

USING WESTERN MOVIES TO ENHANCE CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS

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Received : August 19, 2025
Accepted : November 17, 2025

Revised : October 9, 2025
Published : December 31, 2025

How to Cite (in APA Style) :

Purnomo, B. (2025). Using Western movies to enhance cross-cultural understanding among English literature students. *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature*, 17(2), 270–286.
<https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v17i2.7073>

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Abstract: This study investigates how Western movies facilitate students' cross-cultural understanding in a Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course within an English Literature program in Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected over four instructional weeks through classroom observations, audio-video recordings of role-plays, and reflective journals. The findings show a clear progression in students' intercultural learning. Initially, students experienced cultural dissonance when encountering unfamiliar pragmatic features such as direct refusals, sarcasm, and informal teacher-student interaction. With guided scaffolding, they began to reinterpret these behaviours and develop emerging cultural awareness. By the third week, students engaged in comparative reasoning between Western and Indonesian/Javanese norms, which later evolved into perspective-taking in the final week. Reflective journals reveal increased confidence, pragmatic sensitivity, and deeper cultural insight. Overall, the study concludes that Western movies are effective multimodal input for intercultural learning, but their pedagogical value is maximized when paired with structured discussions and reflective tasks.

Keywords: *cross-cultural understanding, English literature students, intercultural competence, qualitative study, Western movies*

INTRODUCTION

English-language movies are widely recognized as rich cultural artifacts that can mediate learners' exposure to authentic language use and intercultural meanings. As Kramsch (1993) argues, cultural input is inseparable from language learning, and audiovisual media represent one of the most effective channels for presenting language in real social action. Movies integrate visual, auditory, and narrative modes that situate linguistic expressions within their cultural, pragmatic, and affective contexts, enabling

learners to observe speech acts, politeness strategies, and non-verbal cues simultaneously. Such naturally embedded input aligns closely with Krashen's (1985) concept of comprehensible input, which emphasizes meaningful exposure as a driver of deep language processing.

A substantial body of contemporary research has reaffirmed the pedagogical value of movies in developing intercultural competence. Fuat et al. (2025) demonstrated that regular engagement with English-language films significantly enhances students' sensitivity to cultural norms, idiomaticity, and contextual interpretation. More recent empirical studies have shown similar trends. Long and Lin (2022) found that film-mediated tasks fostered students' ability to compare cultural perspectives critically. Permatasari (2023) showed that movie-based discussions promoted empathy and reduced stereotyping. Zayyana et al. (2024) reported that film-integrated instruction stimulated learners' metacognitive awareness of cultural narratives and ideological framing. These findings align with Ahmed (2024) and Pegrum (2022), both of whom emphasize that multimodal digital input, films included, can expand learners' cultural horizons while cultivating reflective and ethical engagement with difference.

Meanwhile, theoretical frameworks on intercultural competence further strengthen the relevance of movie-based learning. Byram (1997) conceptualizes intercultural competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable learners to interpret cultural meanings critically. Byram and Wagner (2018) extend this view by highlighting the role of mediated encounters, such as films, as legitimate intercultural experiences. Deardorff's (2006) widely used model also underscores attitudinal openness, curiosity, and reflection as core components of intercultural development, while Dervin (2021) critiques static, essentialist notions of culture and calls for dynamic, fluid, and context-sensitive intercultural engagement. Taken together, these frameworks position movies as powerful instruments for fostering interpretive skills, empathy, cultural decentring, and critical reflection.

Despite this strong theoretical and empirical foundation, research on movie-based intercultural pedagogy remains limited in the Indonesian higher-education context, especially within English Literature programs. Most existing studies focus on EFL students, emphasizing vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, or general cultural exposure (Akbari & Razavi, 2019; Alasmari, 2020). However, English

Literature students engage with narratives through deeper analytical lenses, examining themes, characterization, ideologies, and cultural representations, which positions them uniquely for benefiting from film-based intercultural learning. Yet, their engagement with Western movies has rarely been examined systematically in relation to the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course.

This gap is particularly salient at Universitas Surakarta, where English Literature students already have extensive informal exposure to Western media through streaming platforms, social networks, and digital culture. Such prior exposure provides a foundation that instructors can leverage pedagogically. When integrated with CCU activities, such as guided discussions, reflective journals, and comparative cultural analysis, movies can sharpen students' cultural sensitivity (Ruthner & Stoian, 2025), enhance interpretive and analytical depth (Alka et al., 2024), and promote nuanced understanding of both foreign and local values (Kartikasari et al., 2024). Recent studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia (Syarif et al., 2023; Wardhany, 2022; Ortega, 2020) also indicate that multimodal input can significantly contribute to students' intercultural awareness when embedded in reflective and dialogic learning environments.

Given these developments, research is needed to understand how Western movies can be systematically integrated into CCU instruction to cultivate intercultural competence among English Literature students. This study addresses “How can Western movies enhance cross-cultural understanding among English Literature students enrolled in the CCU course at Universitas Surakarta?”

Framing the inquiry through *how* aligns with the qualitative design of the study, which seeks to explore interpretive processes, reflective meaning-making, and developmental trajectories rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively. The study aims to fill a critical research gap, contextualize intercultural pedagogy in Indonesian higher education, and offer practical and theoretical contributions for designing CCU curricula that effectively incorporate authentic audiovisual materials.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Movies as Authentic Multimodal Materials in Language and Cultural Learning

Authentic materials provide learners with exposure to language as it is naturally used, embedded within social and cultural contexts. Among these materials, movies are

particularly powerful because they combine linguistic input with multimodal cues (e.g. visual, auditory, paralinguistic, and contextual elements) that support meaning-making (Kramsch, 1993). From the perspective of cultural pedagogy, movies function as symbolic cultural texts that present values, beliefs, and social practices in ways that static materials cannot. Their capacity to blend comprehensible input with contextual richness aligns closely with Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes meaningful exposure as the foundation of acquisition.

Recent empirical studies affirm the relevance of movies as pedagogical tools in both language and intercultural education. Wardhani (2022) found that English-language films significantly increased students' engagement and listening comprehension through contextualized exposure. Similarly, Alka et al. (2024) demonstrated that film-based activities enhanced students' analytical and interpretive skills by enabling them to observe pragmatic cues, politeness strategies, and social dynamics. Beyond linguistic outcomes, movies foster affective engagement and intrinsic motivation (Alasmari, 2020), making them effective resources for promoting holistic learning in higher education. In Indonesian CCU classrooms, these multimodal affordances create meaningful opportunities for students to explore cultural contrasts and develop reflective awareness of sociocultural norms.

Movie-Based Learning and Intercultural Competence Development

Intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds) is a crucial goal in language and literature education. Foundational frameworks by Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006), and Byram and Wagner (2018) emphasize interpretive skills, openness, curiosity, cultural awareness, and critical reflection as core components. Dervin (2021) expands this perspective by challenging essentialist views of culture and highlighting the dynamic, fluid nature of intercultural encounters, an approach directly relevant to movie-based analysis, where learners engage with complex and evolving representations of culture.

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that films can facilitate the development of these competencies. Fuat et al. (2025) reported that regular exposure to English-language movies improved learners' sensitivity to cultural norms, indirect meanings, and idiomatic expressions. Long and Lin (2022) found that film-mediated tasks encouraged comparative reasoning and cultural decentering, enabling students to

adopt multiple perspectives. Research conducted in Indonesia and the broader Asian region supports the following findings. Permatasari (2023) showed that movie-based reflections enhance empathy and reduce stereotyping, while Syarif et al. (2023) revealed that films provide a conducive platform for discussing cultural values and fostering critical awareness. Furthermore, Zayyana et al. (2024) demonstrated that film-integrated learning promotes deeper engagement with cultural narratives and stimulates students' critical evaluation of societal norms and ideologies. Collectively, these contemporary studies affirm that movies are not merely linguistic resources but also catalysts for intercultural competence, supporting both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Movie-Based Pedagogy in Higher Education and English Literature Contexts

Within higher education, films serve as versatile instructional tools that combine cognitive stimulus, emotional engagement, and opportunities for critical interpretation. Recent literature highlights that movie-based pedagogy can deepen conceptual understanding and improve academic reasoning (Ahmed, 2024; Pegrum, 2022). In English Literature programs specifically, movies function at the intersection of narrative studies and cultural analysis. They allow students to explore plot structures, characterization, themes, and ideological messages while simultaneously reflecting on cultural representations (Khalili & Mohammadi, 2023).

Indonesian research, though still limited, offers valuable insights into the potential of films for CCU instruction. Kartikasari et al. (2024) demonstrated that integrating Western films into CCU classrooms encouraged students to compare cultural values critically and engage in reflective discussions. Alka et al. (2024) found that film-based assignments strengthened students' analytical and interpretive capacities, particularly in connecting scenes with broader cultural frameworks. However, systematic approaches for incorporating movies into literature-based intercultural instruction remain underexplored. A systematic review published in 2023 further highlighted gaps in movie-based pedagogy within Southeast Asian higher education, noting the need for structured frameworks capable of guiding reflective, dialogic, and culturally responsive classroom practices.

Gaps in Previous Studies and Theoretical Implications

Despite growing evidence, several gaps in the literature persist. First, most studies on film-mediated intercultural learning have been conducted in EFL or general education contexts rather than in English Literature programs, where the interpretive demands are deeper and more nuanced. Second, limited research has examined how habitual exposure to Western movies, common among Indonesian students, interacts with structured CCU instruction in shaping intercultural awareness. Third, while international studies emphasize the benefits of films for developing empathy and cultural understanding, few have focused specifically on Indonesian higher education settings.

Addressing these gaps has important implications. Theoretically, it contributes to discussions on how multimodal cultural texts mediate intercultural meaning-making, supporting Dervin's (2021) call for non-essentialist, dynamic approaches to cultural learning. Pedagogically, it provides evidence-based strategies for designing CCU curricula that integrate movies with reflective, dialogic, and analytical tasks aligned with Byram's (1997) and Deardorff's (2006) frameworks. By situating this study within these theoretical and empirical contexts, the literature review establishes a clear need for examining how Western movies can be used to enhance cross-cultural understanding among English Literature students in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how Western movies can be integrated into the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course to enhance students' intercultural competence in an English Literature context. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it provides a detailed account of naturally occurring classroom practices and captures students' authentic responses to pedagogical interventions. This design is particularly suitable for research that aims to understand how specific instructional materials (Western films) shape learners' perceptions, reflections, and intercultural meaning-making. The study focused on interpreting participants' observable behaviors, verbal interactions, and written reflections rather than measuring predetermined variables. The qualitative descriptive method also offered flexibility in analyzing multimodal data, including classroom

observations, audio-video recordings, and reflective journals, which are especially relevant to intercultural learning dynamics in CCU pedagogy.

The research was carried out over a three-month period from February to April 2025 at the Department of English Literature, Universitas Surakarta, Indonesia. This institution was purposefully chosen because its curriculum includes the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course, which emphasizes intercultural communication, cultural values, and global cultural literacy as core learning outcomes. The academic setting provided a rich context for examining how Western movies could be integrated into the course to support students' understanding of cultural differences, communication styles, and cross-cultural interaction patterns.

The participants in this study were 32 fourth-semester undergraduate students enrolled in the CCU course. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that the selected participants met key criteria relevant to intercultural learning through film. All participants had completed prerequisite courses in culture, communication, linguistics, and introductory literature, possessed sufficient English proficiency to comprehend film dialogues and engage in discussions, and had prior exposure to Western media. Although they shared a relatively similar academic background, they varied in preferred film genres, cultural knowledge, and prior intercultural experiences. Such diversity enriched the data and strengthened the credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent, their anonymity was preserved through coded identifiers, and all recordings were used exclusively for research purposes.

Research Procedures

The research unfolded through four interconnected stages: preparation, implementation, data collection, and data analysis. In the preparation stage, the researchers selected Western movies and curated excerpts that aligned with key CCU themes, including cultural diversity, stereotypes, politeness strategies, power distance, collectivism–individualism, and intercultural miscommunication. Movie selection was guided by relevance to CCU topics, clarity of the cultural encounters depicted, and accessibility for undergraduate learners. Supporting materials such as lesson plans, discussion prompts, and reflective journal guidelines were also developed during this phase. During the implementation stage, students participated in a sequence of activities

that centered on film excerpts. They watched selected scenes, engaged in guided discussions to identify cultural values and communication styles, performed role-playing tasks based on cross-cultural interaction scenarios, and completed reflective writing assignments to articulate their interpretations and evolving awareness of intercultural concepts. These activities were designed to stimulate analytical reasoning and encourage students to connect film-based input with theoretical ideas from the CCU course.

Data collection took place following each instructional cycle and involved multiple sources to ensure triangulation. Observation notes documented students' engagement and interaction patterns during classroom activities. Audio-video recordings captured students' spoken exchanges during discussions, debates, and role-plays, providing an accurate representation of their communicative strategies. Reflective journals, written weekly, offered insights into students' personal responses, emotional engagement, and self-reported learning processes. Together, these sources contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the students' learning experiences.

Data analysis employed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) three-step qualitative analysis framework. In the data condensation stage, transcripts, journal entries, and observation notes were reviewed and coded to identify recurring themes related to cultural awareness, stereotype recognition, communication strategies, and reflective thinking. The data display stage involved organizing coded information into thematic matrices and visual charts, allowing for comparisons across participants and activities. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were carried out by interpreting emerging patterns in relation to research objectives and relevant theoretical frameworks, with interpretations cross-checked against raw data to ensure accuracy.

In addition, several strategies were implemented to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of this research. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, recordings, and reflective journals to validate emerging findings. Member checking was employed by inviting participants to review selected interpretations, ensuring that their perspectives were accurately represented. Peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with another CCU lecturer, particularly regarding coding decisions and thematic interpretations. The study also incorporated thick description by providing detailed accounts of classroom activities, learning contexts, and interactional

nuances, enabling readers to understand the complexity of the instructional setting. Collectively, these strategies strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings draw from three triangulated instruments: (1) classroom observations, (2) audio-video recordings of role-plays and storytelling, and (3) students' reflective journals, collected over a four-week instructional cycle. Following the reviewer's recommendation, this section presents a systematic, week-by-week elaboration, demonstrating how the three data sources converge to portray students' progressive development of intercultural competence through Western movie-based instruction.

Week 1 - Initial Encounters with Cultural Dissonance

Observational data: Classroom observations revealed that students initially struggled to interpret pragmatic nuances in Western movie scenes. Many perceived direct refusals as impolite or emotionally charged, reflecting Javanese-Indonesian norms that prioritize indirectness and face maintenance. Students whispered to peers, hesitated to speak, and occasionally avoided answering altogether, indicators of early cultural disorientation.

Audio-video recordings: Recordings showed similar hesitation during initial role-play warm-ups. Students' voices were subdued, and turn-taking was minimal. Most relied heavily on literal interpretations of the scenes.

Reflective journals: Early reflections expressed confusion such as "*Saya kira mereka marah karena terlalu direct*" (I think they were angry because it was too direct). Students evaluated Western behavior through their own cultural lenses, demonstrating an ethnocentric starting point.

Synthesis: Week 1 functioned as a cultural orientation stage, where students encountered unfamiliar pragmatic norms but lacked interpretive frameworks to make sense of them.

Week 2 - Emerging Awareness Supported by Structured Scaffolding

Observational data: With guided questions on individualism-collectivism, politeness strategies, and power distance, students began actively seeking clarification. Discussions became more dynamic, and learners initiated questions such as "*Apakah ini*

direct tapi tetap sopan dalam konteks mereka?” (Is this direct but still polite in their context?)

Audio-video recordings: Recordings showed noticeable improvement in turn-taking and interpretive attempts. Although still tentative, students produced more confident explanations of characters’ intentions.

Reflective journals: Reflections revealed shifts in perception: “*Direct itu bukan kasar, tapi ekspresi kejujuran dalam budaya mereka.*” (Direct is not rude, but an expression of honesty in their culture.) Students began recognizing the context-dependence of politeness and the cultural relativity of communicative norms.

Synthesis: Through scaffolding, Week 2 marks the transition from confusion to emerging interpretive awareness, aligning with the inquiry–reflection phase in Deardorff’s (2006) model of ICC.

Week 3 - Comparative Cultural Reasoning and Pragmatic Adaptation

Observational data: Students engaged in richer discussions on gender roles, classroom norms, interpersonal distance, and humor. A scene showing students calling teachers by their first name triggered debate on egalitarianism versus hierarchical relations.

Audio-video recordings: Role-plays reflected growing intercultural reasoning. Students adapted Western directness to Indonesian politeness norms, replacing direct refusals with mitigated expressions. English productions showed increased use of politeness markers (e.g. ‘please’, ‘excuse me’, ‘thank you’) indicating pragmatic uptake.

Reflective journals: Students articulated contextualized interpretations: “*Memanggil guru dengan nama bukan berarti tidak sopan, tapi hubungan yang setara.*” (Calling a teacher by name is not impolite, but rather an equal relationship.) Such entries show the ability to re-evaluate cultural assumptions and understand behaviours within their own cultural frames.

Synthesis: Week 3 signifies a shift toward comparative cultural reasoning, demonstrating the initial development of critical cultural awareness as conceptualized by Byram (1997).

Week 4: Perspective-Taking and Critical Cultural Evaluation

Observational data: Discussions became more analytical and student-led. Students evaluated communicative events based on the target culture’s internal logic rather than

personal norms. For example, assertive refusals were reinterpreted as clarity and autonomy.

Audio-video recordings: Students delivered extended role-plays with greater fluency, contextual justification, and self-initiated explanations about cultural differences. Their pragmatic choices were more intentional and culturally grounded.

Reflective journals: Reflections showed a movement toward perspective-taking: “*Saya belajar melihat dari perspektif mereka, bukan hanya perspektif saya sendiri.*” (I learned to see from their perspective, not just my own.)

Synthesis: Week 4 represents a higher-order phase of ICC: decentering, perspective-taking, and culturally informed judgment, hallmarks of advanced intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Cross-Week Journal Patterns: Internalization of Cultural Learning

Across 32 students, 82% reported increased confidence in interpreting cultural practices. Recurring themes included humor recognition, idiomatic expressions, gender equality, informal forms of address, and speech-act variation. Students repeatedly described “aha moments,” especially when rewatching scenes with deeper interpretive insight. They credited collaborative discussion for helping refine understanding. This consistency indicates internalized intercultural learning, not merely episodic insights.

Table 1. Emerging Themes in Students’ Cross-Cultural Understanding through Western Movies

No. Theme	Example from Student Reflection	Function in Learning Process
1 Individualism vs. Collectivism	“In American movies, people speak directly. In Javanese culture, we are more indirect.”	Helps students compare pragmatic norms across cultures
2 Gender Representation	“Women in the movies are more independent, unlike traditional roles in our context.”	Encourages critical cultural reflection
3 Politeness and Speech Acts	“I learned that saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ is more frequent in English.”	Enhances pragmatic competence in ESP
4 Informal Communication Styles	“They call their teachers by name, which is unusual in Indonesia.”	Stimulates discussion on intercultural appropriateness
5 Humor and Idioms	“At first I didn’t understand jokes, but later I could guess from context.”	Improves linguistic inference and cultural sensitivity

The triangulated data reveal a clear developmental trajectory across the four-week intervention. In Week 1, students experienced confusion and cultural dissonance as they were first exposed to unfamiliar cultural cues in Western movies. By Week 2, guided awareness and interpretive awakening began to emerge as students received structured scaffolding and engaged in focused discussions. In Week 3, their learning

progressed toward comparative reasoning and pragmatic adaptation, indicating that they were increasingly able to relate foreign cultural practices to their own experiences. By Week 4, students demonstrated more advanced skills, such as perspective-taking, cultural empathy, and critical evaluation.

Although the movies functioned as authentic multimodal input, their instructional effectiveness relied heavily on supportive pedagogical strategies, including reflective tasks and dialogic engagement. Over time, students showed notable growth in several areas: they became more culturally sensitive, developed stronger pragmatic awareness, gained an enhanced ability to decode meaning from contextual cues, and engaged in deeper reflection on Indonesian cultural norms through comparative analysis. Overall, the findings indicate that Western movies, when integrated into a well-scaffolded learning environment, serve as powerful tools for cultivating intercultural competence in the CCU classroom.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Western movies function as highly effective authentic materials for facilitating intercultural competence development in Indonesian higher education. Students reported gains not only in linguistic comprehension but also in their ability to interpret pragmatic cues, politeness strategies, nonverbal behavior, and culturally loaded meanings. Many were able to identify implicatures, humor, sarcasm, and context-specific communicative intentions, features that are rarely accessible through textbook-based instruction alone. These outcomes are consistent with Kramsch's (1993) view that cultural texts provide symbolic access to the values and communicative norms of a community, and they reaffirm Krashen's (1985) argument that rich, comprehensible input can enhance learning when learners encounter language in meaningful, low-anxiety contexts.

A key contribution of this study lies in students' enhanced interpretive and reflective abilities. Students were able to compare Western values, such as directness, egalitarianism, and individualism, with Indonesian and Javanese norms of politeness, hierarchy, and social harmony. Their responses align with Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, particularly in the dimensions of attitudes, knowledge, and critical cultural awareness. Students' reflections also resonate with Deardorff's (2006) process-oriented framework, as they demonstrated the ability to

move from observation to reflection and interpretation. This pattern mirrors Dervin's (2021) contemporary critique of intercultural learning as a dynamic, self-reflexive process that involves questioning assumptions about both self and other.

Students' increased engagement and motivation further reinforce the pedagogical value of movie-based learning. Previous research has shown that films can heighten emotional involvement and stimulate learner participation (Wardhani, 2022; Ruthner & Stoian, 2025). In this study, students frequently expressed that following characters, plots, and audiovisual cues made the learning experience more immersive and relatable. These findings echo recent evidence from Telcik and Nushi (2023), who argue that multimodal input enhances learners' ability to derive pragmatic meaning from real-world communicative events. The multimodal features of film enabled learners to process linguistic and cultural information holistically, supporting meaning-making in ways that align with contemporary understandings of embodied and multimodal learning.

However, the findings also show that exposure alone is insufficient for building deep intercultural competence. Without structured scaffolding, learners may misinterpret cultural behaviours or reinforce stereotypes (i.e. an issue widely documented in recent intercultural media studies) (Long & Lin, 2022; Telcik & Nushi, 2023). In this study, guided worksheets, reflective tasks, and post-viewing discussions proved essential in helping students interpret cultural subtleties more accurately. These features support Ortega's (2020) claim that interaction and mediation play central roles in converting input into intercultural learning outcomes. Recent Indonesian studies, such as Permatasari (2023), Kartikasari et al. (2024), and Alka et al. (2024), likewise emphasize that structured mediation is crucial when integrating films into CCU and literature courses.

An important insight from this research is that increased exposure to Western cultural values did not diminish students' appreciation for their own cultural identity. Instead, students developed stronger awareness of Indonesian and Javanese norms through comparative reflection. This aligns with Alasmari (2020) and Dervin (2021), who argue that intercultural development requires learners to reflect critically on their own cultural frames while encountering others. In this sense, Western movies acted not as cultural replacements but as reflective mirrors through which students reassessed

concepts of politeness, collectivism, and social harmony embedded in their own cultural experiences.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the study offers valuable implications for English Literature, CCU, ESP, and tourism-focused programs. Authentic media such as movies expose students to diverse pragmatic norms and communicative styles relevant to real-world intercultural encounters, an essential skill for graduates who will engage with international visitors or global cultural content. These findings are consistent with Akbari and Razavi (2019), Ahmed (2024), and Syarif et al. (2023), all of whom highlight that authentic cultural resources strengthen learners' readiness for intercultural communication in professional and academic settings.

Overall, the effectiveness of movie-based pedagogy depends not merely on the medium itself but on the instructional design that surrounds its use. When movies are integrated with reflective prompts, comparative cultural analysis, and dialogic discussion, they provide powerful multimodal learning environments that support both linguistic development and intercultural competence. Anchored in the theoretical foundations of Byram (1997), Byram and Wagner (2018), Deardorff (2006), Dervin (2021), Kramsch (1993), and Krashen (1985), this study contributes contemporary empirical evidence that Western movies can play a transformative role in promoting intercultural awareness, interpretive skills, and critical cultural reflection in Indonesian higher education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of Western movies as authentic materials for enhancing students' cross-cultural understanding in the CCU course at Universitas Surakarta. The findings demonstrate that movie-based instruction significantly improved students' intercultural competence by enhancing their ability to interpret cultural values, decode pragmatic norms, and compare Western and Indonesian communication patterns. Students showed clearer understanding of contrasts such as individualism vs. collectivism, directness vs. indirectness, politeness strategies, nonverbal behavior, humor, idiomatic expressions, and gender representations.

Crucially, these improvements occurred not simply because students watched movies but because they engaged in guided reflection, structured discussions, and comparative cultural analysis. This aligns with key principles of intercultural communicative competence proposed by Byram (1997), Sercu (2005), and Deardorff (2006), which highlight the need for critical cultural awareness, attitudes of openness, and reflective intercultural practice. Students demonstrated these competencies through classroom discourse, performance tasks, and reflective journals.

Collectively, the study underscores three major implications. First, Western movies provide culturally rich communicative models that textbooks alone cannot offer. Second, intercultural learning is strengthened when learners critically compare target-culture representations with their own cultural frameworks, fostering reflexive awareness. Third, movie-based pedagogy prepares students more effectively for real-life cross-cultural interactions in academic, social, and professional settings. Thus, this study confirms that carefully curated and pedagogically scaffolded movie-based instruction can substantially support the goals of CCU and ESP education in Indonesian universities.

Suggestions

Future ESP and CCU instruction should continue integrating authentic audio-visual materials, particularly Western movies, to provide rich cultural input and stimulate students' critical engagement. Teachers are encouraged to select films that balance linguistic accessibility with cultural depth and align with course objectives. To further enhance learning, movie-based activities can be complemented with other multimodal resources such as documentaries, digital storytelling, intercultural simulations, or online interaction with international partners. These tools can broaden cultural exposure and provide additional opportunities for students to practice intercultural communication skills in meaningful contexts.

Future research could explore long-term impacts of film-based pedagogy, compare its effectiveness across different cultural film sources, or investigate its integration with digital platforms and AI-supported reflective tools. Such research would contribute to advancing intercultural competence frameworks, supporting the work of Byram & Wagner (2018), Liddicoat & Scarino (2013), and Deardorff (2006), and strengthening the pedagogical foundations of intercultural education in Indonesia.

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