skills section. It's just that in this question; students are asked to describe a place that has a strong cultural essence. A specific description of the cultural place is needed to solve this problem.

Jata (2015) shows that the majority of participants (who are educators) focus more on language learning itself. This indicates that they are still less involved in relating it to the intercultural background. Banjongjit & Boonmoh (2018) found in the research related to teachers' perceptions of the ICC concept in English language teaching that the Intercultural dimension was not fully implemented by teachers. These two studies show a correlation with this study, where although the implementation of the ICC dimensions has been found in the English language summative assessment, however, the result obtained is not significant.

The results of the analysis show that out of 30 questions in the summative assessment, only 6 questions contain the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) component. This indicates that although there are efforts to integrate cross-cultural values in the assessment, its implementation is still limited. The most dominant component that appears is the skills aspect, with 5 questions referring to students' ability to interpret, describe, or explain foreign cultural information. Meanwhile, only 1 question represents the aspect of students' knowledge of certain cultural elements.

More specifically, the emergence of the skill aspect is seen in questions that encourage students to understand the meaning of foreign cultures, such as questions about the Songkran Festival in Thailand. This question not only tests literal understanding, but also invites students to access the symbolic meaning and cultural context of the practice. This is in accordance with the opinions of Sercu (2005) and Byram (2020) that skills in ICC include the ability to interpret and relate information across cultures, as well as critically assess different values. However, the absence of an attitude component in these questions indicates that the ICC approach as a whole is not optimal. In fact, aspects of attitude such as curiosity, openness, and empathy towards other cultures are important elements that shape students' cultural sensitivity (Byram, 2020). The absence of this component can be an indication that the assessment is still too focused on the cognitive dimension, without exploring students' affective dimensions in understanding culture.

Compared with the research results of Iswandari & Ardi (2022), it was found that many English teachers in Indonesia have not systematically integrated intercultural competence in learning, including in assessment. Research by Jata (2015) also shows that most lecturers

emphasize more on linguistic aspects in language teaching, and pay less attention to cultural context. This is in line with the findings in this study that the existence of ICC in assessment is still uneven and has not become part of the conscious evaluation design.

The advantage of this result is that there is an indication that schools are beginning to show awareness of the importance of cultural content in teaching English. However, the weakness is that there is no balance between the components of ICC, which should cover knowledge, skills, and attitudes simultaneously. In addition, because this study only used one document of questions from one school, the scope of the findings is still limited and cannot be generalized widely. Therefore, this result is an important reflection for teachers and curriculum developers to start thinking about the comprehensive integration of ICC in the assessment process. One important recommendation is the need for training for teachers in compiling questions based on cross-cultural values that not only measure knowledge, but also shape students' character and cultural awareness.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion that have been carried out, it can be concluded that this study has succeeded in identifying the extent to which the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) components are implemented in English summative assessment questions in one of the vocational high schools in Yogyakarta that implements the Merdeka Curriculum. These findings indicate that although there have been efforts to integrate cross-cultural values into evaluation instruments, the approach is not yet optimal and still requires strengthening, both in terms of question design and teacher awareness as the compilers of assessment instruments. This is important because assessments that include cultural aspects can make a significant contribution in shaping students' global competence, in line with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile, especially in the dimension of global diversity. Thus, the implications of this study indicate the importance of mentoring and training for teachers in designing questions that not only assess language aspects, but also instill intercultural values that are relevant to today's global life. In addition, this study also reinforces the importance of assessment as an integral part of learning that can be used to foster intercultural awareness in students holistically. Further research can expand the scope by analyzing more schools from various regions, so that the results can be generalized more widely. Research can also combine document analysis methods with interviews or observations of teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and practices of ICC integration in learning and assessment. In addition, a quantitative approach can be used to systematically measure the representation of ICC components in assessments and their impact on student competencies in a cultural context.

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