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Intercultural Competence in German Language Learning As a Foreign Language

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Abstract: This study examines intercultural competence in learning German as a foreign language through a systematic literature review approach. Intercultural competence is a multidimensional ability that includes knowledge of the target culture, awareness of cultural differences, openness and empathy, and skills to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts. The literature review shows that German language learning cannot be separated from the cultural dimension, so the integration of intercultural competence is a necessity in the learning curriculum. This study identifies three main dimensions of intercultural competence: cognitive, affective, and behavioral, which require active and experiential teaching strategies such as critical incident analysis, intercultural simulations, and ethnographic projects. Teachers play a central role as facilitators who create a learning environment that supports intercultural exploration and develops learners' critical awareness. The implementation of intercultural competence teaching in Indonesia faces challenges such as limited direct exposure to the target culture, significant cultural differences, and institutional constraints. Assessment of intercultural competence requires a holistic and qualitative approach through reflective portfolios, behavioral observations, and ongoing formative assessment. This research provides important implications for the development of a German language curriculum that explicitly integrates intercultural competence to produce learners who are linguistically competent and able to function as effective intercultural mediators in a global context.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, German Language Learning, Cross-Cultural Communication

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has fundamentally changed the landscape of foreign language education, creating an urgent need for a deeper understanding of how language and culture are intertwined in the learning process. Learning German as a foreign language in Indonesia no longer focuses solely on mastering grammatical structures and vocabulary, but must also encompass an intercultural dimension that enables learners to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts. Intercultural competence is a crucial element determining successful communication in an era where interaction with native German speakers is increasingly intense, whether through student exchange programs, academic collaborations, or professional opportunities in

German-speaking countries. Learning German in Indonesia faces unique challenges due to the significant geographic distance and cultural differences between Indonesia and German-speaking countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Learners are not only confronted with a language system that is structurally different from Indonesian, but also with different cultural values, social norms, and ways of thinking. This intercultural gap often becomes an unnoticed barrier in the learning process, where learners may have mastered the linguistic aspects but fail to understand the cultural nuances that underlie language use in certain contexts. Therefore, the integration of intercultural competence in the German language curriculum is a non-negotiable necessity (Language & Yogyakarta, 2025).

Intercultural competence in the context of foreign language learning refers to an individual's ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. This ability encompasses knowledge of the target culture, awareness of cultural differences, openness and empathy toward other cultures, and the ability to adapt communicative behavior in intercultural situations. In German language learning, this competence involves not only an understanding of German traditions, history, and social characteristics, but also the ability to reflect on one's own culture and identify how cultural differences can influence language interpretation and production. Developing intercultural competence requires a systematic and sustainable pedagogical approach. Previous studies have shown that language teaching that neglects intercultural aspects tends to produce learners who are linguistically competent but less able to navigate complex cross-cultural communication situations. This phenomenon is known as the gap between linguistic competence and intercultural communicative competence. In the Indonesian context, where German language learning largely takes place in formal instructional environments with limited exposure to the target culture, the role of teachers and teaching materials becomes crucial in facilitating the development of intercultural competence. However, there is still a gap between the theoretical understanding of the importance of intercultural competence and its practical implementation in German language classes in Indonesia (Ekasani et al., 2025).

German language curricula across educational institutions in Indonesia exhibit considerable variation in their emphasis on intercultural aspects. Some programs explicitly integrate cultural components, while others prioritize the achievement of linguistic competence, treating culture as an additional or complementary element. This heterogeneity reflects the need for a more in-depth study of how intercultural competence is understood, taught, and assessed in the context of German language learning in Indonesia. Furthermore, technological developments and access to digital resources have opened up new opportunities for more authentic and interactive intercultural teaching, yet these opportunities are still not being optimally utilized in many institutions. Another challenge facing the development of intercultural competence is its complex and multidimensional nature, which makes its assessment and measurement challenging. Unlike linguistic competence, which can be measured through standardized language proficiency tests, intercultural competence involves more subjective and contextual aspects of attitude, awareness, and skills. This raises questions about the most appropriate methods and instruments for measuring the development of German language learners' intercultural competence, and how constructive feedback can be provided to support its continued development (Simamora et al., 2023).

The need for teachers with adequate intercultural competence is also a crucial issue in this context. German language teachers are not only required to master the target language and possess knowledge of German culture, but also to possess intercultural sensitivity and the ability to facilitate learning experiences that foster the development of intercultural competence in learners. However, not all German language teachers in Indonesia have direct experience living or studying in German-speaking countries, which can affect the depth of their understanding of subtle yet significant intercultural aspects. Considering the various challenges

and opportunities that exist, research on intercultural competence in teaching German as a foreign language in Indonesia is highly relevant and urgent. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching practices, which not only produce learners who are linguistically proficient in German but also possess the sensitivity and ability to communicate and interact meaningfully in intercultural contexts. Through a more comprehensive understanding of how intercultural competence can be developed in German language learning, it is hoped that the quality of foreign language education in Indonesia can continue to improve to meet the demands of the global era (Syahputra, 2025).

Based on the background outlined above, this research focuses on several key issues. First, how intercultural competence is understood and integrated into German as a foreign language learning in Indonesia. Second, what teaching methods and strategies are effective in developing intercultural competence in German language learners.

Furthermore, this study explores the challenges faced by teachers and learners in developing intercultural competence, as well as how intercultural competence can be assessed comprehensively and objectively. These questions form the basis for an in-depth study of the relationship between language learning and the development of intercultural competence in the context of German language education in Indonesia.

This study aims to identify and analyze effective German language teaching practices in developing learners' intercultural competence. Furthermore, it aims to formulate pedagogical recommendations that German language teachers can apply in designing and implementing learning oriented toward developing intercultural competence.

Through a comprehensive study of German language teaching theory and practice with an intercultural focus, this research is expected to contribute to improving the quality of German language learning in Indonesia. The ultimate goal is to produce research outcomes that can serve as a reference for developing a more holistic German language curriculum and teaching methods that are relevant to the needs of learners in the global era.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in the field of foreign language teaching, particularly regarding the development of intercultural competence. The findings can serve as a reference for further research examining intercultural aspects in foreign language learning in different contexts and target languages.

Practically, this research provides benefits to various parties involved in German language education in Indonesia. For teachers, it provides concrete guidelines and strategies for integrating intercultural dimensions into daily teaching practices. For learners, the results can help them understand the importance of intercultural competence and how to actively develop it. For educational institutions, this research can serve as a basis for developing policies and curricula that are more responsive to the needs of comprehensive foreign language learning and oriented toward the development of intercultural competence.

Literature Review

Concept of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is a multidimensional capability encompassing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This concept refers not only to an understanding of specific cultural practices but also to the ability to reflect on one's own culture, identify the cultural assumptions underlying communicative behavior, and develop flexibility in adapting communication styles to the intercultural context. Intercultural competence involves an awareness that meaning is not inherent in words or actions but is constructed through the lens of different cultures, so that the same interpretation of a single communicative event can vary significantly depending on the cultural backgrounds of the participants. Over time, the concept of intercultural competence has been expanded to encompass interacting affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions.

The affective dimension encompasses openness, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and appreciation for cultural diversity. The cognitive dimension refers to knowledge of the value systems, social norms, communication patterns, and worldviews of diverse cultures, including an understanding of how history, geography, and social structures shape cultural practices. The behavioral dimension involves the ability to apply intercultural knowledge and attitudes in real interactions, including verbal and nonverbal communication skills appropriate to the cultural context, the ability to manage intercultural conflict, and the capacity to negotiate meaning in situations where cultural differences are significant (Zaka, 2020).

Foreign Language Learning and Cultural Dimensions

Foreign language learning is fundamentally inseparable from cultural learning because language is a symbolic system that reflects and shapes the ways of thinking, values, and social practices of a cultural community. Traditional approaches to foreign language teaching often treat culture as an adjunct or complement to linguistic competence, where cultural aspects are introduced through factual information about the target country, such as geography, history, or specific traditions. However, contemporary approaches recognize that culture is not simply content added to the language curriculum but rather an integral dimension that must be integrated into every aspect of language learning, from the selection of teaching materials to the design of communicative activities and assessment strategies. Perspectives that place culture at the heart of foreign language learning emphasize the importance of developing pragmatic and sociolinguistic awareness in learners. Pragmatic awareness refers to an understanding of how social context influences language use, including the choice of register, level of formality, politeness strategies, and conversational conventions that vary across cultures. German learners, for example, need to understand how formal and informal greeting systems work in German, when to use Sie or du, and how factors such as age, social status, and situational context influence these choices. Without a deep understanding of the cultural dimensions of language use, learners risk miscommunication or even giving an undesirable impression even if the grammatical structures they use are correct (Afra et al., 2023).

Pedagogical Approaches in Developing Intercultural Competence

Developing intercultural competence in language learning requires a pedagogical approach that goes beyond the transmission of factual knowledge about the target culture. An effective approach emphasizes experiential and reflective learning, in which learners not only receive information about German culture but also actively engage in the process of discovery, analysis, and critical reflection on cultural phenomena. Strategies such as intercultural critical incident analysis, simulations of cross-cultural communicative situations, and ethnographic projects enable learners to develop the observation, interpretation, and evaluation skills that are central to intercultural competence. This approach also encourages learners to become active and critical cultural researchers, rather than simply passive consumers of cultural information. The use of authentic materials and digital technologies opens up new opportunities for creating deeper and more meaningful intercultural learning experiences. Films, advertisements, news articles, podcasts, and social media from German-speaking countries provide a window into contemporary cultural practices and allow learners to observe how language is used in real-life contexts. Digital platforms also facilitate virtual intercultural exchanges with native German speakers through collaborative projects, language tandems, or online discussion forums, providing learners with opportunities to test and develop their intercultural competence in authentic interactions. However, the use of these resources requires careful pedagogical mediation by teachers to ensure that learners are not only exposed to cultural content but also develop the ability to analyze and reflect critically on it (Vocabulary, 2022).

Challenges in Teaching Intercultural Competence

One of the main challenges in teaching intercultural competence is overcoming the tendency to simplify or generalize cultures in ways that can lead to stereotyping. When German culture is presented as a homogeneous and static entity with characteristics that can be easily categorized and memorized, learners risk developing superficial and even biased understandings. In reality, culture is a dynamic, diverse, and contextual phenomenon, where internal variations based on factors such as geographic region, social class, generation, and individual identity can be as significant as intercultural differences. Teaching learners to recognize the complexity and diversity within the target culture and avoid cultural essentialism requires a nuanced and reflective pedagogical approach. Another challenge often encountered is the limited direct exposure to the target culture in the context of foreign language learning in Indonesia. Without the opportunity to experience German culture directly through visits or interactions with native speakers, learners rely heavily on cultural representations mediated through textbooks, teaching materials, and teacher explanations. This can result in a theoretical and decontextualized understanding of culture, which may not easily translate into practical competence in real-life intercultural situations. In addition, teachers' own cultural backgrounds can influence how they understand and teach German culture, especially if they do not have experience living or studying in German-speaking countries, which can limit the depth and authenticity of the intercultural teaching they provide (Hardika et al., 2025).

Intercultural Competence Assessment

Assessing intercultural competence presents its own complexities due to its multidimensional nature and encompassing aspects that are not easily measured through conventional tests. Unlike linguistic competence, which can be evaluated through written or oral tests that measure mastery of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and communicative skills, intercultural competence involves dimensions of attitude, awareness, and interpersonal skills, requiring a more holistic and qualitative assessment approach. Assessment methods such as reflective portfolios, behavioral observations in intercultural simulations, critical incident analysis, and self-assessment can provide a more comprehensive picture of the development of a learner's intercultural competence compared to standardized tests that focus on factual knowledge of culture. Developing clear and measurable assessment criteria for intercultural competence is also a challenge that requires serious attention. Indicators of intercultural competence need to be defined in a way that allows for identification of the learner's development from the beginner level, which may still be highly ethnocentric and tend to judge other cultures based on their own cultural standards, to the advanced level, characterized by the ability to adopt a culturally relativistic perspective and function as an effective intercultural mediator. An effective assessment system must also take into account that intercultural competence develops gradually and non-linearly, with the possibility of setbacks or plateaus in the development process, so that continuous formative assessment and providing constructive feedback are more important than just summative assessment at the end of the learning period (Galingging et al., 2025).

METHOD

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method to examine intercultural competence in learning German as a foreign language. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand the concepts, theories, and practices related to intercultural competence in the context of foreign language learning, which requires interpretive analysis of various relevant literature sources. The library research method allows researchers to collect, analyze, and synthesize existing knowledge from various written sources

such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, and other academic documents to build a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study.

The qualitative literature research characteristic of this study encompasses a descriptive-analytical nature that seeks to describe and analyze in detail the concept of intercultural competence and its relevance to German language learning. This research does not aim to test hypotheses or produce statistical generalizations, but rather to explore and understand the complexity of the intercultural competence phenomenon through a systematic and critical literature review. This approach allows the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and conceptual relationships emerging from various literature sources and to develop a framework of understanding that can provide theoretical and practical contributions to the field of teaching German as a foreign language.

Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary literature related to intercultural competence and learning German as a foreign language. Primary literature includes textbooks and monographs written by leading experts in the fields of foreign language teaching, intercultural competence, and applied linguistics, as well as research articles published in international and national scientific journals that have undergone a peer-reviewed process. Secondary literature includes review articles, chapters in collective books, conference proceedings, and policy or curriculum documents relevant to the research topic. The selection of data sources was carried out by considering the criteria of quality, relevance, and the novelty of the information contained therein.

The literature search was conducted through various academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, ERIC, and electronic journal portals available through educational institution libraries. The keywords used in the literature search included a combination of terms such as intercultural competence, German language learning, foreign language, cultural teaching, intercultural communication, and other related terms in both Indonesian and English and German. The temporal limitation for the reviewed literature focused on publications from the last two decades to ensure relevance to recent developments in this field, although classic works that have had a significant influence on the development of intercultural competence theory were also included as fundamental references.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through systematic documentation and recording of information obtained from various literature sources. This process began with the identification and selection of relevant literature based on predetermined criteria, then continued with in-depth reading and recording of important points, key concepts, research findings, and theoretical arguments contained in each source. The researcher used a structured recording system to organize information based on specific themes or categories appropriate to the research focus, such as the definition and dimensions of intercultural competence, teaching strategies, implementation challenges, and assessment methods.

During the data collection process, the researcher also conducted a preliminary analysis of each literature source to assess its credibility, argument validity, and contribution to the understanding of the research topic. The information collected included not only empirical facts and findings, but also theoretical perspectives, conceptual frameworks, and academic debates relevant to intercultural competence in German language learning. The recording process was carried out meticulously, including complete references for each piece of information collected to ensure citation accuracy and facilitate retrieval of the original source if further verification or elaboration is required.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study used qualitative content analysis techniques to identify, codify, and categorize key patterns and themes emerging from the reviewed literature. The analysis process began with repeated readings of the collected data to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the literature's content. Next, the researcher coded the data by assigning labels or codes to segments of information that had particular meaning or relevance to the research questions. These codes were then grouped into broader categories based on shared themes or concepts, which then formed an analytical framework for understanding the phenomenon of intercultural competence in German language learning.

Following categorization, the researcher conducted a comparative analysis to identify similarities, differences, and relationships between concepts emerging from various literature sources. A synthesis process was conducted to integrate findings from various literature sources into a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The researcher also critically interpreted the data by considering theoretical and practical contexts, identifying gaps in the existing literature, and developing new insights that could contribute to the development of knowledge in the fields of intercultural competence and German language learning. The entire analysis process was conducted iteratively and reflectively to ensure depth and richness of interpretation of the data studied.

Data Validity

The validity of the data in this literature review research is ensured through the application of the principle of source triangulation, namely by using various types of literature from different authors, theoretical perspectives, and research contexts to validate findings and interpretations. By comparing and confirming information from multiple independent sources, researchers can increase the credibility and reliability of the analysis conducted. Furthermore, researchers also prioritize the use of literature sources that have undergone a peer-reviewed process and are published in reputable academic journals or publishers, indicating that the content has been evaluated by experts in the relevant field and meets academic quality standards.

To enhance the validity of interpretation and analysis, researchers apply the principle of reflexivity by consciously recognizing and acknowledging positions, assumptions, and biases that may influence the data interpretation process. The analysis process is carried out systematically and transparently by documenting the steps taken, the criteria used in categorization and interpretation, and the justification for the conclusions drawn. Researchers also conduct conceptual member checking by referring back to the original literature to verify the accuracy of interpretations and ensure that the representation of ideas and arguments from various authors is fair and accurate without distorting the meaning intended by the original authors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dimensions of Intercultural Competence in German Language Learning

The results of the literature review indicate that intercultural competence in German language learning encompasses three main interrelated dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension refers to knowledge and understanding of German, Austrian, and Swiss culture, including value systems, social norms, history, geography, social institutions, and communication practices prevailing in German-speaking communities. This knowledge is not only factual about visible aspects of culture such as food, festivals, and traditions, but also includes an understanding of invisible culture such as the concept of time, individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and the low-context orientation of communication in German culture. The affective dimension encompasses psychological

attitudes and dispositions such as openness to cultural differences, curiosity about other cultures, empathy for different perspectives, tolerance of ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment (Malang, 2020).

The behavioral dimension encompasses practical skills for acting effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. These skills include culturally appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication skills, the ability to adapt to different communication styles, active listening skills, the ability to manage intercultural misunderstandings, and the ability to negotiate meaning in cross-cultural interactions. In learning German, learners need to develop the ability to use appropriate politeness strategies, understand the use of nonverbal communication such as eye contact and personal distance that differ from Indonesian culture, and adapt language registers to suit the social context. These three dimensions do not develop in isolation but rather influence and reinforce each other in a continuous learning process, where cultural knowledge provides the foundation for positive attitudes, which then facilitate the development of effective behavioral skills in intercultural interactions (Nifty et al., 2024).

Cultural Integration in German Language Learning Materials

A review of the literature on German language learning materials shows that cultural integration can be achieved through a variety of approaches, ranging from informational to comparative and reflective. The most traditional informational approach presents factual information about German-speaking countries through descriptive texts, images, or videos that introduce aspects such as famous landmarks, historical figures, education systems, or culinary specialties. While this approach provides a foundational understanding of the target culture, it tends to treat culture as content separate from language learning and often results in superficial and stereotypical understandings. A more effective comparative approach encourages learners to compare aspects of German culture with their own Indonesian culture, helping them recognize that cultural practices they consider universal or natural are actually culturally specific constructions (Tarigan et al., 2025).

The most transformative reflective approach encourages learners to develop a critical awareness of cultural and identity constructions. Learning materials that adopt this approach not only present information about German culture or compare cultures, but also encourage learners to question stereotypes, recognize internal diversity within cultures, and understand how factors such as globalization, migration, and social change influence contemporary cultural practices. Authentic materials such as news articles, advertisements, films, or social media posts from German-speaking countries can be used as starting points for critical discussions on contemporary issues such as multiculturalism, European identity, or changing generational values. This approach prepares learners to become intercultural communicators who can not only function within German culture but also act as mediators between Indonesian and German cultures, with a deep understanding of the complexities and dynamics of culture. (Nurhani et al., 2021).

Teaching Strategies for Developing Intercultural Competence

The literature suggests that developing intercultural competence requires active, experiential teaching strategies rather than simply transmitting knowledge. One effective strategy is the use of intercultural critical incident analysis, in which learners are presented with scenarios or stories about situations in which misunderstandings or conflicts arise due to cultural differences. Learners are then asked to analyze the situation from multiple cultural perspectives, identify the cultural assumptions underlying the participants' behavior, and develop strategies for managing the situation more effectively. The use of simulations and role-playing that place learners in realistic intercultural communicative situations is also very beneficial, for example, simulations of job interviews in German companies, business

negotiations, or social interactions in various settings that help learners develop an awareness of how cultural norms influence communication and behavior (Sirait et al., 2023).

The use of mini-ethnography projects or cultural observation assignments is also a powerful strategy for developing intercultural competence. Learners can be tasked with observing and analyzing aspects of German culture through various media such as films, television programs, documentaries, or interactions with native speakers through digital platforms. They then produce reflective reports that not only describe what they observed but also analyze the cultural meaning of the phenomena and reflect on how these experiences influenced their understanding of German culture and their own. Collaborative projects with learners from German-speaking countries through platforms such as a tandem or virtual exchanges also provide authentic opportunities for intercultural practice. These strategies transform learners from passive consumers of cultural information into active researchers, developing the inquiry and critical reflection skills that are central to intercultural competence (Jasa et al., 2025).

The Role of Teachers in Facilitating Intercultural Learning

German language teachers play a central role as facilitators and models in the development of learners' intercultural competence. Teachers' own intercultural competence is an essential prerequisite for effective teaching, encompassing not only knowledge of German culture but also awareness of one's own culture, the ability to identify and manage cultural biases, and the skills to facilitate productive intercultural dialogue. In teaching practice, teachers have a responsibility to create a safe learning environment that supports intercultural exploration, foster a classroom climate that values diverse perspectives, encourages openness and curiosity, and manages discussions on sensitive cultural issues in a constructive manner. Teachers need to be skilled at facilitating discussions that explore cultural differences without falling into stereotypes or overgeneralizations, and be able to challenge ethnocentric views or cultural biases in a non-defensive or judgmental manner (Olivia et al., 2024).

In addition, teachers play a role as selectors and mediators of learning materials, determining which cultural representations will be introduced to learners. Teachers need to be critical in selecting materials that provide an accurate, diverse, and contemporary portrayal of German culture, avoiding materials that reinforce stereotypes or provide overly idealistic or negative representations. Teachers also need to help learners develop media literacy skills and the ability to critically analyze cultural representations. In using authentic materials, teachers play a role in mediating the content to ensure that learners are not only exposed to the language and culture but also develop a deeper understanding through leading questions, structured activities, and reflective discussions. Thus, teachers are not simply transmitters of information but active facilitators who guide learners on their journey of developing intercultural competence (Dewi & Malia, 2024).

Implementation Challenges in the Indonesian Context

The implementation of intercultural competence teaching in German language learning in Indonesia faces a number of specific challenges related to the social, cultural, and institutional context. One major challenge is limited direct exposure to German culture and native speakers. Most learners do not have the opportunity to visit German-speaking countries or interact regularly with native speakers, so their understanding of German culture relies heavily on representations mediated through text books, media, and teacher explanations. Significant cultural differences between Indonesia and German-speaking countries also create difficulties in understanding and internalizing German cultural values and practices. For example, Germany's direct and low-context communication culture differs significantly from

Indonesia's more indirect and high-context communication culture, where meaning is often communicated implicitly and the avoidance of direct conflict is valued (Filiana et al., 2025).

Institutional challenges also impact the implementation of intercultural competence instruction, including time constraints within the curriculum, pressure to achieve objectively measurable linguistic competence targets, and a lack of resources or training for teachers. In many German language programs, priority is given to developing linguistic competence because it is more easily measured and evaluated through standardized tests, while developing intercultural competence is often considered a nice-to-have but non-essential addition. Teachers may lack adequate training in intercultural teaching or feel confident facilitating discussions on complex cultural issues. Limited access to authentic and up-to-date learning materials is also a barrier, especially for institutions lacking adequate resources. Overcoming these challenges requires an institutional commitment to integrating intercultural competence as an explicit learning goal and providing the necessary support for both teachers and learners. (Girsang et al., 2025).

Assessment of Intercultural Competence in Learning

Intercultural competence assessment presents methodological complexity due to its multidimensional nature and encompasses aspects that are not easily quantified or measured through conventional tests. Effective assessment approaches for intercultural competence tend to be more holistic and qualitative, using a variety of methods and instruments to capture the complexity of the phenomena being assessed. Reflective portfolios that document a learner's intercultural learning journey, including written reflections on intercultural experiences, critical incident analyses, and evidence from intercultural projects or activities, can provide a more comprehensive picture of the development of intercultural competence. Other relevant assessment methods include behavioral observation in intercultural simulations or role-plays, where teachers can observe how learners apply their intercultural knowledge and skills in interactions, with assessment rubrics developed to assess aspects such as the ability to identify cultural differences, flexibility in adapting communication, empathy for different perspectives, and the ability to manage intercultural misunderstandings. (Learning et al., 2021).

However, intercultural competence assessment must be conducted with an awareness of the limitations and challenges inherent in this process. Intercultural competence develops gradually and non-linearly, with the possibility of setbacks or stagnation at certain periods, making ongoing formative assessment more important than summative assessment conducted only at the end of a learning period. Assessment must avoid cultural bias, where assessment criteria implicitly value the values or behaviors of one culture over another. It is important to remember that the goal of intercultural competence assessment is not to assess whether learners have become like native speakers of the target culture, but rather to assess their ability to function as intercultural mediators who can navigate effectively between their own and the target culture. With a thoughtful and multifaceted assessment approach, teachers can support and facilitate the ongoing development of learners' intercultural competence. (Sihite et al., 2025).

Implications for German Language Curriculum Development

The findings of this literature review have important implications for the development of a German language curriculum in Indonesia that integrates intercultural competence as an explicit and central learning objective. The curriculum needs to be designed with a clear framework of the dimensions of intercultural competence to be developed at each learning level, with a structured progression from basic cultural awareness at the beginner level to sophisticated intercultural mediation skills at the advanced level. Learning objectives should encompass not only linguistic competence but also specifically defined and measurable

intercultural competences, such as the ability to identify cultural values underlying communicative practices, the ability to reflect on one's own culture, or the ability to adapt to different communicative norms. Curriculum development also needs to consider the selection of learning materials that support the development of intercultural competence, with materials that are diverse, authentic, and representative of the cultural diversity within German-speaking countries, avoiding stereotypical or overly simplistic representations. (Latuheru et al., 2022).

Implementing a curriculum oriented toward intercultural competence also requires institutional support that includes teacher training, the provision of learning resources, and appropriate assessment systems. Professional development programs for German language teachers should include components on intercultural pedagogy, teaching strategies for developing intercultural competence, and authentic assessment methods. Institutions should also provide access to authentic and up-to-date learning resources, including digital platforms that facilitate virtual intercultural exchanges with learners or native speakers from German-speaking countries. Assessment systems should be expanded to include not only language proficiency tests but also intercultural competence assessments through portfolios, projects, presentations, or other alternative assessment methods. With comprehensive support, a curriculum that integrates intercultural competence can be implemented effectively and produce learning outcomes that are more holistic and relevant to global communication needs. (Purwanto, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Intercultural competence is an essential component that cannot be separated from learning German as a foreign language in Indonesia. A literature review shows that intercultural competence encompasses interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, requiring a systematic and integrative pedagogical approach in its implementation. The development of intercultural competence cannot be achieved through the mere transmission of factual knowledge about culture, but rather requires active, experiential, and reflective teaching strategies such as critical incident analysis, intercultural simulations, and ethnographic projects that encourage learners to become active and critical cultural researchers. Teachers play a central role as facilitators who not only convey cultural information but also create a learning environment that supports intercultural exploration and develops a critical awareness of cultural constructions. Although the implementation of intercultural competence teaching in Indonesia faces various challenges such as limited direct exposure to the target culture, significant cultural differences, and institutional constraints, these challenges can be overcome through strong institutional commitment, curriculum development that explicitly integrates intercultural competence, the provision of adequate training and resources for teachers, and the use of digital platforms to facilitate authentic intercultural interactions. With a comprehensive and sustainable approach, learning German can produce outcomes that are not only linguistically competent but also able to function as effective intercultural mediators in the context of global communication.

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