

Investigating Instructional Strategies and Materials to Enhance Intercultural Pragmatic Competence among Undergraduates in Pakistan

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Abstract

Developing intercultural pragmatic competence (IPC) is essential for achieving communicative skills in English as a lingua franca, as it inherently involves intercultural interaction. This study examined instructional strategies and materials to enhance IPC among undergraduate English students. The study, carried out in Pakistani federal universities, was guided by Celce-Murcia's communicative competence model in general and Spitzberg and Changnon's relational model of intercultural competence in particular. It adopted a concurrent mixed-methods research design with triangulation. The quantitative data gathered from teachers and students through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics via SPSS and the qualitative data collected from teachers' interviews were analyzed thematically. The study identifies that teachers are not sufficiently aware of BS English objectives as prescribed by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), resulting in the application of diverse strategies in their classes. Many teachers also treat English language and culture as separate entities; therefore, they do not integrate them sufficiently to develop IPC. The teachers' pedagogical practices also suggest that many lack sufficient training; as a result, they do not conduct classroom activities properly and rarely use audiovisual aids. They deliver lectures conventionally, spending most of the time in a similar pattern. The study therefore suggests implementing HEC's objectives to harmonise pedagogical practices and holding teacher training workshops to equip teachers to integrate language and culture and conduct activities properly. It also suggests further research to understand the gap between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices.

Keywords: intercultural pragmatic competence, pedagogical practices, BS English, Federal Universities of Pakistan, modern plays.

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Introduction

Advances in global communication have also increased multilingual and multicultural encounters, heightening the necessity for a lingua franca (LF) that equips communicators to communicate across diverse native languages (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2023). English plays a vital role in intercultural interaction worldwide (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022). Ali (2025) even privileged it as a marker of modernity in Pakistan. This ascendancy of English as an LF extends attention beyond linguistic competence to the intercultural pragmatic (ICP) dimensions of English language teaching (ELT). This concerns Intercultural pragmatic competence (IPC): the practical application of rules derived from ICP. According to Kecskes (2023, p.1), ICP asks, “How do people interact with each other in a language other than their native tongue and with native speakers of the language of interaction?” In essence, while ICP provides a theoretical lens, IPC is the skill to put that understanding into action.

In Pakistan, one of the prime objectives of a Bachelor of Studies (BS) in English is to enable learners to “demonstrate proficiency in interpretive, analytical and communicative skills... and oral expression” (HEC, 2025, p. 4). These communicative skills in English require IPC, as any interaction among speakers with different first languages (L1s) constitute LF communication (Seidlhofer, 2013), which requires IPC grounded in knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical awareness (Deardorff, 2006). This grounding enables intercultural communicators to act as a sort of chameleon, adjusting to whatever situation they find themselves in (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Matveev, 2017).

IPC gives learners awareness of the intricacies of linguistic expressions, such as the appropriate use of speech acts, the avoidance of impolite language and the application of politeness strategies. It also leads learners to examine their own cultural beliefs and biases to manage misunderstandings and conflicts in intercultural interaction (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). Thus, intercultural communication (IC) in English can be effective only with IPC at an appropriate level, as, unlike grammatical failures, violations of pragmatic norms can provoke indignation, irritation and confusion that can break communication (Chzhan, 2026). Moreover, Pakistan is home to many cultures. When Pakistanis from different L1’s interact in English, it constitutes ELF (Seidlhofer, 2013), which requires IPC to mediate and negotiate meaning (Kecskes, 2014). So, English teachers are expected to foster skills beyond exams, particularly for the unpredictable communication tasks required to communicate in the global

world (Shahzad, 2018). Therefore, the objective of foreign language learning is not merely mastery of communicative competence; rather, instructors are now expected to cultivate intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in their learners (Sercu & Bandura, 2005).

However, many students, including those who get a bachelor's degree in English, lack the desired communication skills, particularly real-world pragmatic and connotative comprehension (Khalil, Baig, & Javed, 2023). This necessitates an investigation of the present state of ICC in English language teaching (ELT). However, limited attention has been paid to actual pedagogical practices in ELT, particularly in Pakistan. To fill this research gap, this study investigates the pedagogical practices for BS English at federal universities (FUs) in Pakistan by evaluating the use of instructional strategies and materials to develop IPC, thereby informing teacher training and adherence to the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan's (HEC) guidelines to better prepare students for effective IC by developing IPC.

Research Objectives

- 1) To investigate the instructional strategies and materials employed by the English teachers at FUs in Pakistan for developing IPC among undergraduates.
- 2) To analyze the extent to which the use of instructional strategies and materials aligns with the principles of IPC.

Research Questions

- 1) What strategies and instructional materials do English teachers employ at FUs in Pakistan to develop IPC among undergraduates?
- 2) To what extent does the use of these strategies and instructional materials align with the principles of IPC?

Literature Review

In an increasingly interconnected world, the global spread of English has incited extensive research on communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Central to this shift from intracultural interactions to intercultural interaction is the recognition that effective communication depends not only on grammatical accuracy but also on the ability to use the linguistic and nonlinguistic means appropriately according to immediate and sociocultural contexts, a capacity known as pragmatic competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002). This concept has been extended to interactions between speakers from different L1s, arguing that

such intercultural interaction follows its own norms rather than those of native speakers (Kecskes, 2023). This reconceptualization gives rise to IPC, a concept that remains theoretically vibrant but empirically under-examined, particularly in postcolonial contexts where English serves both global and local functions.

A dominant strand of research on teaching and learning IPC emphasizes explicit instruction, arguing that learners in ELF seldom develop the qualities needed to communicate effectively across cultures without teaching (Byram, 2020). Therefore, foreign language instruction should integrate language and culture to enable the learners not only to convey the message but also to interpret and respond in accordance with cultural norms, leading to more authentic and effective intercultural exchange (Deardorff, 2006). A complementary strand, grounded in ICP, reframes the instruction entirely. Instead of approximating native-speaker norms, the learners need to negotiate and mediate meanings to accommodate diverse interlocutors in LF communication (Kecskes, 2023). Empirical studies, such as Salih and Kurt (2025), suggest that role play, authentic materials, collaborative tasks and simulations are the most appropriate strategies for developing pragmatic competence. However, reviews reveal an implementation gap. Teachers often endorse intercultural goals but struggle to translate them into practice. This gap is especially marked in examination-driven classrooms.

However, these pedagogical claims rest on diverse studies. They differ in theoretical framing, targeted features and proficiency levels, so no unified base for ELF pedagogical practices exists. Assessing what the evidence actually supports necessitates examining specific studies in ICP contexts: their designs, findings and unaddressed gaps.

In this field of inquiry, the studies usually address ICC in general, not IPC specifically. Young and Sachdev (2011), for example, explore the beliefs and practices of foreign language instructors in the USA, the UK and France. The study used a multi-method approach combining diaries, questionnaires and focus groups. The findings reveal a general consensus among teachers across locations: most teachers support including ICC in their pedagogical practices, yet they feel the prescribed curriculum gives it little emphasis. In this regard, Soomro, Kazemian and Mahar (2015) also investigate the state of ICC in foreign language teaching in Pakistan and Iran. The study highlights the limitations of the prescribed textbooks used as instructional material at the HSSC level and recommends including cultural elements in instructional materials. Another study by Biswalo (2015) explores ICC from the perspectives of English teachers at

secondary schools in Tanzania. This quantitative study finds that most of the instructors lack awareness of ICC and its significance in foreign language instruction. The study's findings contrast with Ghanem's (2017) survey, which sought the opinions of Arabic and English teachers and found that teachers are aware of the significance of ICC in foreign language teaching but cannot include it in their instruction due to a lack of time. Other studies, such as Saleem, Saleem and Aziz (2022), compare the similarities and differences in the use of speech acts across Pakistani English speakers and native English speakers.

The review of these studies reveals that, first, most address ICC in general and not IPC. Second, the findings are diverse and, in some cases, even contradictory. Third, most research is set in developed countries such as France, the UK and the USA. Fourth, they focus on teachers' beliefs about including ICC in foreign language teaching, their willingness to promote ICC among students, the integration of language and culture, the place of this competence in foreign language teaching and comparisons of speech-act use in Pakistani English and native English. However, actual pedagogical praxis regarding IPC, particularly in Pakistan, has received limited attention. The present study thus attempts to bridge this gap by focusing on actual pedagogical practices in the BS English program, which may be further shaped accordingly.

Methodology

This investigation used a concurrent mixed-methods research design with triangulation. This approach collects quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyzes them separately and then merges them during interpretation to compare and triangulate the findings (Creswell, 2015). The data for this study were collected from those FUs that offer the BS English program in the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters. The quantitative data were obtained from teachers and students involved in BS English through questionnaires and the qualitative data were obtained from teachers who taught modern plays in BS English at FUs through semi-structured interviews. This triangulation is especially valued in education because it links theoretical concepts with practical applications (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Furthermore, it enhances validity and reliability, ensuring outcomes for all stakeholders.

Participants, Procedure and Process

First, formal permissions for data collection were obtained from the relevant authorities at the concerned universities. Then, for the quantitative data, two questionnaires were prepared, piloted and their reliability was determined by calculating their coefficient (alpha) using SPSS before their administration to the participants. In their reply, 137 teachers and 286 students yielded complete responses. However, for the qualitative data, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared and 10 teachers of the modern plays course were interviewed using the guide to ensure relevance and inclusion. Based on the participants' responses, additional questions were added on the spot to probe more deeply into the pedagogical practices. The interviews were recorded in audio and video format with participants' permission and convenience. The recordings were first transcribed and then coded to analyze the emerging themes.

Methods of Analysis

For the descriptive analysis of the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were obtained via SPSS. Frequencies and averages were tabulated, calculated, analyzed and interpreted. On the other hand, the qualitative data were organized, coded, thematized and interpreted. The emerging themes were aligned and analyzed against the study's objective using thematic analysis (Creswell, 2015).

Analytical Consistency

The study systematically applied the same analytical framework and reasoning to each data item. Both quantitative and qualitative data were structured and analyzed using the same theoretical framework and thematic sequences.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical protocols were followed. Formal written permissions were obtained, the participants were briefed on the study, interviews were arranged at their convenience and the mode of recording was subject to their consent. Anonymity and data security were maintained.

Theoretical Framework

ICP is fundamentally embedded in multiple theoretical concepts that connect language with cultural contexts. However, this investigation

is guided by Celce-Murcia's (2007) communicative competence model (CCM) in general and Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) RMIC in particular.

Components of Communicative Competence Model

CCM breaks down CC into five interrelated components: discourse, socio-cultural, formulaic, interactional and strategic competence.

Discourse Competence

In any model of communicative competence, this model places discourse competence at the centre, enabling the interactor to construct a unified message through the appropriate selection, arrangement and sequencing of utterances, words and sentences (Celce-Murcia, 2007). It enables cohesion and coherence, grounding the utterance in contexts through the appropriate use of deixis and the maintenance of formality conventions.

Linguistic Competence

It includes phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactical knowledge.

Formulaic Competence

It refers to prefabricated chunks and fixed phrases used frequently in everyday speech. It also includes idioms, collocations and other lexical frames. Fluent speakers of a target language draw on their formulaic knowledge as often as they use systematic linguistic knowledge (Hunston, 2002).

Interactional Competence

It involves the practical skills to manage collaborative turn exchanges, open and close conversations, take and relinquish the floor and repair communication breakdowns.

Strategic Competence

It is the ability to use all other competences appropriately in a target situation. It overrides these by compensating for deficiencies in any one through the use of others.

This model, therefore, offers comprehensive, actionable insights into the competencies and understandings essential for effective communication, particularly from L2 perspectives. These components are essential elements of IPC. So, it is a suitable model to guide this study, as it provides a roadmap of effective communication in general.

Relational Model of Intercultural Communication

In addition to CCM, this study is guided by RMIC. It highlights the relational, interactive and context-dependent nature of competence. Its components, such as knowledge, skills and motivation, affect how interlocutors interact across diverse cultures. This model aligns with the core concept of ICP, where both interlocutors negotiate and mutually mediate meaning (Kecskes, 2014). It is conceptualized on three premises. First, competence is emergent and dyadically constructed by the interlocutors. Outcomes are subjective and local. This means a communicator may appear competent with one interlocutor but not another. Third, the focus is on process: what happens between interactors during an episode, including rapport, identity and negotiation of meaning rather than pre-existing traits.

Knowledge

Knowledge constitutes the cognitive dimension: individual understanding of one's own and others' cultural norms, communication practices, values, cultural biases and awareness of interactional processes that shape IC. Within RMIC, knowledge is not merely factual; rather, it is relational. It is activated and co-constructed in the exchange itself.

Skills

Skills refer to the behavioral dimension: the ability to communicate effectively in real-time situations, including repairing misunderstandings, managing ambiguity and adopting a communication style aligned with the relational context.

Motivation

Motivation embodies the affective dimension: the willingness to accept cultural variations and demonstrate empathy and openness toward other cultures. It is not merely individual; rather, it emerges from the relational dynamic, interactors' mutual engagement and perceived similarity.

RMIC provides a suitable framework for this study, as it offers a structured approach to exploring how interlocutors employ these competencies to overcome the complexity of IC. Furthermore, this model is aligned with the core concept of SCA (Kecskes, 2014), which provides grounds for IPC.

Analysis and Findings

The analysis addresses the study's research questions side by side. First, it identifies the strategies and materials English teachers use to develop IPC among undergraduates, then evaluates the extent to which their use aligns with IPC principles. The analysis is as follows.

Analysis of the Questionnaires' Data

Both the teachers' and the students' questionnaires, attached as appendices A and B respectively, comprised 13 questions each. Each question included an explanation or example where necessary. However, for precision, Tables 1 to 5 below summarize the core common concepts in both teacher and student questions and compare the data received against each.

To develop students' proficiency, teachers must understand HEC's (2025) program learning outcomes (PLOs) to design course learning outcomes (CLOs) and lesson objectives, because the lessons revolve around their objectives. Thus, the first two questions in both questionnaires concerned the teachers' and the students' understanding of the program and the lesson's objectives. Table 1 below presents comparative data from responses to these questions.

Table 1

Teachers' Approach toward the Objectives of the BS English Program

No	Question Content	Teachers' Response (%)	Students' Response (%)
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		Yes	No	No Idea	Yes	No	No Idea
1.	Explicit explanation of the lesson's objectives at the beginning of each lesson.	81.1	10.9	8.0	42.0	50.0	8.0
2.	Recognition of the ICC as a major objective of the BS English program.	42.4	49.6	8.0	68.2	23.8	8.0

As reflected in Table 1 above, although many teachers reported stating lesson objectives at the beginning of their lessons, a considerable number of students reported that teachers did not explicitly communicate these objectives. Similarly, many teachers believed communicative competence was not among the PLOs, whereas students believed it was an essential objective of the BS English program. These discrepancies suggest an inconsistency between teachers and students in their understanding of PLOs, leading to unclear directions and a lack of the roadmap for preparing and developing the communicative skills required to withstand the modern world.

The next two questions concerned the integration of language and culture, as they are intertwined and shape each other (Liddicoat, 2004). Table 2 below presents a comparative analysis of the data about these questions.

Table 2

Integration of Language and Culture in BS English Instruction

No	Question Content	Teachers' Response (%)			Students' Response (%)		
		Yes	No	No Idea	Yes	No	No Idea
3.	Integration of language and culture.	76.6	18.2	5.2	50.3	41.3	8.4
4.	Beliefs about learning English without its culture.	45.3	48.9	5.8	57.7	34.3	8.0

As shown in Table 2 above, many teachers reported integrating language and culture in BS English classes; a considerable number of students did not confirm this practice. This proportion of teachers and students remained similar in their beliefs about integrating language and culture. Many students believed they could learn a foreign language without learning its culture. Intertwining the language and culture is the basic principle of IPC. Without recognizing that language and culture are intertwined, the learners cannot be intrinsically motivated toward IPC, a phenomenon that Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) RMIC fundamentally supports.

The next two questionnaire items asked about the significance of learners' own culture versus the target culture. Table 3 presents the comparative data regarding these questions.

Table 3

Significance of Culture: Self vs Other

No	Question Content	Teachers' Response (%)			Students' Response (%)		
		Yes	No	No Idea	Yes	No	No Idea
5.	Significance of learners' cultural self-understanding in the development of IPC	78.1	16.1	5.8	69.6	20.3	10.1
6.	Significance of target cultural self-understanding in the development of IPC	71.5	24.1	4.4	61.9	28.0	10.1

As reflected in Table 3 above, both teachers and students, with some exceptions, acknowledged the significance of awareness of both learners' own culture and the target culture. This is a positive step toward IPC development as individuals are more likely to take meaningful action once, they recognize its importance.

Although ICP underscores the dynamic and reciprocal nature of IC, it builds on the concepts from cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (Kecskes, 2014). The next two questions address these aspects of IPC. Table 4 presents the comparative data from responses to these questions.

Table 4

Medium of Explaining English Text

No	Question Content	Teachers' Response (%)			Students' Response (%)		
		Yes	No	No Idea	Yes	No	No Idea
7.	Explanation of English text in English only.	35.0	62.0	3.0	35.0	60.8	4.2

8.	Explanation of the English text in both Urdu and English	61.3	35.8	2.9	71.3	22.4	6.3
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As Table 4 shows, many teachers and students stated that English texts are mainly explained in both English and Urdu. This explanation could support understanding of cross-cultural diversity and interlanguage variation, which are vital for IPC.

The essential qualities for effective IC are rarely learned without teaching (Byram, 2020). Well-planned, explicit guidance on pragmatic norms, situational appropriateness and cultural routines helps students exhibit culturally suitable language behaviors' (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). Classroom activities such as simulations, role-plays, inferring cultural meanings and exposure to authentic materials provide opportunities to practice pragmatic functions such as apologizing, giving opinions, requesting, refusing, thanking and congratulating. The next five questions in the questionnaire addressed how these activities are conducted in BS English classrooms. Table 5 shows the comparative data from responses to these questions.

Table 5

Classroom Activities to Develop IPC

No	Question Content	Teachers' Response (%)			Students' Response (%)		
		Yes	No	No Idea	Yes	No	No Idea
9.	Role-playing to perform speech acts	72.3	25.5	2.2	62.6	30.4	7.0
10.	Inferring English cultural norms	73.7	23.4	2.9	67.8	29.0	3.1
11.	Watching the videos of the prescribed plays	65.0	32.1	2.9	81.9	11.5	6.6
12.	Finding out contextual links between language and picture	81.7	16.1	2.2	63.7	30.4	5.9

13.	Group activities to infer cultural differences	77.4	19.7	2.9	62.6	30.8	6.6
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Table 5 shows that many teachers reported conducting individual and group activities to enhance students' cross-cultural understanding; however, comparatively fewer students agreed with this statement, except for watching videos of the prescribed plays, which a majority reported doing. These activities promote IPC through instructional materials that convey cultural backgrounds and instructional norms.

Analysis of the Interviews

The questionnaires' data were triangulated with the interview data to provide valuable insights that facilitate comparison, contrast and validation of the collected data.

Course Objectives

All pedagogical practices revolve around program learning outcomes (PLOs) and course learning outcomes (CLOs), as teachers are expected to align their CLOs with HEC's (2025) PLOs. Participants were asked about the PLOs and CLOs they kept in mind while teaching BS English courses. In response, varied views emerged. Some teachers prioritized familiarizing students with literary movements and enabling them to analyze literary texts using literary theories; others emphasized critical thinking, creativity and imagination; a few even aspired to have their students serve as performers and evaluators of drama. However, a few teachers identified understanding English culture alongside communicative competence and writing as a key PLO. They believed one PLO is to support students in understanding English culture as they develop their academic writing and communicative competence. These findings are consistent with the students' data, which indicate that lesson objectives are often not explicitly stated. This unclear practice may affect IPC development, as it is not among teachers' priorities.

Integrating Language and Culture

The interviewees were also asked about integrating language and culture. Generally, many teachers reported integrating language and culture. However, when asked follow-up questions about culturally

embedded lexical items, it appeared that they did not integrate language and culture in a true sense. Thus, while the teachers may explain what happened, they may not explain how and why it happened through identifiable pragmatic strategies.

Teaching Prescribed Text

Because all interviewees were the instructors of the courses on modern plays, they were asked how they engaged with the prescribed text. Many participants reported that they explain the texts, address students' queries and, to some extent, relate them to students' socio-cultural backgrounds. According to these teachers, failing to teach the texts directly is a primary cause of learners' deficiencies at the end of the program. However, many teachers oppose detailed, close study of the texts. Instead, they assign the readings as independent student tasks and discuss major themes only after students have completed the texts. Because this practice depends on teachers' choices, the significant aspects of IPC development are likely to be omitted.

Familiarity with Learners' Own Culture and Target Culture

The interview participants uniformly emphasized that the learners should be aware of their own culture; however, some teachers went a step further. For instance, a teacher said, "I set very strict boundaries for them (students). They can explore English culture, but they should refrain from adopting it". Such teachers divide culture into *our* versus *their*; they may not explain what they consider their culture. Some teachers did not even favour comparisons of literary characters with local literary characters. For example, a teacher raised a point about cultural sensitivity by asking counter-questions. Why was he supposed to be sensitive about other cultures? Why shouldn't they? He further asked why we needed to be apologetic and why we were taking their burden as our own. The teacher even emphasized, "I disagree with the idea that we need to forsake our own culture to embrace aspects of their culture". The interviewee further strengthened this argument by asking counter-questions and reluctantly praising some characters from English literature, using negative phrases such as "to give the devil his due". Such an approach affects the development of IPC by strengthening ethnocentrism and reducing open-mindedness and empathy (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

Conducting Classroom Activities

When asked about classroom activities, many teachers reported that, because of limited time, they could not focus on a wide range of activities. However, despite these limitations, some teachers reported engaging their students in activities, such as relating one play to another, dramatizing parts of a play, identifying literary devices from the text, watching the assigned play as a home task, analyzing the language of a literary text, presenting or teaching major themes of a play and conducting critical analysis of a given text. This list of activities shows that teachers pay limited attention to activities that may enhance IPC, such as inferring cultural norms through dialogues, simulations, or role-playing based on diverse cultural aspects. The counter questions in the interviews also reveal that teachers do not implement these activities properly. What many teachers call “role-playing” is actually reading aloud.

Discussion

This study investigates the strategies and instructional materials English teachers at FUs in Pakistan use to develop IPC among Pakistani undergraduates and the extent to which these strategies align with IPC principles. This section discusses the findings in detail.

One major finding is that English teachers lack a clear understanding of HEC’s PLOs across FUs, as they hold diverse views on BS English objectives. This diversity can obscure the ICC’s objective, which is one of the major objectives of BS English (HEC, 2025). Furthermore, while any foreign language program aims to develop effective target-language interaction (Cetinavci, 2012), communicative competence in English without IPC is impossible, as it involves the mediation and negotiation of meaning (Kecskes, 2014).

The study also finds that although many teachers recommend a thorough study of the prescribed plays’ texts, many consider it the students’ job to go through the texts themselves. This approach affects the development of communicative competence in general and IPC in particular because explaining texts moves beyond literal comprehension to cultural awareness, critical interpretation and pragmatic reasoning, which are essential competencies for IPC development. Modern plays practically enact speech acts, politeness strategies, directness or indirectness and culturally embedded linguistic expressions. Understanding these nuances in their cultural contexts, recognizing cross-cultural and cross-language similarities and differences and applying them

in IC are essential for learners of any foreign language (Aamir & Sani, 2023; Lamino & Diaz, 2024).

The findings further indicate that the teachers underscore the importance of awareness of one's own culture, yet some emphasize their own culture over others, drawing fixed boundaries and instructing students to confine themselves to their own culture. This approach strengthens egocentrism and reduces open-mindedness and empathy (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). In contrast, a bottom-up approach is essential in IC for constructing frames with interlocutors and building both core and common ground. Such spontaneous strategies enhance intersubjectivity, fostering adaptability and flexibility in handling cultural and linguistic diversity (Rommetveit, 2003).

While the findings from both research tools are generally consistent, some discrepancies remain. Many teachers, through both questionnaires and interviews, report integrating English language and culture into their instruction, but many students believe they should learn only English, not its cultural content. As the instructional claims are best understood in students' perceptions, by that measure, integration remained unrealized in practice. Teachers' responses to other questions support this; for instance, they rarely explained culturally embedded lexical items. Similarly, the instruction rarely includes cross-cultural comparisons and activities that integrate language and culture. Consequently, students remain unaware of these nuances. This practice hinders the proper development of IPC because language learning cannot be confined to grammar and vocabulary alone. There is a dire need to integrate culture into the pedagogical practices of a foreign language, such as English, in Pakistan, because language and culture go hand in hand. Without one, the other cannot be understood or learned (Liddicoat, 2004).

Another discrepancy concerned classroom activities. In response to the questionnaire, teachers report engaging students in activities that may enhance their IPC. Students also affirm their engagement in such activities; however, in-depth interviews indicate otherwise, revealing that they engage only in reading. Many teachers say they involve students in reading plays' texts rather than performing roles by imitating the characters. Different students read the dialogue parts of different characters. This is what they call role-playing. This shows that what participants considered role-playing was actually book reading and that no such activity as role-playing or simulation exists to enhance IPC. Hence, teachers rarely conduct activities in their true spirit. Since both communicative competence and IPC require knowledge, skills and

motivation to have effective IC (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), engaging students in such activities that contribute to enhancing these skills is an essential part of pedagogical practices, as skills cannot be acquired without proper practice and instruction that provides students with meta-pragmatic knowledge, which tends to develop their L2 pragmatic skills significantly (Sangoor, 2026).

The findings also indicate that teachers in pedagogical practice mostly use only prescribed textbooks and whiteboards. They rarely use any other audiovisual aids. Audiovisual materials, such as recorded play performances and video clips of real-life situations in specific cultural contexts, including gestures, tone, silence, pauses, turn-taking and eye contact, expose learners to realistic scenarios. Thus, these aids, if used properly, can bridge classroom learning and the complex, dynamic reality of cross-cultural encounters, which require diverse linguistic abilities, cross-cultural knowledge, skills for negotiating meanings and motivation. Using such aids can help develop a repertoire in which all linguistic abilities have a place (CEFR, 2001).

These findings partly align with Young and Sachdev's (2011) study, which finds that foreign language teachers support the inclusion of ICC in their pedagogical practices. However, this study further contributes to understanding the state of IPC in ELT in Pakistan by identifying that though the teachers support the inclusion of ICC, they do not completely adhere to the principles of IPC in their pedagogical practices, particularly in the conduct of classroom activities, integration of language and culture and motivation of the students towards IPC. The study partly contradicts Biswalo (2015), which finds that foreign language teachers are aware of the significance of IPC and believe it is an essential skill for the modern world. However, Ghanem's (2017) survey reveals that teachers recognize the significance of IPC in foreign language teaching but cannot include it in their instruction because of time constraints. Hence, it contributes by identifying the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs about including IPC in their instruction and their actual pedagogical practices. It offers an empirical basis for rethinking how IPC is addressed in BS English programs in Pakistan.

Conclusion

In light of the rising demand for intercultural communicative capability in Pakistani higher education, this study investigated the strategies and instructional materials English teachers use to develop IPC

among undergraduates and the extent to which their use aligns with IPC principles. It finds that teachers are largely unaware of HEC's (2025) PLOs and employ diverse instructional strategies in BS English classrooms across FUs. Although most teachers mainly rely on prescribed textbooks, their approaches to using these materials differ significantly. Some instructors focus on detailed textual explanations, while others treat independent reading as the students' sole responsibility. A similar divergence appears in the medium of instruction: some teachers restrict themselves to English, others adopt a bilingual approach and a few even prefer Urdu for entire lectures. Regarding the integration of English language and culture, many teachers report integrating both; however, they do not implement this integration in its true spirit. In intercultural interaction, though awareness of one's own culture is certainly valuable, some teachers draw fixed boundaries between *their culture* and *ours*, whereas effective intercultural interaction requires empathy, open-mindedness and adaptive behaviour (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Regarding classroom activities, most teachers involve their students in reading tasks. Even what is labelled as simulation or role-playing is little more than students reading aloud dialogues assigned to specific characters. Similarly, despite the potential of audiovisual aids in developing IPC, the instructors rarely use them.

The study further concludes that unclear objectives, disintegration of language and culture, limited focus on text explanation, increased egocentrism with an emphasis on us-versus-them boundaries, improper use of classroom activities with a major focus on reading instead of simulating and limited use of audiovisual aids, deviating from the principles of IPC, affect its proper development, as it requires knowledge, skills and motivation (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009) to negotiate and mediate meanings in real-life intercultural interactions (Kecskes, 2014).

Recommendation

These findings point to several recommendations for curriculum design, teacher training, policy and further research. First, HEC's (2025) PLOs for BS English should be implemented across universities in Pakistan to ensure consistency and the inclusion of IPC in pedagogical practices. Second, teachers' training workshops should be organized periodically to equip instructors with effective strategies for integrating language and culture into their pedagogical practices. Third, to address time constraints, teachers need to be encouraged to adopt a balanced

approach to textual explanation. Fourth, while English remains the target language, judicious use of bilingual explanation may be permitted without compromising language development. Fifth, periodic seminars should address modern challenges in teaching a foreign language, especially by helping instructors move beyond rigid “*us* versus *them*” boundaries. Sixth, classroom activities need re-evaluation: simulation or role-playing should genuinely involve performance rather than mere reading aloud. Seventh, instructors should incorporate audiovisual aids, as they can significantly enhance IPC. Finally, further research is warranted to explore the reasons for the disconnect between teachers’ beliefs and their pedagogical practice.

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