

# Exploration of Intercultural Attitudes in Collaborative Reflective Writing in an Intercultural Communication Course by English Majors in China

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**Abstract:** *Intercultural competence (IC) is a key competence for EFL learners and its development is a central goal of the Intercultural Communication courses In China. Within that goal, scholars emphasize the attitudinal dimension—beyond knowledge, skills, and language—especially in predominantly monocultural Chinese classrooms. Against this backdrop, this research conducted a content analysis of 37 collaborative reflective writing based on given videos by English majors from a university in western China, aiming at exploring students' intercultural attitudes and their relationship between video themes. This research finds that most students hold favorable attitudes—openness, respect and curiosity—towards foreign cultures, while a small number of them show strong evidence of self-awareness and national identity. It also finds that intercultural attitudes are more likely to emerge when students write on familiar preferred video themes—such as university life and language learning. However, videos that address broader and more abstract themes often encourage critical cultural awareness. These findings will not only guide the continued refinement of the course, but also serve as a practical reference to EFL curricula.*

**Keywords:** Intercultural competence, Intercultural communication course, Intercultural attitudes, Collaborative reflective writing, English majors.

## 1. Introduction

Intercultural competence (IC) is not only a hot topic in intercultural studies but also a competence essential for EFL learners in China. In 2018, *National Standards for Education Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Regular Higher Education Institutions* issued by Ministry of Education (MOE) in China specified that IC is what students majoring in foreign languages are required to possess. Hence, the cultivation of students' IC is one of key objectives of all EFL courses in China, and Intercultural Communication course for English majors is no exception.

Given the multi-disciplinary nature of intercultural communication studies, scholars at home and abroad have developed various IC frameworks. Despite differences in these frameworks, they share a commonality in listing intercultural attitudes as one indispensable dimension. Compared with western IC frameworks, Chinese models incorporate goals aligned with China's foreign language talent development—namely, cultural awareness grounded in a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and national identity reinforced by civic responsibility.

Across the literature on intercultural instruction, scholars underscore the importance of intercultural attitudes and recommend pedagogical approaches. Sun (2021) held that “intercultural attitudes should occupy a central position in IC assessment” (p.143). Wen (2022) believed that English teachers should adopt the method of case analysis, aiming at enhancing students' sensitivity and intercultural attitudes towards cultural differences, as well as enabling them to learn about rules and strategies to cope with such differences. In addition to case analysis, reflective writing is also frequently used and proved effective in raising students' intercultural attitudes in China (Chen & Zheng, 2019). However, a majority of reflective writing is on the individual basis without the

consideration of students' lack of direct intercultural communication experience. Therefore, we designed a paired reflective writing task based on videos either selected by the teacher or recommended by students themselves in the course with the purpose of developing students' intercultural awareness.

Designed to support and enhance course development, this task seeks to improve the current course and offer practical guidance to other EFL courses. According, this study addresses two questions as shown below:

RQ1: What is the overall distribution of components of intercultural attitudes across all reflective essays? Which component is strongest and which is weakest?

RQ2: Do differences in themes and source of videos lead to different rates of intercultural attitudes in paired reflective essays?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 IC and IC Teaching for English Majors

IC is a core concept in intercultural communication studies. Because of varying disciplines and approaches, scholars could not reach consensus on the terminology, not to mention the definition of it. One of the most agreed definitions is that it is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247–8). From this definition and other definitions, three key dimensions of intercultural competence were outlined: knowledge, attitudes and skills. These dimensions are commonly agreed by scholars and have laid a foundation for the conceptualization of IC frameworks (Bryam, 1997; Fantini, 2009; Deardorff, 2006; Sun, 2016; SISU Intercultural Institute, 2023) that are

widely applied in foreign language teaching and assessment.

In China, undergraduate English majors include undergraduates majoring in English literature, English translation and business English. According to the official *Teaching Guidelines for English Majors* published in 2020, one of the crucial teaching objectives across the three majors is to foster strong IC. As a core course for senior English majors, Intercultural Communication course is designed to develop students' IC. But the competence is difficult to be cultivated solely through classroom instruction, primarily because Chinese classrooms lack multicultural contexts. Therefore, Wen (2022) contended that of the course should prioritize enhancing sensitivity to cultural differences, building intercultural communication awareness and equipping students with principles and strategies to handle such cultural differences at multiple levels.

To conclude, IC is a core learning outcome for undergraduate English majors. In the Intercultural Communication course, a key emphasis is on developing the affective and attitudinal dimensions of IC, which we collectively refer to in this paper as intercultural attitudes.

## 2.2 Intercultural Attitudes

Across IC dimensions, intercultural attitudes are recognized by scholars as of great significance. For example, Byram (2022) considered attitudes as the core concept and one of the preconditions of intercultural communicative competence. Sun, Liao and others (2021), after synthesizing existing research, stated that intercultural attitudes were central to the IC assessment.

Although the importance of attitudes is highly recognized, intercultural scholars still differ in the specific components of this dimension. Deardoff (2009b) noted that intercultural attitudes comprise respect (valuing other cultures), openness (withholding judgement), curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity). He believed that "curiosity sets a foundation for more creative ways to turn differences into opportunities while openness allows the possibility of seeing from more than one perspective" (Deardorff & Jones, 2012, p.6). Similarly, Bryam (2022) pointed out that intercultural attitudes included "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (p.62). In Bryam's intercultural communicative model, critical cultural awareness occupies the central place. This is the ability to reflect on one's cognitive barriers in intercultural communication, such as stereotypes and prejudices.

Chinese scholars, like their Western counterparts, regard respect and openness as core components of intercultural attitudes. The difference is that most of them group attitudinal, affective, and awareness components into a single category. For example, in Sun's (2016) framework, intercultural attitudes have components including respect for cultural diversity, intercultural empathy and critical cultural awareness. While in the IC assessment framework issued by SISU Intercultural Institute in 2023, the dimension, which is named as attitudes, includes cultural awareness (respect, perspective-taking, Chinese cultural identity, openness and empathy), national identity and global awareness.

In sum, the concept of intercultural attitudes can be narrowly or broadly defined. In a narrow sense, it comprises attitudinal components of personal traits such as openness, curiosity and respect; In a broad sense, the concept involves attitudinal, awareness and affective components. Compared with Western scholars' definitions, Chinese scholars highlight national identity, cultural confidence and civic responsibility.

## 2.3 Collaborative Reflective Writing and IC Development

Reflection has long been identified as critical to the development of IC (Feng, 2016; Sims et al., 2025). Reflective writing is agreed in the existing literature as a valuable pedagogy to facilitate EFL students' intercultural awareness or even improve their overall intercultural competence. The qualitative study conducted by Li and Liu (2022) on English major students in China reveals that the research project on intercultural communication based on business note writing and reflections can raise students' intercultural sensitivity and awareness. An empirical study carried out by Chen and Zheng (2019) proved that journal writing involving guided reflections can facilitate students' intercultural communicative competence by examining attitudes in student journals.

Reflective writing tasks given in intercultural courses can be categorized into two types: one is free writing such as blogs and diaries (Roswita et al., 2022); the other is controlled writing such as journals and essays on given topics (Chen & Zheng, 2019). The former relies on lived experience; the latter on virtual or indirect experience. Free writing suits overseas sojourners or students in multiculture contexts, whereas controlled writing focuses on training a targeted competence and is typically used in a monocultural classrooms.

Collaborative writing is a form of cooperative learning in which participants work in pairs or small groups to produce a jointly written text, sharing responsibility for the whole process and the final product (Saunders, 1989). Grounded on the social constructivist learning theory, it is recognized as a popular approach to assist EFL learners in tackling writing difficulties and facilitating peer interactions and mutual learning (Parded, 2024). Since language competence is considered a key dimension of intercultural competence (Fantini, 2009), collaborative writing can help EFL students better express themselves and generate more creative ideas.

Collaborative writing requires each student to participate in the whole writing process — brainstorming, writing, editing — in an equal share. Task and purpose determine the grouping for collaborative writing — pairs, triads, small groups, or larger teams. For our intercultural writing task, groups are limited to pairs, because according to feedbacks from students, it is easier to retrospect, reflect and write in pairs than in a group of three or four persons.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participants

The participants of this research were 74 third-year English major students enrolled in the Intercultural Communication

Course from a Chinese university in the southwestern region. Their English language proficiency was distributed between level 6 to level 7 on the scale of China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE), equivalent to B2 (upper intermediate level) on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) for languages. Before taking the course, they had learned the course An Introduction to English Speaking Countries in the sophomore year. As juniors, they were accustomed to do collaborative learning tasks.

### 3.2 Collaborative Reflective Writing Task

Students were given a paired reflective writing task with no less than 500 words based on teacher-assigned or student-chosen cultural-themed videos. The writing task is due in the final week of the course (16th week). In week 15, students must form pairs, submit one favorite video if possible and then choose one video from five short videos assigned by the teacher or videos recommended by students. Videos cover three content types — intercultural experience, cultural events or phenomenon, and cross-cultural films or documentaries. Each writing pair must have an equal share in the whole research and writing process, which includes video-selection, brainstorming, drafting, editing and revision. They should a short statement of contributions with the essay.

Students were encouraged to engage in meaningful cultural explorations by relating their personal cultural experiences and insights to what they have learned in the course. To facilitate systematic reflections, the teacher introduced Gibbe's reflective cycle when explaining the writing task. But students have the autonomy to decide their own form of writing, whether a more systematic form based on Gibb's reflective cycle or a freer form such as a blog. The reflective writing task is designed to examine students' intercultural attitudes under collaborative conditions.

This task allows reflective writing in pairs rather than individually because existing research proved that collaborative writing is conducive to the solution of language

problems. It may also lead to more creative and in-depth thinking. The task limits groups to two students, because feedbacks from students in the previous year showed that communication and cooperation in the writing phase became too difficult to affect their writing quality in a group of three to four students. Reflective essays are based on videos either recommended by the teacher or students, because students have little intercultural communication experience beyond the virtual world.

### 3.3 Research Design

The research aims to assess students' intercultural attitudes as manifested in 37 paired reflective writing based on videos by adopting the method of content analysis. In order to give a comprehensive assessment of all essays, we construct a coding framework (see Table 1) of intercultural attitudes by integrating attitudinal elements in three IC frameworks widely used in IC teaching and assessment. Specifically, the framework is created by aligning: (a) Deardorff's (2006) foundational intercultural attitudes — respect, openness, curiosity and discovery (A1-A2) and internal outcome — empathy (A3); (b) Byram's (2022) emphasis on curiosity / openness (A2), critical cultural awareness (A7); and (c) SISU Intercultural Institute's (2023) components of cultural self-awareness, national identity and cultural confidence, and global mindedness (A4-A6). We referred to PISA 2018 Global Competence for the broader "global" lens used in A6. What's worth mentioning is that A7 critical cultural awareness is added because it can indicate the depth of students' reflections as what Byram suggested as the aim of his educational framework, although some argues that it falls into the cognitive dimension.

Following the source of each indicator, we gave operational definitions and formulated coding criteria (present / absent) so that coders can refer to. A column was left blank in the codebook for coders to take down original quotes from essays. Detailed criteria and example quotes are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Coding Framework and Assessment Criteria**

Indicator	Definition	Criteria - Present = 1	Criteria - Absent = 0	Example Quotes
A1 Respect	Be inclusive and value other cultures and cultural diversity.	Appreciate or value other cultures; accept cultural differences without a superior or inferior stance; admit strengths of other cultures despite differences.	Third-person explanation or description of cultural difference without first-person valuing stance.	We must understand and respect the values that greetings embody within different cultures. We should refrain from simply imposing our own greeting customs, derived from our native culture, onto others. (Group 10)
A2 Openness / curiosity	Tolerate ambiguity and uncertainties, with readiness to suspend/withhold judgment, willingness to learn or adjust.	Withhold or suspend judgment, signal the willingness to learn, or advocate adapting to the other's cultural.	Statements or comparisons that only show fact without suggesting any learning, adjustment, or suspended judgment.	Both sides should strive to understand each other's cultural backgrounds and recognize their different perceptions and attitudes. (Group 15)
A3 Empathy	The awareness of thinking from other's perspective (perspective-taking) and explain how each side feels or perceives it.	Explicit perspective shift or explanation of others' feelings/interpretations.	One-sided interpretation without perspective-shifting and <b>no</b> other-oriented feeling; purely self-focused emotions.	From our (Chinese) perspective, as a leader, he (Trump) shouldn't make such mistakes. If he does, then he's not seen as a good leader. But back in the US, people can see it differently. They view Trump as just another person who made some mistakes, unrelated to his leadership skills. Foreigners might be shocked to see propaganda flags in red backgrounds hanging everywhere in China. (Group 8)

A4 Cultural self-awareness	Awareness to establish a cultural identity as a Chinese and willingness to understand how Chinese cultural norms/ values shape self or community practices.	First-person reflection, explicitly connecting to Chinese culture, and voice an intent to foster cultural identity as a Chinese citizen.	Only third-person comparisons, no first-person judgement or feelings, a lack of China-informed lens and development of Chinese identity.	Personally, our traditional marital concepts are deeply influenced by Confucian culture...Marriage is not merely the union of two individuals; it is also the alliance of two families, involving family honor and social responsibilities. (Group 16)
A5 National identity and cultural confidence	Willingness and the awareness to have dialogic, non-confrontational identity expression that addresses bias or misunderstandings and tells China's story in intercultural exchange.	Proposes actions/stances reflective of Chinese values in a way that engages equally with others.	Nationalist slogans irrelevant to the task; no reference to Chinese identity or willingness to deliver China's voice to the world.	We must pay more attention to the usage in cultural activities. We should avoid negative portrayals, like depicting the Chinese long as a monstrous villain. ...use more accurate terms... for instance, using "Chinese dragon" or "Loong" ... can help avoid confusion. (Group 17)
A6 Global mindedness	Recognize the significance of globalization or internationalization, endorse the idea of "community with a shared future for mankind", and shows an aspiration to represent China in international cooperation and global governance.	Use an explicit global frame and endorse the concept of shared future for mankind, and willingness to contribute to global cooperation or participation.	Purely bilateral comparison without global frame and languages of shared future, no global stance or participation.	The documentary also made me realize that a single educational model cannot fully meet the demands of a globalized era. ...we should draw on the strengths of different cultures to develop a balanced educational approach ... (Group 26)
A7 Critical cultural awareness	Evaluate critically and on the basis of an explicit systematic process of reasoning, values present in one's own and other cultures and countries.	Explicit criteria stated or inferable; critical evaluation of values to self and other; a traceable reasoning chain (examples/evidence).	One-sided praise or blame, no criteria and process of reasoning, no bidirectional application.	From the perspective of knowledge transmission, the advantages of Chinese-style education are obvious... But there is also problem... British students are used to free-exploration-based learning... and ...excessive freedom in British classrooms may also lead to some students' lack discipline. (Group 36)

### 3.4 Data Coding and Analysis

Each essay was read holistically and coded binary per indicator (Present=1 / Absent=0) by two coders. Coders also pasted original quotes from the essay to justify any "Present" decision. Two Coders are teachers of Intercultural Communication course, one for English majors and the other for non-English majors. Essays were coded manually without tools considering the small sample size and the subjective nature of intercultural attitudes. Two coders jointly assessed five essays, then double-coded them independently. They resolved discrepancies by clarifying assessment criteria of A1 A4 and A5. Then two coders proceeded to assess the rest of essays independently, recoding quotes in the codebook to facilitate potential discussion of discrepancies. The overall  $\kappa \approx 0.87$ , interpreted as almost perfect on common benchmarks.

Based on coding of each indicator, the percentage of presence of intercultural attitudes were calculated to reflect students' performance in attitudinal and affective regard. The presence of each indicator was also calculated by themes types to reflect the influence of themes on students' reflective writing and distribution of intercultural attitudes.

### 3.5 Ethics

All student essays are kept anonymous. Researchers have obtained the informed consent of all participants before using their work for research purpose only.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 An Overview of Intercultural Attitudes Across All Essays

As can be seen from Table 2, among 6 components of intercultural attitudes (A1 to A6), the most frequently demonstrated attitudes are A1 respect for all cultural

differences (31, 83.8%) and A2 curiosity and openness (31, 83.8%). By contrast, A5 national identity and cultural confidence (8, 21.6%) and A4 cultural self-awareness (5, 13.5%) are least observed. What stand in the middle on the table are two indicators — A6 global mindedness (16, 43.2%) and A3 empathy (15, 40.5%). On the bottom of the table is the least reflected one —A7 critical cultural awareness (4, 10.8%). The lowest percentage of A7 may indicate that students have explored the topic insufficiently and thus demonstrate minimum evidence of deep and critical thinking.

**Table 2:** Distribution of Intercultural Attitudes across All Essays

Attitudes components	Total Count	Percentage (n=37)
A1	31	83.8%
A2	31	83.8%
A3	15	40.5%
A4	5	13.5%
A5	8	21.6%
A6	16	43.2%
A7	4	10.8%

Note: A1= Respect, A2= Openness / curiosity, A3= Empathy, A4= Cultural self-awareness, A5= National identity and cultural confidence, A6= Global mindedness, A7= Critical cultural awareness.

### 4.2 Comparison Intercultural Attitudes Across All Essays by Themes

**Table 3:** Distribution of Themes and Sources in Essays

Theme Type	Essays counts: video source from teacher (n)	Essays counts: video source from students (n)	Essay counts by theme type (n)	Percentage of essays by theme type
Education	6	4	10	27.0%
Language /Symbol	10	0	10	27.0%
Marriage /Family	4	2	6	16.2%
Values	1	9	10	27.0%
Cultural Event	1	0	1	2.7%
Total	22	15	37	100%

Since reflective essays are written on the basis of videos, themes of essays equate those of videos. As is seen from table 3, the distribution of themes in essays is not even. Among the total 37 essays, three themes remain equally dominant: education (10 essays, 27%), language / symbol (10 essays, 27%) and values (10 essays, 27%). Less distributed theme is Marriage/Family (6 essays, 16.2%), while the least chosen theme is cultural event (1 essay, 2.7%). This distribution suggests that students prefer intercultural topics related to their major, study and school life — themes of education and language/symbol — than topics far away from their student life, such as cultural event. The latter is considered the most

challenging, thus only one pair of students chose it. Students also showed interest in value-themed videos, likely because they had been introduced to the value approach in the course, which provided clear analytical lenses. However, videos about Marriage/family remained relatively unpopular among students.

It is a different picture if compare the number of essays based on two types of video source. Obviously, teacher-selected videos are more favored than those recommended by students. Among videos given by teachers, language/symbol (10 essays) and education (6 essays) are two themes of the highest choice rate among students, while among video source from students, value (9 essays) is unquestionably the most popular choice.

**Table 4:** Distribution of Intercultural Attitudes in Essays by Theme Type (counts and percentages)

Theme Type (n)	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7
<b>Education (10)</b>	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)
<b>Language/Symbol (10)</b>	9 (90%)	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)
<b>Marriage/Family (6)</b>	5 (83.3%)	5 (83.3%)	3 (50%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
<b>Values (10)</b>	6 (60%)	7 (70%)	6 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)
<b>Cultural Event (1)</b>	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total (37)</b>	31 (83.8%)	31 (83.8%)	15 (40.5%)	5 (13.5%)	8 (21.6%)	16 (43.2%)	4 (10.8%)

Note: A1= Respect, A2= Openness / curiosity, A3= Empathy, A4= Cultural self-awareness, A5= National identity and cultural confidence, A6= Global mindedness, A7= Critical cultural awareness.

When essays are categorized by themes, clear variations on intercultural attitudes emerge (Table 4). Firstly, education-themed essays exhibit the highest overall frequency in intercultural attitudes, with A1 respect for all cultural differences (10, 100%) and A2 openness / curiosity (10, 100%) the most prominent and A6 global mindedness of comparatively high distribution. Language / Symbol-themed essays are strong in A5 National identity and cultural awareness (5, 50%), whereas Marriage / Family-themed essays are weak in A5 national identity and cultural confidence (0, 0%), but they comparatively stand out in A4 culture self-awareness (2, 33.3%). Values-themed essays show the lowest overall frequency in all dimensions, except for A6 empathy being the most prominent (6, 60%), and A4 culture self-awareness and A5 national identity and cultural confidence (0, 0%) being the least obvious. The essay on the theme of cultural event has an outstanding performance in five components of intercultural attitudes. But considering only one essay on this theme, the result is not of high reference value.

To conclude, the distribution of intercultural attitudes shows that different video themes can affect indicators of intercultural attitudes that students demonstrate. Themes more related to students' study and life — education and language/ symbol can evoke stronger affectual and attitudinal expressions, especially the reflections on students' own culture. Broader and more abstract theme — cultural event — show the worst prevalence, but it can propel students to think in different perspectives and in a deep and critical manner. Students of higher intercultural competence are willing to challenge difficult themes.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Uneven Distribution of Intercultural Attitudes

We can conclude from research results that students welcomed foreign cultures as manifested in different types of videos and were willing to explore cultural differences with an open and unbiased mindset. However, being open, curious and respectful is the prerequisite of intercultural communication. To facilitate deeper intercultural understanding also requires empathy in both emotions and cognition. From the analysis of student essays, we found that perspective taking is expressed alone without empathy. For example, as one essay pointed out, “the direct communication of Western physicians may be perceived as impersonal by Chinese family members, while the euphemism of Chinese doctors may make Western family members feel that the information is not transparent.”

Secondly, the awareness of Chinese culture, national identity and cultural confidence is often neglected in students' reflections. This is a phenomenon that has been observed by other researchers (Wang, 2019), which often results in the aphasia of Chinese culture. It is agreed that the understudy and deficient awareness of Chinese culture will jeopardize students' further development as a Chinese citizen. The current curriculum may be one factor contributing to students' inadequate awareness of cultural self-awareness, national identity and cultural confidence. Chinese Culture and Intercultural Communication run in the same semester; Culture of English-speaking Countries is scheduled for the prior semester. This curriculum design may partly explain the higher proportion of foreign-culture-oriented elements in students' essays. If the current curriculum design remains

unchanged, the Intercultural Communication instructor should first get to know the students better — beginning with learning the schedule and content of the Chinese Culture course in advance. Besides, the teacher should design activities and tasks to guide students to explore their own culture, establish cultural self-awareness, and make a connection between Chinese and foreign cultures.

## 5.2 Impact of Video Themes on Intercultural Attitudes

An analysis of intercultural attitudes in essays by themes indicate that video themes on which student essays base correlate with students' emotional and attitudinal expressions. Stronger intercultural attitudes and emotions can be found when students write on familiar topics, most notably those relatable to their lives, whereas in-depth thinking and critical intercultural awareness are more likely to occur when students write on topics in need of more research, such as those related with cultural events. Therefore, teachers should choose such types of videos as teaching materials if they want to stimulate students' intercultural attitudes across components. But if certain components need to be enhanced, the instructor could consider more targeted themes. For example, to choose value and event-based materials to facilitate students' deep thinking.

Apart from videos, video contents such as plots, lines and dialogues can also arouse certain intercultural attitudes and emotions. For example, evidence of stronger national awareness is found in essays themed in language and symbols. That is because the video on that theme contains contents that can guide students to connect Chinese national culture to languages and symbols. For Intercultural Communication course and other EFL courses, instructors should choose videos aligned with the targeted attitudinal outcomes to develop specific intercultural attitudes.

## 5.3 Collaborative Writing and Critical Cultural Awareness

In the study, there is no strong evidence to prove the correlation between collaborative writing and critical cultural awareness, although it is often believed that collaborative writing can encourage more in-depth thinking between students, which has a potential to entail critical cultural awareness. The scarce distribution of critical cultural awareness shows that both collaboration and writing are not as satisfactory as expected. Therefore, instructors should give more detailed guidance in three aspects: the method to conduct deep reflections, writing skills of reflective essays and student collaboration in the writing process.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research aims to discover students' intercultural attitudes by assessing their performance in collaborative reflective essays. It finds that an overwhelmingly majority of students maintain an open, curious, non-judgmental and respectful attitude towards foreign cultures, but only a small minority of students exhibit evidence of cultural self-awareness and national identity. In addition, themes more related to students' lives or teacher's explicit instructions have positive correlation with stronger intercultural attitudes displayed in student essays. Lastly,

critical thinking awareness may not be developed unless deep reflections occur. However, deep reflections may not necessarily be inspired by collaborative reflective writing.

Based on these findings, Intercultural Communication and EFL courses need a reposition of teaching objectives to strengthen students' self-awarenesses, cultural identity and cultural confidence. By selecting materials rich in national and local culture, instructors can guide students to explore their cultural identity and, in turn, strengthen cultural confidence.

However, this research failed to conduct a dynamic assessment of students' intercultural attitudes. Future research may adopt more diverse research methods to track students' development of intercultural attitudes over the course. In addition, more explorations could be done by systematically comparing pair and individual writing, writing based on videos recommended by the teacher and students to determine how different task designs affect the development of students' intercultural attitudes.

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