

**LEARNING BEYOND LANGUAGES: THE ROLE OF CROSS-
CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING COURSES AND LECTURERS'
INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN FOSTERING OPEN-
MINDEDNESS AMONG EFL STUDENTS**

THESIS

Submitted by:

Mira Anova

NIM. 220203136

Student of Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan

Department of English Language Education



**FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN
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BANDA ACEH**

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UNDERSTANDING COURSES AND LECTURERS' INTERCULTURAL
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THESIS

Has Been Approved and Submitted to the Thesis *Munaqasyah* Defense as One the
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Education

By

MIRA ANOVA

NIM. 220203136

Student of English Language Education Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher
Training Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh

Approved by:

Supervisor

Head of Department


Faishal Zakaria, S.Pd.I., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 196507092014111001


Syarifah dahliana, S.Ag., M.Ed., Ph.D.
NIP. 197504162000032001

It has been defended in *Sidang Munaqasyah*
in front of the board of the Examination for the working paper
and has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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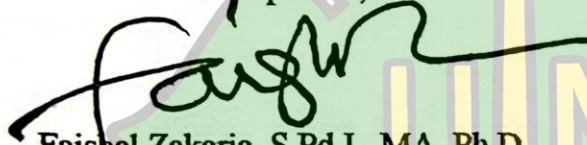
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August 11th, 2026
Safar 28th, 1448 H

Board of Examiners

Chairperson,



Faishal Zakaria, S.Pd.I., MA., Ph.D
NIP. 198010242011011002

Secretary,



Rizki Rinaldi, S.S., M.Hum.
NIP. 198806182025211003

Member,



Dr. Risdaneva, MA
NIP. 19831029015032003

Member,



Fera Busfina Zalha, MA.
NIP. 198902272018012001

AR - RANIRY

Certified by:

The Dean of Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh



Prof. Saiful Muhik, S.Ag., M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D
NIP. 017801021997031003

SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAAN

(Declaration of Originality)

Saya yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini:

Nama : Mira Anova

NIM : 220203136

Tempat/tanggal lahir : Bukit Gaden, 18 Agustus 2003

Alamat : Bukit Gadeng, Kota Bahagia, Aceh Selatan

Menyatakan dengan sesungguhnya bahwa skripsi yang berjudul:

**Learning Beyond Languages: The Role Cross-Cultural Understanding Course
And Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences In Fostering Open-Mindedness
Among Efl Students**

adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila ada kesalahan dan kekeliruan di dalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikian surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

Banda Aceh, 11 Agustus 2026

Saya yang membuat pernyataan:


Mira Anova

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Author

Mira Anova

ABSTRACT

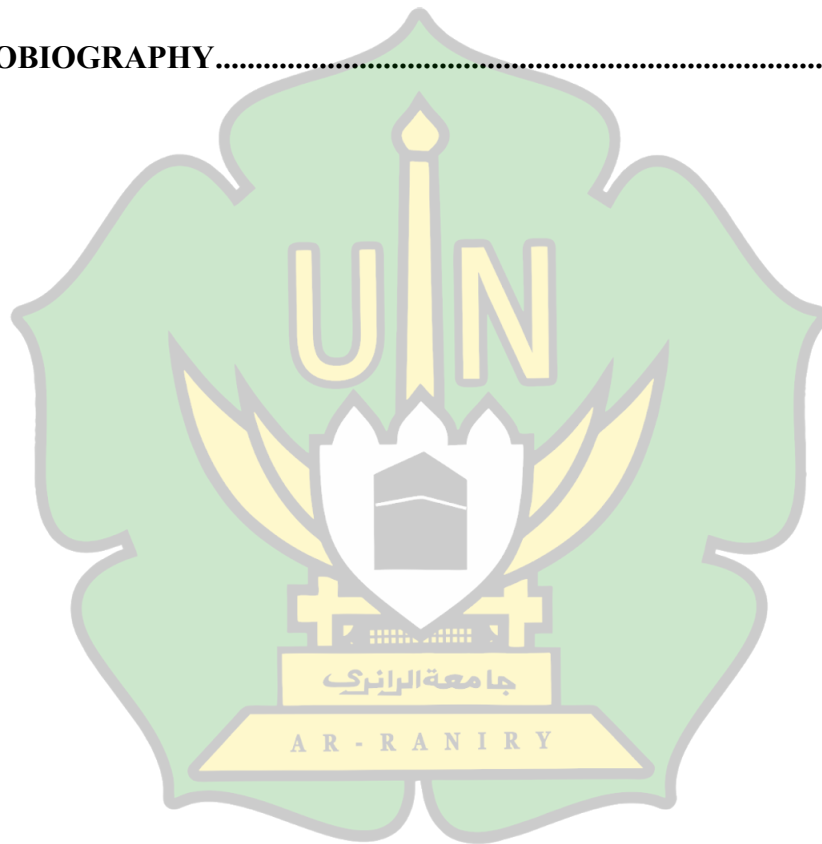
Name : Mira Anova
NIM : 220203136
Faculty : Education and Teacher Training
Thesis Title : Learning Beyond Languages: The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Courses and Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences in Fostering Open-Mindedness among EFL Students
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This study investigated how the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course and lecturers' intercultural experiences fostered open-mindedness among EFL students at a state Islamic university in Aceh. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed through semi-structured interviews with seven students (P1-P7), analyzed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis and interpreted through Byram's ICC model and Bhabha's Third Space framework. Nine answers were found. The CCU course fostered open-mindedness across Byram's (1997, 2021) *savoir comprendre*, *savoir être*, and *savoir apprendre/faire*, while lecturers' intercultural experiences functioned as a separate, trusted way of learning through someone else's experience, in one case directly changing a participant's earlier stereotype. The two sources worked jointly, a relationship that became clearer through Bhabha's Third Space framework as applied by Zakaria (2025), concluding that lecturers' intercultural experiences functioned as an active pedagogical resource rather than illustrative background.

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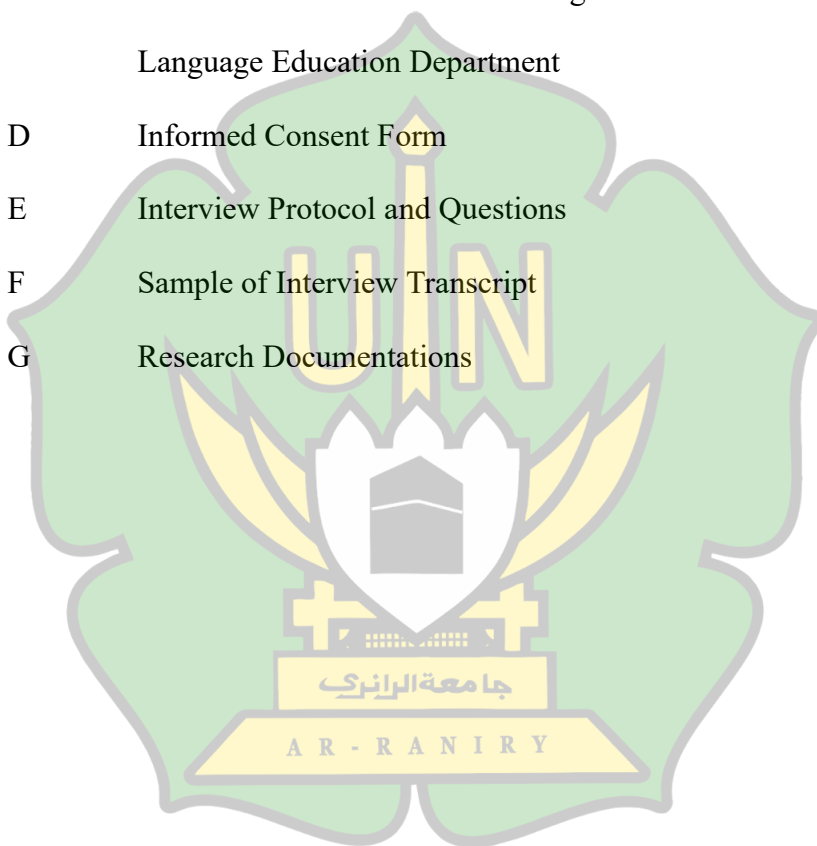
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In Indonesia, English language education departments do not only teach language skills but also emphasize understanding cultural diversity as an essential component of the curriculum (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018; Maulana, 2020). This broader approach recognizes that effective language education must integrate cultural awareness to prepare students for real-world communication. Language learning extends beyond linguistic dimensions: It also includes an understanding of the culture and worldview of its speakers, which comes from social interactions and cultural contexts (Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 1997, 2021; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). As a result, language acquisition is closely tied to understanding differences in values, customs, and perspectives. These differences shape how individuals communicate across diverse social settings. This viewpoint matches the idea of learning beyond language, which argues that language education involves fostering cultural awareness and appreciation for diversity.

In many departments of English language education, including the one where this study took place, this integrated approach is explicitly addressed through the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course, which is offered as a required subject. The course employs discussions, reflective activities, and case-based analyses to enable students to examine how cultural backgrounds influence communication, interaction, and interpretation (Feliani et al., 2023; Musaldin, 2025; Maulana, 2020), such as sharing personal cultural narratives and reflecting on real-life intercultural conflicts to

build empathy and reduce biases. Recent reviews further highlight its role in promoting critical reflection on cultural differences in Indonesian EFL settings (Musaldin, 2025; Maulana, 2020).

The curriculum encourages students to critically explore cultural differences and reduce misunderstandings among speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018), and it also helps students develop a non-judgmental stance toward cultural variations. These aspects help students approach cultural diversity with greater sensitivity and reflection. In addition, the curriculum lays a strong foundation for enhancing students' awareness and openness to diversity, particularly through immersion experiences that boost cross-cultural skills and language proficiency (Feliani et al., 2023). Nevertheless, cross-cultural learning within the department extends beyond the formal content of the CCU course. Many lecturers possess academic or professional experience abroad, and their encounters with diverse cultural environments are frequently shared during classroom discussions, even in courses not directly focused on cultural studies. These narratives serve as authentic learning resources, letting students see cultural awareness applied in real-world contexts (Rahmani Doqaruni, 2023).

In sharing these experiences, lecturers take on a role that can be understood through intercultural mediation: teachers of language have been described as intercultural mediators, using classroom interactions to help learners engage with culturally embedded meanings (Kohler, 2015). Research on the extended contact hypothesis shows that simply hearing about someone else's positive experience with another culture can make a person more open toward that culture, even without

experiencing it firsthand (Wright et al., 1997). A lecturer sharing a personal experience with students works in a similar way: students do not go through the experience themselves, but hearing it may still help shape their openness toward other cultures.

Classroom interactions involving personal narratives, reflective questions, and respectful attitude modeling play a crucial role in reducing ethnocentric judgments and fostering cross-cultural understanding (Fang et al., 2024). In practice, lecturers often use their personal experiences to model open-mindedness, showing students how such openness plays out when navigating unfamiliar cultural norms in communication.

Open-mindedness, the attitudinal outcome such practices aim to cultivate, is defined as curiosity and openness, along with a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (Byram, 1997), and it is essential for prospective English teachers (Carvajal & Duarte Medina, 2020). In a multicultural nation like Indonesia, where future educators encounter students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, open-mindedness is not only an asset but a professional necessity. Narratives shared by lecturers are known to serve an intercultural function, raising students' awareness of the differences between their own culture and the target culture (Rahmani Doqaruni, 2023).

Despite the presence of the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences, students appear to internalize open-mindedness to varying extents. Several gaps remain in the existing literature, particularly around the affective dimension of CCU learning (Musaldin, 2025), the role of lecturers' experiences as active pedagogical resources rather than background context (Fang et al., 2024), and the combined influence of both elements from the learners' own perspective. Chapter II discusses these gaps in greater

depth. Addressing them, the present study investigated how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences jointly shape students' open-mindedness in the Department of English Language Education.

B. Research Questions

1. How do students experience the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course in developing open-mindedness?
2. How do students perceive and interpret lecturers' intercultural experiences as part of their learning process?
3. How do the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural narratives jointly shape students' open-mindedness in English language education?

C. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore how students' lived experiences of the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course relate to the development of open-mindedness.
2. To examine how students perceive and interpret lecturers' intercultural experiences as part of their learning process.
3. To analyze how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural narratives jointly shape students' open-mindedness in English language education.

D. Significance of the Study

This study offers practical and theoretical contributions to the following stakeholders:

1. English Language Education Students

To increase their understanding of how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences foster open-mindedness, enabling them to become more culturally responsive educators.

2. Lecturers

To provide evidence-based insights on intentionally integrating personal intercultural experiences into teaching practices, enhancing students' open-mindedness and intercultural competence.

3. Department of English Language Education

To inform curriculum enhancement, such as integrating reflective modules or lecturer-sharing sessions, to strengthen intercultural learning in Indonesia's diverse language education context.

E. Terminologies

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout this study, the following key terms are defined as follows:

1. Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) Course

A required course in the Department of English Language Education that examines how cultural background shapes communication and helps prevent misunderstanding among English language learners (Maulana, 2020). The course employs discussions, lecturer explanations, and individual or group assignments to develop students' intercultural awareness and competence (Eliawati, 2019).

2. Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences

Personal academic experiences in diverse cultural environments abroad, which they draw on and share in the classroom as part of their teaching practice (Kaowiwattanakul, 2016).

3. Open-Mindedness

Curiosity and openness, along with a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (Byram, 1997).

4. Intercultural Competence

The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds, involving attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

5. Learning Beyond Language

An approach to language education that moves beyond linguistic forms to include learners' understanding of cultural values, worldviews, and identities embedded in communication (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Fostering Open-Mindedness Through The Cross-Cultural Understanding Course and Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences

This chapter presents the theoretical foundation relevant to this study. It begins with an explanation of the concept of open-mindedness, including its dimensions and its relevance within English Language Education. Next, the discussion turns to the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course, covering its teaching and learning practices as well as the challenges students commonly face. The chapter then examines lecturers' intercultural experiences as another potential source of open-mindedness. To connect these discussions, the chapter also outlines the theoretical framework underlying the study. The chapter closes with a review of previous studies to situate this research within existing literature, and the identification of the research gap that it aims to address.

1. The Concept of Open-Mindedness

Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) places open-mindedness under its attitudinal component (*savoir être*): curiosity, openness, and a readiness to relativize one's own cultural values while temporarily suspending disbelief about others (Bennett, 2004). Being open-minded here does not mean treating every viewpoint as equally valid. It means holding off judgment long enough to understand a cultural practice on its own terms before returning to one's own perspective.

This disposition matters in language education because it supports authentic intercultural communication (Wang et al., 2022) and is associated with a higher tolerance for cultural ambiguity (Dewaele & Botes, 2020). For pre-service English teachers, it plays an especially practical role: it builds the sensitivity to interpret students' culturally shaped behavior fairly, rather than judging it through their own cultural lens, such as misinterpreting a direct or expressive communication style as rudeness when it is simply a cultural norm (Gudykunst, 2004). This same sensitivity helps future teachers adapt their instructional strategies to diverse learner needs (Maulana, 2020), preparing them to act as mediators of cultural understanding rather than just transmitters of linguistic knowledge (Kohler, 2015).

Within Byram's framework, open-mindedness lets learners move from simply tolerating cultural differences to genuinely understanding and reflecting on them. This grows through repeated exposure to intercultural input, whether through the CCU course or lecturers' own intercultural experiences. How this growth works, through Byram's attitudinal pillars and Bhabha's Third Space, is explained further in the Theoretical Foundation section of this chapter.

2. The Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) Course

The Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course is a required subject in the Department of English Language Education curriculum at most Indonesian universities. It is designed to introduce students to key cultural concepts, intercultural value differences, and the ways in which culture shapes communication patterns and meaning interpretation (Maulana, 2020). Unlike

traditional culture courses that focus primarily on factual knowledge about English-speaking countries, CCU adopts a reflective and comparative approach that encourages students to examine global cultures alongside their own cultural background, positioning their culture as one among many rather than a universal norm (Byram, 2021).

The general objectives of the CCU course include raising awareness of global and local cultural diversity, understanding how culture influences communication styles and social behavior, identifying sources of intercultural misunderstanding, reducing stereotypes, increasing empathy, and strengthening students' intercultural competence.

a. Teaching and Learning Practices in CCU

Classroom practices in CCU often incorporate active learning strategies to help students engage critically with cultural concepts (Pratama, 2017). One common technique involves critical incident exercises, short stories about people from different cultures experiencing a moment of confusion or miscommunication. Students then answer guiding questions that help them consider different possible interpretations of the incident (Snow, 2015). These exercises are complemented by open class discussions in which students compare the cases to their own experiences and identify the cultural assumptions behind each interaction.

Students also complete reflective writing tasks that connect theoretical concepts to personal experience, helping them identify biases or assumptions that may have previously gone unnoticed, a practice shown to

support intercultural awareness among pre-service language teachers more broadly (Moloney & Oguro, 2015). Lecturers often connect these concepts to Indonesia's cultural diversity, reflecting a broader tendency among Indonesian EFL educators to relate culture teaching to the nation's ethnic and linguistic diversity (Munandar & Newton, 2021). Discussions emphasize how communication norms, values, and expectations may differ across communities, encouraging students to recognize that cultural variation exists not only internationally but also within their own country. Through these practices, students build the open-mindedness described in the preceding section, the curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend judgment central to Byram's *savoir être*.

b. CCU as Preparation for International Mobility

The CCU course also prepares students who plan to participate in international mobility programmes, such as student exchanges, IISMA, short courses, or postgraduate studies abroad. A solid understanding of cultural values, communication differences, and adaptation strategies has been shown to reduce culture shock and support smoother intercultural adjustment in host countries (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2012; Jackson & Oguro, 2018).

c. Challenges in CCU Learning

Challenges in CCU learning generally do not arise from lecturers' instructional competence but from students' initially low levels of cultural self-awareness. Many students have not yet recognized that everyday

behaviors, such as greeting rituals, addressing elders, eye contact patterns, and norms around interruption, are culturally shaped rather than universal. When confronted with unfamiliar norms, students often experience confusion, resistance, or defensiveness.

However, this resistance can become a valuable entry point for building open-mindedness. Through scaffolded reflection, supportive discussion environments, and gradual exposure to diverse cultural perspectives, lecturers can transform students' initial discomfort into productive opportunities for growth in open-mindedness.

3. Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences

The lecturers' intercultural experiences function as a highly authentic and powerful complement to the formal content of the CCU course. In language teacher education, it is common practice for institutions to send lecturers for study, training, or professional development abroad, and many lecturers subsequently draw on these international experiences in their teaching (Zhang & Wang, 2022). They frequently integrate these experiences into various courses. Their firsthand exposure to diverse cultural contexts provides students with real-world perspectives that are difficult to obtain from textbooks alone.

These narratives function as mediated intercultural learning (Fang et al., 2024), enabling students to engage with cultural concepts through credible, emotionally resonant narratives rather than abstract or hypothetical examples. Lecturers commonly describe experiences involving communication misunderstandings, misinterpretations of everyday social norms, and

adaptation to unfamiliar academic and social expectations while studying or working abroad (Fang et al., 2024). Such narratives present cultural concepts in concrete, relatable forms that deepen students' understanding of intercultural dynamics.

As lecturers recount moments of confusion, discomfort, or transformation, students are encouraged to examine taken-for-granted cultural assumptions, tolerate ambiguity when faced with unfamiliar norms, and practice non-judgmental responses in intercultural communication. These learning processes directly support the development of *savoir comprendre*, *savoir être*, and *savoir apprendre/faire*.

In short, lecturers' intercultural experiences turn theoretical knowledge into something vivid and memorable, which accelerates the development of open-mindedness among English Education students. Their intercultural backgrounds end up complementing the CCU course's structured curriculum, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Exposure to these authentic intercultural narratives has also been shown to foster empathy, reduce ethnocentrism, and stimulate self-reflection among students (Rahmani Doqaruni, 2023). In this sense, lecturer narratives serve as a pedagogical bridge between theoretical instruction and the lived realities of intercultural communication, complementing the structured content of the CCU course with credible, emotionally resonant examples of how cultural understanding develops in practice.

4. Theoretical Foundation

a. Third Space

Third Space is a concept that explains how two different things, such as formal knowledge and personal experience, can meet and produce new understanding, instead of simply being combined side by side (Bhabha, 1994). Rather than being treated as separate, these two sources continually complement and reinforce each other in the learning process.

This concept has been applied to English lecturers in Indonesia, where an online learning community became a space in which formal knowledge and real work experience met and formed new understanding (Zakaria, 2025). In this study, the CCU classroom is viewed in a similar way: course material and lecturers' intercultural experiences do not stand on their own, but work together to shape students' understanding. For this reason, Third Space is used as the lens to answer the third research question, namely how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences together shape students' open-mindedness.

b. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

In Byram's (1997, 2021) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), open-mindedness forms a main element of the attitudes component (*savoir être*). Byram identifies three attitudinal pillars that language learners must develop: curiosity, openness, and a willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures as well as unexamined beliefs about one's own. These attitudes lay the foundation for progression to other ICC

components, such as interpreting and relating cultural meanings (*savoir comprendre*) and engaging in culturally appropriate interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). Without sufficient open-mindedness, learners may struggle to advance meaningfully through these subsequent dimensions.

The significance of open-mindedness becomes even clearer when viewed through Bennett's (1993, 2004) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which outlines six stages of intercultural growth. The first three stages, namely Denial, Defense, and Minimization, represent ethnocentric orientations. The latter three stages, which include Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration, reflect ethnorelative orientations. Open-mindedness serves as the psychological "gateway" that enables learners to move from Minimization, where cultural differences are downplayed, to Acceptance, where they are recognized as valid and meaningful. EFL students who engage with authentic cultural narratives through CCU courses or lecturers' intercultural experiences demonstrate movement from Minimization to Acceptance.

In the Indonesian context, similar developmental patterns are evident. Research on Indonesian EFL teachers shows that greater open-mindedness supports stronger abilities to respond to cultural diversity and incidents of stereotyping through ethnorelative reasoning (Munandar & Newton, 2021). These findings highlight that open-mindedness supports attitudinal readiness as much as practical pedagogical competence in culturally diverse classrooms.

Recent expansions of Byram's framework extend ICC toward the concept of intercultural citizenship, which emphasizes ethical engagement, civic responsibility, and the ability to act across cultural boundaries (Porto et al., 2018). In this broader view, open-mindedness enables learners to navigate issues shaped by cultural plurality critically and constructively, which is increasingly relevant in Indonesia's diverse educational landscape. Therefore, open-mindedness should be understood as more than just a supporting attitude. For students in the Department of English Education, it is an essential prerequisite for achieving functional intercultural competence, as evidenced in their interpretation of cultural meanings, interactions with diverse learners, and design of inclusive classroom practices.

These theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual basis for examining students' open-mindedness in the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry in the present study.

5. Review of Previous Studies

Previous studies provide valuable insight into how intercultural learning develops within language education contexts. Research on the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course consistently shows that CCU effectively enhances students' cultural awareness, broadens their understanding of cultural diversity, and reduces stereotypical thinking among learners (Feliani et al., 2023; Maulana, 2020). Other studies highlight the important role of lecturers' intercultural experiences in shaping students' attitudes and perspectives.

Exposure to lecturers' intercultural experiences has been shown to deepen students' understanding of cultural norms and to strengthen their responsiveness during intercultural encounters.

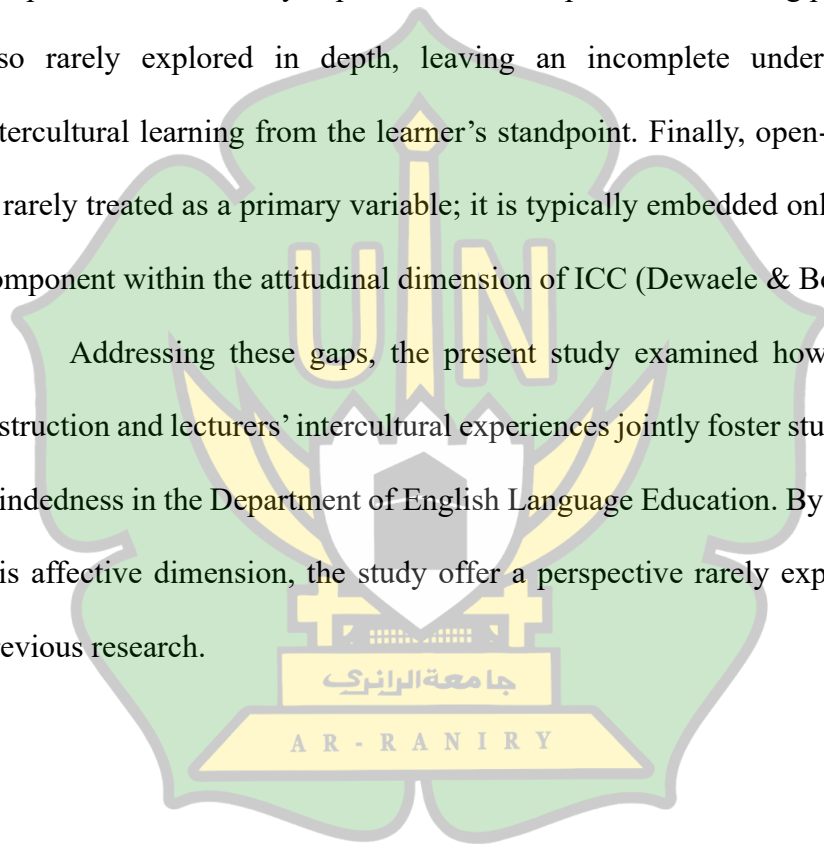
Several empirical works further emphasize the benefits of authentic cultural narratives. Such narratives have been found to promote open-mindedness by encouraging learners to critically reflect on unfamiliar cultural practices and reconsider their initial assumptions. These studies also show that authentic narratives significantly enhance students' cognitive flexibility and their willingness to evaluate cultural differences with greater empathy and nuance (McConachy, 2022). Taken together, these findings suggest that CCU courses, lecturers' intercultural experiences, and authentic narratives contribute in complementary ways to students' development of intercultural learning and attitudes.

6. Research Gap

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the existing body of literature. While studies acknowledge that international/intercultural experiences shape both cognitive and affective development among educators (Kaowiwattanakul, 2016), open-mindedness specifically has rarely been examined as a primary outcome in its own right. Although lecturers' intercultural experiences are acknowledged as valuable in shaping EFL pedagogy (Zulferdi & Husna, 2022; Huang et al., 2023), most studies treat these experiences as background characteristics rather than active pedagogical resources that directly shape students' affective development. How lecturers

intentionally draw on their experiences to foster open-mindedness remains underexplored (Rahmani Doqaruni, 2023; Fang et al., 2024). Furthermore, no previous work has investigated the combined influence of CCU instruction and lecturers' intercultural experiences, even though these two elements often appear at the same time in language education programmes. Students' perspectives on how they experience and interpret these learning processes are also rarely explored in depth, leaving an incomplete understanding of intercultural learning from the learner's standpoint. Finally, open-mindedness is rarely treated as a primary variable; it is typically embedded only as a small component within the attitudinal dimension of ICC (Dewaele & Botes, 2020).

Addressing these gaps, the present study examined how both CCU instruction and lecturers' intercultural experiences jointly foster students' open-mindedness in the Department of English Language Education. By focusing on this affective dimension, the study offer a perspective rarely explored in the previous research.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to deeply explore and understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings that English Education students attach to the development of open-mindedness. Specifically, it investigates how this trait is fostered through the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course and their lecturers' intercultural experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The phenomenological approach specifically aims to explore the essence of participants' lived experiences by examining how they interpret and make sense of the phenomena under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Through this approach, the study aimed to capture the essence and shared meanings of students' experiences in developing open-mindedness. Particularly how they subjectively perceive, feel, and interpret the contributions of formal CCU instruction and informal lecturers' intercultural experiences in fostering their willingness to consider alternative cultural perspectives without immediate judgment. This included revealing the interpretive, attitudinal, and behavioral shifts in their openness to cultural diversity as future English educators.

In this study, phenomenology enabled the researcher to examine how students personally experience and understand the development of their open-mindedness as influenced by CCU instruction and lecturers' intercultural experiences. This approach is particularly appropriate given the study's focus on subjective perceptions, affective

attitudes, and the personal meaning students derive from their intercultural learning experiences.

B. Research Participants

The population of this study consisted of students from the Department of English Language Education (PBI) at UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, from the 2023 batch who had completed the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course.

Participants were recruited in two ways. Four participants were already known to the researcher, two from taking the same CCU class together, and two from other courses. The researcher contacted them individually via WhatsApp, explained the research criteria, and confirmed their willingness to participate. The remaining three participants were recommended by other participants who were from the same batch. The researcher then met them in person, explained the research topic and objectives, and invited them to take part. Once they agreed, further details about the research procedure were shared through WhatsApp.

The participants of this study were seven students from the PBI Department at UIN Ar-Raniry. This sample size follows phenomenological research principles, which prioritize richness over breadth (Creswell & Poth, 2018), allowing for an in-depth exploration of each participant's lived experiences while providing sufficient diversity to identify meaningful patterns. To ensure the richness and relevance of the data, a purposive sampling technique was employed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were selected based on the following two criteria:

1. Had completed the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course.
2. Had been taught by lecturers who shared their personal intercultural experiences gained abroad during classroom sessions.

These criteria were set to guarantee that all participants could provide relevant data to answer the three primary research questions investigated in this study. The demographic profile of the participants is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Participants' Demographic Information

No	Major	Gender	Initial
1	Department of English Language Education	Female	P1
2	Department of English Language Education	Male	P2
3	Department of English Language Education	Male	P3
4	Department of English Language Education	Female	P4
5	Department of English Language Education	Female	P5
6	Department of English Language Education	Female	P6
7	Department of English Language Education	Male	P7

C. Method of Data Collection

In qualitative research, data are commonly collected through document analysis, observation, and interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that interviews can be carried out face-to-face, by telephone, or in groups, usually employing open-ended or semi-structured questions to explore participants' views in depth. Following this approach, the researcher utilized semi-structured, face to face interview, with each session during 30 to 45 minutes. These interview were conducted

in person within a quiet, comfortable setting to ensure participants felt at ease sharing their experiences openly.

To prepare for this process, the researcher developed an interview guide containing ten open-ended questions alongside informed consent forms. Before any data were obtained, the study's purpose was fully explained to the seven selected PBI students. Their written informed consent was then secured, ensuring they understood that participation was entirely voluntary. With the participants' explicit permission, each interview session was audio-recorded and later transcribed into raw transcripts. Since the interviews were conducted in a mix of Indonesian and English, the transcripts were subsequently translated into English to facilitate the coding and analysis process.

D. Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher first read through the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data, then gave initial codes to statements related to the CCU course, lecturers' intercultural experiences, and students' open-mindedness. These codes were grouped based on shared patterns to find candidate themes. The themes were reviewed and refined along the way, an early draft of eight themes was later revised into the final set of nine as clearer patterns emerged, before each theme was given a clear name and written up in the findings.

The themes were then interpreted using Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) to explain how participants' open-mindedness developed, while Bhabha's Third Space helped explain how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural

experiences worked together, addressing the third research question. To support the trustworthiness of the analysis, the findings were shared with participants for verification, and each stage of the coding and analysis process was documented so it could be reviewed later.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of this study, which explored how the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course and lecturers' intercultural experiences fostered open-mindedness among EFL students. The findings were derived from a reflexive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with seven participants (P1-P7), interpreted through Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model, particularly the *savoir* components relevant to open-mindedness. Nine themes emerged from the data, each supported by illustrative quotations drawn directly from the interview transcripts.

A. Research Findings

Table 4.1 Overview of Themes

No	Theme	RQ	Focus
1	Conceptual Knowledge from CCU as an Interpretive Lens	RQ1	Using CCU concepts to make sense of cultural differences
2	Suspending Judgment: A Shift Toward Understanding Before Judging	RQ1	Learning to understand before judging unfamiliar practices
3	Cultural Relativism: Recognizing "Different" Instead of "Wrong"	RQ1	Seeing cultural differences as different, not wrong
4	Emotional Regulation: From Reactive to Calm and Curious	RQ1	Reacting to cultural differences with more calm and curiosity
5	Behavioral Change in Cross-Cultural Interaction	RQ1	Preparing for and adjusting behavior in intercultural encounters
6	Authenticity of Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences as a Bridge	RQ2	Lecturers' intercultural experiences making abstract concepts feel real and believable
7	Translating Open-Mindedness into Future Teaching Practice	RQ3	Applying open-mindedness to future teaching
8	CCU and Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences as Complementary	RQ3	CCU and lecturers' intercultural experiences working together as two direct sources of open-mindedness

9	Limits and Tensions: Critical Reflections and Counter-Examples	RQ3	Critical reflections that complicate a simple success story
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1. Conceptual Knowledge from CCU as an Interpretive Lens

This section focuses on how participants perceived the conceptual knowledge introduced in the CCU course as a framework for understanding cultural differences. Through concepts such as stereotypes, culture shock, individualism, collectivism, and power distance, participants gained knowledge that helped them understand cultural practices that at first seemed unfamiliar. Rather than treating these concepts as abstract theory, participants used them to interpret real encounters and to reconsider assumptions they had previously taken for granted.

P1 recounted an experience that reflects the concept of power distance, although she did not use that term herself, when she reinterpreted a moment of confusion:

“So I wondered, is that already normal for them or what? I thought maybe they just treat everyone the same. But then I thought again, maybe in their environment it is like how people abroad do it, not using bang or kak. Their culture just does not have that kind of address.”

P1 explained that her early confusion, seeing someone address an older person by first name instead of using kinship terms like bang or kak, cleared up once she applied CCU’s concept of cultural variation in social address, even though she never named the concept herself. P4 ran into a similar address-norm moment involving a lecturer’s intercultural experience, echoing the same interpretation independently. In

both cases, conceptual knowledge worked as an interpretive lens, turning confusion into a reasoned explanation for something unfamiliar.

A similar pattern of applying conceptual knowledge was expressed by P2 in relation to individualism and collectivism:

“there are some countries that have an individualistic culture, where their culture is more personal, more individual... As for collectivistic, they are more communal.”

P2 explained that distinguishing between individualistic and collectivistic cultures gave him a framework for anticipating differences before he even encountered them. The vocabulary from CCU gave participants categories to organize and predict cultural variation, rather than only reacting to it after the fact.

P5 further illustrated how conceptual knowledge reshaped her prior reliance on stereotypes:

“During the class, I learned that every culture has its own values, perspectives, habits, and ways of communicating... So the class helped me realize that we cannot just judge if we do not understand or do not yet know the culture behind that place.”

P5 explained that before taking CCU, she often judged other cultures based on stereotypes she picked up from social media. Learning that every culture has its own coherent system of values and communication styles let her replace that habit with a more informed, culture-specific view. Conceptual knowledge, then, did more than explain unfamiliar behavior: it pushed out the less accurate, stereotype-based judgments she used to rely on.

Across these three cases, conceptual knowledge did real work: it gave participants a lens for reading unfamiliar situations, a way to anticipate difference before meeting it, and a tool for replacing stereotype with a more grounded understanding of culture.

2. Suspending Judgment: A Shift Toward Understanding Before Judging

Building on the interpretive lens described above, this section focuses on how participants described becoming more willing to understand cultural differences before making judgments. After taking the CCU course, participants reported that they no longer immediately saw unfamiliar practices as strange or inappropriate. Instead, they started pausing to consider the cultural background behind something before drawing any conclusions.

P1 described this shift directly:

“I try harder to understand first before judging someone.”

P1 explained that after taking CCU, she made a conscious effort to understand a person’s background before judging their behavior, pointing to the direct “kau-kau” address style used by people from Medan as an example of a regional norm rather than a sign of rudeness. This marks a deliberate shift away from snap judgment toward reflective understanding.

P4 elaborated on the reasoning behind this shift:

“Now when I encounter opinions or behaviors that differ from what I am used to, I do not immediately judge, but instead try to understand the reason why they think or act that way.”

P4 emphasized that her response to unfamiliar opinions or behaviors changed from immediate evaluation to an active search for underlying reasons, adding that she had also become calmer and less easily offended when encountering cultural differences. This shows that suspending judgment took real effort: it meant actively looking for an explanation, not just tolerating the difference passively.

P6 described a similar reflective process when encountering unfamiliar behavior:

“not immediately judging, but understanding more, oh maybe that is just their culture.”

P6 described a specific moment in Medan when a young child greeted her with “hi,” only for the child’s mother to tell the child not to be too friendly, an incident P6 initially found a little offensive. After sharing the incident with a friend, she arrived at a reframed understanding of the encounter: instead of reacting negatively to unfamiliar behavior, she reminded herself that the behavior might simply reflect a different cultural background. This shows that attributing behavior to cultural difference, rather than personal fault, served as a strategy for suspending judgment in the moment, one that in this case followed a real and initially uncomfortable encounter rather than only classroom learning.

Across these experiences, participants became more willing to suspend immediate judgment when encountering cultural differences. Rather than relying only on their own cultural assumptions, they increasingly paused to consider that behaviors and practices might be shaped by different cultural backgrounds and experiences.

3. Cultural Relativism: Recognizing “Different” Instead of “Wrong”

Closely related to this growing willingness to suspend judgment, this section looks at how participants came to see cultural differences as variations in practice rather than as right or wrong in themselves. After taking the CCU course, participants reported becoming more aware that each culture operates by its own internal logic, which encouraged them to reframe unfamiliar practices as different, not worse.

P1 expressed this reframing clearly:

“What feels abnormal to us is completely normal to others.”

P1 explained that a practice that initially struck her as strange, seen through a western movie, was in fact entirely ordinary within its own cultural context. This indicates a shift away from judging other cultures by her own culture’s standard, toward recognizing that what counts as normal differs from one culture to another.

P4 articulated a similar relativistic stance:

“there is actually no right or wrong, it depends on each culture.”

P4 explained that after comparing norms of politeness across cultures, she concluded that no single culture’s standard could be treated as universally correct. This reflects that cultural relativism was not limited to a single example but had become a generalized principle she applied across situations.

P5 extended this relativistic view to communication style:

“in some cultures, being direct can sometimes be seen as rude by others, even though for that person it is just their normal culture.”

P5 explained that a direct manner of speaking, which might be judged as rude in one cultural frame, is simply an unmarked norm within another. This shows that

participants extended cultural relativism beyond visible customs to more subtle dimensions such as communication style.

P3 offered a further example of this relativistic reframing, describing how a regional stereotype about loud speech was reinterpreted once its cultural background was understood:

“It does not mean seeing differences as something wrong, but respecting them and trying to respond and get along well.”

P3 explained that people from certain coastal Acehnese regions tend to speak loudly, a trait he had initially found irritating. Once he learned this was simply a product of their environment rather than a personal flaw, he came to engage with the difference respectfully instead of distancing himself from it.

These patterns show that participants came to see cultural differences as different, coherent ways of doing things, not as mistakes measured against one correct standard. This shift showed up across many areas, from everyday behavior to styles of communication.

4. Emotional Regulation: From Reactive to Calm and Curious

Alongside this shift in how participants judged cultural differences, this section focuses on how participants described changes in their emotional responses toward cultural differences after taking the CCU course. Rather than reacting with shock, discomfort, or irritation, participants reported becoming calmer and more curious when encountering unfamiliar cultural practices.

P2 described this emotional shift:

“Emotionally, maybe we become calmer when we meet people from different backgrounds. And perhaps our communication style with them can also be adjusted accordingly.”

P2 explained that learning about individualistic and collectivistic cultures helped him approach unfamiliar people with more calmness and curiosity instead of unease, and that this shift also led him to adjust his communication style depending on who he was talking to. Here, emotional regulation was linked to the conceptual understanding from Theme 1: knowledge and emotion seemed to develop together, not separately.

P4 reported a comparable change in emotional response:

“Emotionally, I have become calmer and am not easily offended when I see cultural differences.”

P4 explained that she no longer felt easily offended by behaviors unlike her own cultural habits. She gave an example of a direct communication style she once saw as impolite but came to see as a cultural norm rather than personal rudeness, after recalling her lecturer’s explanation. Her emotional regulation, then, was grounded in a concrete way of reinterpreting what she saw, not just a general calmness.

P5 further elaborated on the reorientation from negative reaction toward curiosity:

“Emotionally, I have become calmer, more curious rather than having to react negatively.”

P5 explained that before taking CCU, she would easily feel strange or uncomfortable seeing behavior unlike her own, often wondering why the other person acted that way. After the course, her usual response to unfamiliar behavior shifted from discomfort to active curiosity. Emotional regulation, then, was not just about suppressing negative feelings, but about replacing them with curiosity.

Overall, participants described a consistent emotional shift: initial unease or irritation gave way to calmness and curiosity as they grew more familiar with unfamiliar cultural practices. This shift was closely tied to the conceptual knowledge and suspended judgment described in earlier themes.

5. Behavioral Change in Cross-Cultural Interaction

Following the interpretive and emotional shifts described in Themes 1 through 4, this section focuses on how participants described changes in the ways they approached and responded to cross-cultural interactions after taking the CCU course. Alongside these changes in knowledge, perspective, and emotion, participants also reported becoming more prepared to engage with cultural differences and more willing to adjust their behavior during actual intercultural encounters. This theme has two sub-themes: preparedness before encounters and real-time corrective action during encounters.

a. Preparedness and Anticipatory Adaptation Before Cross-Cultural Encounters

Several participants explained that the CCU course encouraged them to prepare themselves mentally before interacting with people from different cultural

backgrounds, rather than assuming others would behave according to Indonesian norms.

P1 described this kind of preparation:

“Now I would look things up first. Like if I want to go to Japan, what are Japanese people like? What is their culture like? What are the taboos there? Be more careful. Be more prepared.”

P1 explained that before going abroad, she would now research the culture and taboos of her destination rather than relying solely on financial planning as she had done previously. This shows that preparedness extended from a purely practical concern into a genuinely intercultural one.

P2 connected this preparedness directly to conceptual knowledge:

“Knowing that can help us be more careful when we are in someone else’s place, and also make it easier to adapt because we already understand how they are.”

P2 explained that knowing whether a culture was individualistic or collectivistic in advance made adaptation easier once he was actually in that environment. This indicates that anticipatory knowledge functioned as a form of preparation that reduced the difficulty of later adaptation.

P6 acknowledged that this kind of adjustment could nonetheless be demanding:

“if it is like that, we would have to adjust. And that is hard. Especially for an extroverted person.”

P6 explained that adjusting to a culture where strangers do not greet or acknowledge one another, unlike the Indonesian habit of smiling or making eye contact even with people they do not know, would be particularly difficult for someone with

an extroverted personality. This highlights that while participants recognized the need to prepare and adjust, this preparedness was not always experienced as effortless, but rather as a conscious adjustment against their own natural tendencies.

These participants became more prepared for future cross-cultural encounters, increasingly recognizing the importance of anticipating differences and adjusting expectations, even when such adjustment required deliberate effort.

b. Real-Time Corrective Action During Encounters

Participants also described behavioral changes that occurred during actual intercultural interactions. In situations involving potential misunderstanding or inappropriate reactions to difference, participants reported catching themselves and adjusting their behavior in the moment, or taking active steps to repair a misunderstanding.

P7 recounted a specific moment of self-correction during an interaction with a fellow Acehnese speaker with a strong regional accent:

“when he spoke his accent was very thick Acehnese. When I heard it, I still laughed a little, but then I quickly became aware that I should not be doing that... I calmed them down, reminding them that we are all Acehnese ourselves.”

P7 explained that although his initial reaction was to laugh, he quickly recognized this as inappropriate and moved to stop his friends from continuing to laugh, reminding them of their shared regional identity. This shows that real-time corrective action involved not only regulating one’s own reaction but also actively stepping in to correct the behavior of others.

P5 described a comparable instance of corrective action following an accidental offense in an online interaction:

“Sorry if my words made you feel offended. I apologize if this is just how my culture is here.”

P5 explained that after her direct, unfiltered way of speaking, something she described as a natural personal trait, was perceived as rude by another person online, she felt guilty about the misunderstanding and immediately apologized, explaining her cultural background as the source of her manner of speaking. This indicates that real-time corrective action also took the form of an active kind of repair, in which participants explicitly named cultural difference as a way of restoring mutual understanding.

Considered together, these examples show that participants did not only prepare for cross-cultural encounters in advance but also actively corrected their behavior, or the behavior of those around them, during live intercultural interactions. This reflects a more advanced, in-the-moment form of open-mindedness than preparedness alone.

6. Authenticity of Lecturers’ Intercultural Experiences as a Bridge Between Theory and Practice

In addition to these behavioral changes, this section focuses on how participants perceived lecturers’ intercultural experiences as an important complement to the conceptual material taught in the CCU course. Participants explained that hearing lecturers’ intercultural experiences made abstract cultural concepts feel concrete and believable because they came from a source they trusted and could relate to directly.

P1 explained the emotional weight carried by these authentic intercultural experiences:

“It feels like we are right there. Even though it is our lecturers’ experience, it feels real because it is genuinely from their lives.”

P1 explained that although the experience belonged to her lecturer rather than to herself, such as her lecturer’s intercultural experience of walking home alone at night abroad and being followed by drunk strangers, which led P1 to draw her own lesson about avoiding solo outings at night, hearing it recounted directly made the cultural differences described feel real rather than abstract. This indicates that authenticity was tied specifically to the personal, first-hand nature of the experience.

P2 recounted a specific instance in which a lecturer’s firsthand experience directly challenged a stereotype:

“The stereotype was that people in the US are more fierce. But when the lecturer was there, they once got lost, and thankfully someone guided them back to their apartment. Even though the lecturer had been too afraid to ask anyone for help, because they thought the stereotype could even put them in danger. It turned out not to be the case.”

P2 explained that hearing about a lecturer’s experience abroad, such as an instance in which the lecturer, despite believing the stereotype that people in the US were unfriendly, ended up being helped by a stranger after getting lost, felt more real than passively watching similar content as an audience, because the intercultural experience came from someone he knew personally. This reflects the fact that authenticity was strengthened by the existing relationship between student and lecturer,

which lent additional credibility to the experience and helped directly challenge a stereotype.

P5 further contrasted the authenticity of lecturers' intercultural experiences with impersonal written sources:

“It felt like an authentic story because it came directly from the lecturers... not like reading a storybook where we do not know who the author is.”

P5 explained that unlike an anonymous storybook, a lecturer's intercultural experience carried the credibility of a known and identifiable source, and that hearing these intercultural experiences also helped her realize that experiencing culture shock was a normal part of adapting to a new environment, not a sign of personal failure. This shows that participants judged authenticity by whether they could identify and trust the person recounting the experience, not merely by its content.

Together, these three experiences indicate that lecturers' authentic intercultural experiences functioned as a bridge between theory and practice in the CCU course, with their personal experiences helping participants move beyond conceptual understanding by providing concrete, credible, and emotionally resonant examples of how cultural differences are actually experienced.

7. Translating Open-Mindedness into Future Teaching Practice

Building on this sense of authenticity, this section focuses on how participants perceived the relevance of open-mindedness to their future roles as English teachers. Participants explained that the knowledge and insights gained from the CCU course encouraged them to think concretely about how they would treat culturally diverse students in their future classrooms.

P2 framed this translation in terms of avoiding a fixed mindset as a teacher:

“So if we are not open-minded, we end up being a fixed-mindset teacher... you have to embrace everyone.”

P2 explained that failing to remain open-minded would risk turning a teacher into someone rigid and unaccepting of difference, and that a sense of solidarity with students from different backgrounds was part of what a good teacher must embrace. This indicates that open-mindedness was understood by P2 not simply as a personal trait but as a professional obligation.

P4 expressed a similar hope for her future teaching:

“I want to become a teacher who is more open, who appreciates differences, and who can make students feel comfortable without being afraid of being judged because of their culture.”

P4 explained that she specifically wanted her students to feel free from the fear of being judged for their cultural background. This indicates that P4 translated her own experience of learning to suspend judgment (Theme 2) into a concrete pedagogical goal for her future students.

P5 described a comparable vision for her future classroom:

“I want my classroom to be a place where students feel accepted, feel welcomed with their different cultures... let them express their own culture without any racism.”

P5 explained that she imagined her future classroom as a space where students, who would naturally differ not only in culture but also in family background, could openly express their cultural identities without fear of racism. This shows that

participants extended open-mindedness beyond personal attitude into an explicit standard for the kind of learning environment they intended to create.

These reflections reveal that participants viewed open-mindedness as directly relevant to their future teaching practice. The knowledge, emotional regulation, and behavioral adjustments described in the preceding themes were consistently reframed by participants as resources they intended to draw upon when teaching culturally diverse students.

8. CCU and Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences as Complementary Sources of Open-Mindedness

Beyond how lecturers' intercultural experiences made conceptual material feel concrete, several participants went further and explicitly described the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences as two sources that worked together to directly produce their open-mindedness, rather than one merely reinforcing the other.

P1 described this combination as functioning like theory paired with direct practice:

“So the CCU course and the lecturers' stories complement each other in making me more open-minded. It is really like theory combined with direct practice, the right combination. If we only learn the theory, we would not have any real picture of it, like learning math with formulas but no practice problems.”

P1 explained that the conceptual material from CCU alone would have remained abstract, and that it was specifically the pairing with lecturers' intercultural experiences that made the course's impact on her open-mindedness feel complete and applicable.

P2 described a similar combination, framed as a sequential process:

“I feel that the CCU course and the lecturers’ stories together have greatly expanded my thinking toward cultural diversity. The CCU course is more theoretical... but the stories from the lecturers are more concrete examples... First we get the theory from CCU, and then we get the real-world context from the lecturers... it truly made me more open-minded.”

P2 explained that receiving the conceptual framework first, then encountering it again through a lecturer’s intercultural experience, produced a stronger and more lasting impression than either source would have on its own.

P5 offered a similar description, pointing to both the ideas and the feelings involved:

“The CCU gave me a theoretical understanding... the stories helped me understand the concepts about culture and communication. And the personal stories made me emotionally connect with those concepts. So together they helped me become more open-minded and more accepting toward cultural diversity.”

P5 explained that the course supplied the conceptual understanding while the lecturer’s intercultural experience supplied an emotional entry point into that same understanding, and that it was the combination of both registers, not either alone, that she credited for her growing open-mindedness.

Taken together, these three experiences indicate that participants did not experience the CCU course and lecturers’ intercultural experiences as separate or merely sequential inputs, but as two complementary sources whose combination they credited directly with fostering their open-mindedness.

9. Limits and Tensions: Critical Reflections and Counter-Examples

In addition to these positive developments, this section focuses on participants' critical reflections that complicated a straightforward reading of the CCU course producing open-mindedness. These reflections raised different kinds of concerns: some participants questioned the accuracy of the cultural concepts themselves, others pointed to a risk built into the teaching method, and others questioned how much of their own open-mindedness could really be credited to the course at all. Combined, these three angles of critique highlight that the development of open-mindedness was shaped by multiple factors beyond the course alone.

P3 questioned the accuracy of applying cultural generalizations the same way to every individual:

"I personally do not quite agree, because every person has their own introvert and extrovert tendencies... many actually prefer to be individual even though they live in Indonesia."

P3 explained that although Indonesia is often characterized as a collectivistic society, many individuals within it are personally more individualistic in personality. This indicates a critical awareness that cultural-level generalizations, such as the individualism-collectivism framework discussed in Theme 1, do not necessarily predict the behavior of every individual within that culture.

A second, different concern involved the teaching method itself, specifically the use of lecturers' personal intercultural experiences. P6 raised a concern that reflecting too closely on such experiences could foster negative rather than open-minded

thinking, questioning what the appeal of a place would be if the people living there were not welcoming to outsiders:

“If we say it is a cool city, what is the point of going there if their attitude turns out to be like that?”

P6 explained that her lecturer’s intercultural experience about Japanese commuters ignoring a foreigner who asked for directions (Theme 6) complicated her positive image of Japan as a disciplined, admirable country, leading her to question the appeal of visiting a place whose people might not be welcoming to outsiders. She noted, however, that her lecturer had qualified this impression by explaining that such indifference was mostly confined to large cities, and that people in smaller towns had in fact been considerably more welcoming. This indicates that lecturers’ intercultural experiences, while generally described as a source of authentic learning (Theme 6), could also carry a risk of reinforcing negative impressions if not carefully framed and contextualized.

A third line of critique questioned how much of participants’ open-mindedness could actually be credited to the CCU course itself, as opposed to factors that existed independently of it. P6 reflected that her personality already inclined her not to judge others quickly, even before taking CCU:

“It just feels normal to me... my personality is already kind of like, how do I say it, not the type to judge anyway.”

P6 explained that responding to difference this way already felt normal to her before she encountered the course material, indicating that the course may have

reinforced and articulated a pre-existing disposition rather than creating an entirely new one, and complicating a simple cause-and-effect reading of the course's influence.

"I also once met Sundanese people during community service, they were kind of too expressive... their gestures were too free in expressing themselves... we felt a bit embarrassed watching it."

P6 also recounted meeting Sundanese colleagues during community service, describing their expressiveness as excessive and admitting she felt a little embarrassed watching them. Unlike the Medan incident described in Theme 2, this reaction was not revisited or reframed within the interview. The implications of this contrast are taken up further in the Discussion.

A related but distinct concern was raised by P7, who reflected that his open-minded stance already existed prior to CCU and was strengthened, rather than created, by the course and its lecturers' intercultural experiences:

"Actually, from the beginning, I was already not really fond of judging people directly. But with CCU and these lecturers' stories, it strengthened my stance on that even more."

P7 explained that his tendency to withhold judgment predated the course, and that CCU and lecturers' intercultural experiences served to strengthen an existing stance rather than instill a new one. He added that this strengthened disposition remained somewhat untested in practice, since his day-to-day interactions were largely confined to people from broadly similar cultural backgrounds, meaning he had not yet encountered the kind of situation that would fully put it to the test. Together, P6's and P7's reflections show that conceptual learning from CCU alone may not fully explain

participants' open-mindedness. Pre-existing disposition and the extent of real intercultural contact both make it harder to draw a simple cause-and-effect conclusion about the course's influence.

These three angles of critique, questioning the cultural concepts themselves, questioning the teaching method, and questioning how much of the change could be credited to the course, together indicate that participants' experiences of becoming more open-minded were not all the same, and the CCU course alone could not fully explain them. While the course clearly contributed to participants' conceptual understanding, emotional regulation, and behavioral adjustment, pre-existing personal dispositions, the extent of participants' direct intercultural exposure, and their own critical engagement with the material also shaped how, and how much, open-mindedness developed.

B. Discussion

The discussion below relates the findings to the study's three research questions and the theoretical framework from Chapter II. The nine themes are not treated as separate findings, but as groups that connect to different parts of the research questions.

Themes 1 through 5 mainly answer the first research question. Together they show how students experienced the CCU course as a place to develop open-mindedness, moving through three stages of Byram's (1997) framework: interpreting cultural meaning (*savoir comprendre*), suspending judgment (*savoir être*), and applying this in real interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). Theme 6 answers the second research question, showing how students made sense of lecturers' intercultural experiences. Themes 7, 8, and 9 answer the third research question: Theme 8 shows most directly

how the CCU course and lecturers' experiences worked together to shape open-mindedness, Theme 7 shows how this carried into students' future teaching plans, and Theme 9 shows the limits of this picture.

The discussion follows this same order: first the interpretive and attitudinal shifts, then the behavioral changes, then how the course and lecturers' experiences worked together, and finally the critical reflections that qualify the study's findings.

1. Savoir Comprendre: Interpreting and Relativizing

Themes 1 and 3 are the first of three stages that together answer the first research question. They show one interpretive process, not two separate ones: participants first learn to interpret an unfamiliar practice, and this understanding then grows into a stable, non-judgmental way of seeing cultural differences in general. Each stage matches a specific point in Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence. When P1 reinterpreted an address-term encounter through the idea of power distance, she did more than notice a cultural difference: she replaced one explanation (rudeness) with another (a way of marking hierarchy in language). This is exactly what Byram's *savoir comprendre* asks for: not just being exposed to something unfamiliar, but actively using an interpretive tool to move past a first, stereotype-based reading. P4 described a similar situation on her own, in a completely different context, suggesting this was not a one-time reaction but a habit of thinking she could apply elsewhere.

The cultural relativism seen in Theme 3 is a further step. Where Theme 2 shows participants holding back judgment, Theme 3 shows judgment being replaced by a stable, alternative way of seeing things. This is a deeper form of *savoir comprendre*:

participants moved from interpreting a single unfamiliar practice to treating relativism as a general way of thinking. P1, P4, and P5 all came to see unfamiliar practices as “different” rather than “wrong,” showing this shift toward treating cultural differences as simply different, not wrong. P5 went even further and applied the same thinking to directness in communication, something the CCU course never directly taught, suggesting the shift was not limited only to the examples participants learned in class.

2. Savoir Être: Suspending Judgment and Regulating Emotion

Participants' growing willingness to suspend judgment (Theme 2) is closely connected to this interpretive skill, and this study treats it as the core of open-mindedness: being ready to hold back quick judgment while still trying to understand. P4's shift from judging right away to actively looking for the reason behind a behavior shows that suspending judgment took real, active effort, not just automatic tolerance. P6's experience makes this effort visible: she felt offended when a mother in Medan discouraged her child from being friendly toward her, but only reinterpreted the incident later, while retelling it to a friend. This is what Byram (1997) calls *savoir être*: a deliberate willingness to set aside disbelief about an unfamiliar norm, rather than a general attitude of tolerance. The reframing did not happen right away; it only came out once P6 put the incident into words for someone else. This suggests suspended judgment is something practiced in real moments, not just something learned in theory.

Theme 4 covers a side of this process that the interpretive stages above do not explain on their own. Participants described moving from surprise or discomfort toward calmness and curiosity (P2, P4, P5), showing that open-mindedness also came with an emotional cost that had to be managed, not just something to understand

intellectually. P2 connected his growing calmness directly to his understanding of individualism and collectivism, suggesting that this emotional shift did not happen on its own, but was made possible by the interpretive work in Theme 1: once he had an explanation for the unfamiliar behavior, the discomfort had somewhere to go. P5's shift from discomfort to curiosity goes even further, suggesting she was not just holding back a negative reaction but actively replacing it with curiosity, a pattern similar to the emotional adjustment multilingual individuals report when facing unfamiliar cultural environments (Dewaele & Botes, 2020).

3. Savoir Apprendre/Faire: Behavioral Readiness

Theme 5 is the third and final stage that completes the answer to the first research question. It matches Byram's (1997) *savoir apprendre/faire*: the ability to put knowledge, attitudes, and skills into actual practice. The preparedness participants described (sub-theme 5a), such as P1's shift toward researching cultural norms before traveling and P2's use of prior knowledge to make adapting easier, shows behavioral change that was grounded in the interpretive learning described in Theme 1. P6's admission that this kind of adjustment could be effortful, especially for an extroverted person, adds a useful point: unlike simply recognizing something, behavioral openness required ongoing personal effort rather than a one-time adjustment.

The real-time corrective action described in sub-theme 5b is a more advanced form of this same behavior. P7's stepping in to stop his friends from laughing at a strong regional accent, and P5's quick apology after her direct communication style was misread as rude, both show an in-the-moment application of intercultural competence, beyond simply being prepared in advance. These examples suggest that behavioral

open-mindedness in this study went beyond avoiding one's own mistakes, to actively correcting the reactions of others too, a more socially engaged form of *savoir apprendre/faire* than what most existing literature, with its focus on individual self-regulation, would suggest.

Together, these three stages, interpreting cultural meaning, suspending judgment and managing emotion, and applying this in real behavior, make up this study's answer to the first research question.

4. Pedagogical Bridge: Authenticity, Joint Influence, and Future Practice

Theme 6 addresses the second research question directly, showing how lecturers' personal intercultural experiences functioned as what Kohler (2015) and Rahmani Doqaruni (2023) describe as mediated intercultural learning. Participants consistently distinguished lecturers' intercultural experiences from other sources of cultural input, such as films or storybooks, because the source was someone they knew and trusted. This is consistent with Wright et al.'s (1997) extended contact hypothesis: hearing about an intercultural experience from a trusted source can shift attitudes even without direct, first-hand contact. P2's description of a stereotype being directly challenged by his lecturer's story shows this mediating effect in practice. Lecturers' intercultural experiences, then, did not just illustrate concepts already taught. They actively changed what participants had assumed before.

Theme 8 answers the third research question most directly. Here, participants credit the CCU course and their lecturers' intercultural experiences together, not one supporting the other, with producing their open-mindedness. While Theme 6 shows the two sources working as a bridge to understand cultural concepts, Theme 8 shows

participants crediting both sources with shaping their open-mindedness itself. P1 described the pairing as theory combined with direct practice. P2 described learning the CCU framework first, then meeting the same idea again through his lecturer's story. Neither participant saw the two sources as repeating each other. Instead, each source added something the other could not provide on its own. P5 went further, describing the pairing as working on both a cognitive and an emotional level at once. In short, the two sources worked together, and neither one alone could have produced the same result.

Theme 7 shows this same joint influence carrying forward into participants' plans for their own future teaching. P4's wish to protect her future students from the fear of being judged echoes her own experience of learning to suspend judgment in Theme 2. P5's vision of a classroom free from racism extends the cultural relativism from Theme 3 into a concrete teaching goal. This fits Maulana's (2020) point that open-mindedness in EFL teacher education matters most when it shows up in planned classroom practice, not just as a personal attitude.

This pattern, where neither the course content nor the lecturers' stories alone explain participants' open-mindedness, fits Zakaria's (2025) use of Bhabha's (1994) Third Space with Indonesian English teacher educators. In that study, an online professional community became a hybrid space where formal training and real professional experience were worked out together, producing something neither could produce alone. The CCU classroom in Themes 6 through 8 worked the same way: course content was not just something students received. It was constantly shaped alongside lecturers' personal stories. For participants like P1, P2, and P5, the two

sources were not separate steps but fed into each other, exactly the kind of shared meaning-making Zakaria (2025) describes in a Third Space. In other words, the CCU classroom worked well not because the theory or the lecturers' stories were strong on their own, but because the classroom held both together and let them shape each other.

5. Critical Reflections: The Limits of a Straightforward Reading

Theme 9 plays a distinct role in this discussion, as it directly complicates the joint influence claimed in Themes 7 and 8 and addressed in the third research question. Three lines of critique emerged: questioning the accuracy of cultural generalizations (P3), questioning the teaching method itself (P6), and questioning how much change could be credited to the course at all (P6 and P7). Together, these critiques reflect this study's identified research gap: existing literature tends to treat lecturers' intercultural experiences as background context rather than as an active, sometimes uncertain, pedagogical resource.

P3 questioned whether the individualism-collectivism framework could really apply the same way to every individual within a culture (Theme 1). This shows an awareness that culture-level ideas do not always predict how one specific person will behave, something models built on these frameworks often overlook. P6 raised a different concern: lecturers' intercultural experiences, if taken too much at face value, could actually push students toward negative rather than open-minded thinking. This points to a limit in the mostly positive picture of narrative mediation from Theme 6: how well these stories work may depend on how they are framed, not just on the storytelling itself.

Most importantly, P6 and P7 both said their open-mindedness existed well before they took the CCU course. This fits Musaldin's (2025) point that CCU instruction in Indonesia still faces real challenges, including students starting from very different places and instructors sometimes holding a fixed view of culture. These challenges make it hard to credit the course alone for students' intercultural attitudes. Even P6's own openness was not fully consistent: she described her Sundanese colleagues as overly expressive and admitted feeling embarrassed watching them, without applying the same reframing she used for the Medan incident in Theme 2. This suggests that even a disposition participants saw as already there did not show up the same way in every situation. P7 added another point: his own disposition had barely been tested, since he had limited direct exposure to very different cultural groups. This suggests that self-reported open-mindedness may be an attitude someone holds internally without it yet being tested in practice. This distinction lines up with how this study separates *savoir comprendre*, *savoir être*, and *savoir apprendre/faire* in Themes 1 through 5.

This tension, between open-mindedness participants developed on their own and the institutional world they will eventually enter, connects to Zakaria's (2025) study of Indonesian English teacher educators dealing with strict institutional pressures and top-down policies, such as government targets for international publication. In that study, participants used an online community as a space to push back against these outside standards. Participants in this study may face a similar test. The CCU classroom offered a relatively safe space to develop open-mindedness, but once participants enter workplaces with fixed curricula, hierarchies, and top-down expectations, there may be

little room left for the kind of personal, negotiated understanding built in Themes 6 through 8. P6's and P7's own accounts, that their open-mindedness was uneven or already partly formed before the course, suggest that this attitude, even if genuinely held, is not yet a settled professional skill. It will need to be actively defended and reworked against institutional pressure, not simply assumed to carry over into practice. This points to what Zakaria (2025) calls professional autonomy: not just holding open-minded attitudes privately, but being able to act on them, even against the very institutions participants will be trained to serve.

6. Synthesis: Answering the Research Questions

Taken together, these findings answer the study's three research questions in a layered way. For RQ1, on how students experienced the CCU course in developing open-mindedness, the course helped students build this open-mindedness step by step: they first learned to interpret unfamiliar cultural practices instead of judging them right away (Themes 1 and 3), then grew more willing to hold back judgment and manage the discomfort that came with it (Themes 2 and 4), and finally started acting on this openness in real situations, both preparing for cultural differences in advance and correcting reactions in the moment (Theme 5). These three parts, interpreting, feeling, and acting, developed together rather than as separate stages, which fits Byram's (1997) view that intercultural competence works as an integrated whole rather than isolated skills. One qualification is needed here: Theme 9 shows that for two participants, P6 and P7, this picture doesn't fully hold, since both said their open-mindedness existed well before they ever took the course.

For RQ2, on how students perceived and interpreted lecturers' intercultural experiences, these experiences worked as a distinct, trusted form of learning, separate from other cultural input like films or storybooks. Hearing these stories directly from someone the students knew and trusted made abstract course concepts feel concrete, and in at least one case, directly changed a student's existing stereotype (Theme 6).

For RQ3, on how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences jointly shaped students' open-mindedness, participants said the two sources worked together to produce their open-mindedness (Theme 8), and this joint effect carried into how they planned to teach in the future (Theme 7). But Theme 9 complicates this picture: participants' open-mindedness didn't come from the course and the stories alone. It also depended on dispositions they already had before the course, and on how critically they engaged with what they were taught, a factor this study hadn't expected going in. This more complete picture answers the research gap from Chapter II directly: lecturers' intercultural experiences are not just background flavor to the course content. They are an active part of how students become more open-minded, even though that influence is still shaped by things happening outside the classroom.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusions

This study explored how the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course and lecturers' intercultural experiences fostered open-mindedness among EFL students, guided by three research questions. Based on the findings and discussion presented in Chapter IV, the following conclusions were drawn.

In response to the first research question, the CCU course fostered open-mindedness through three related steps, following Byram's (1997, 2021) framework. Participants first built *savoir comprendre*, the skill of interpreting cultural meaning, moving from applying conceptual knowledge as an interpretive lens to adopting a stable relativistic stance toward cultural difference. This interpretive groundwork supported a growing willingness to suspend immediate judgment and a shift from discomfort toward calmness and curiosity, the attitudinal core of open-mindedness itself. This attitude, in turn, was expressed behaviorally, or through *savoir apprendre/faire*, as participants became more prepared for cross-cultural encounters in advance and more capable of correcting their own or others' reactions in the moment. This developmental picture required one qualification: for two participants, open-mindedness appeared to already exist before the CCU course, indicating that the course could not be credited as the sole origin of this disposition for all participants.

In response to the second research question, lecturers' intercultural experiences functioned as a distinct and trusted form of mediated learning that made abstract concepts feel real and easier to understand. Participants consistently distinguished these

experiences from other sources of cultural input, such as films or storybooks, on the basis of authenticity tied to a known, credible source. In at least one instance, a lecturer's intercultural experience directly revised a participant's prior stereotype, demonstrating that these experiences did more than illustrate concepts already taught.

In response to the third research question, participants directly credited the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences with jointly, rather than separately, producing their open-mindedness, describing the two sources as complementary. This joint influence extended into participants' anticipated future teaching practice. However, this joint influence should not be read as a clean, linear process. Participants' critical reflections revealed that their open-mindedness also depended on pre-existing personal disposition, the extent of their direct intercultural exposure, and their own critical engagement with course material. Read through Bhabha's (1994) Third Space, as applied by Zakaria (2025) to Indonesian English teacher educators, the CCU classroom functioned as a hybrid space in which formal course content and lecturers' intercultural experiences were continually negotiated together, rather than one simply reinforcing the other. This framing carries a further implication beyond the classroom itself: if open-mindedness is produced through active negotiation rather than passive absorption, then it is unlikely to remain fixed once participants leave the relative safety of the CCU course. The same negotiated, hybrid quality that made the classroom effective also suggests that this disposition will need to be continually renegotiated as participants enter professional environments with their own competing pressures.

Taken together, this study concludes that lecturers' intercultural experience functions not merely as illustrative background to formal instruction, but as an active

pedagogical resource whose influence is connected with factors beyond the classroom, including participants' pre-existing disposition and their capacity to critically evaluate what they are taught. This qualified understanding responds directly to the research gap identified in Chapter II, which noted a tendency in the existing literature to treat lecturers' intercultural experiences as peripheral rather than as a substantive contributor to EFL students' intercultural development.

These conclusions should be interpreted carefully. The study involved seven participants from a single CCU course cohort at one institution, and the data were drawn solely from semi-structured interviews without classroom observation or other forms of triangulation, so the findings reflect participants' self-reported intercultural experiences rather than a pattern that has been independently verified or that can be generalized beyond this context. Because this was a cross-sectional design, the study also cannot directly confirm whether participants' open-mindedness is sustained once they leave the CCU course, a question addressed here only through participants' own anticipations rather than follow-up data. Further research, including classroom observation or longitudinal follow-up, would help confirm and extend these findings.

B. Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the following suggestions are offered.

1. CCU Course Lecturers

Lecturers are encouraged to continue sharing personal intercultural experiences alongside conceptual material, given that participants consistently credited this pairing, rather than either source alone, with producing their open-mindedness. At the same time, lecturers are advised to frame such experiences carefully. This study found that

sharing an intercultural experience without enough context carries some risk of reinforcing negative impressions of a culture, as reflected in one participant's reflection on reconsidering her positive image of a country after hearing such an experience. Providing balancing context when sharing these experiences may help preserve their value for teaching and learning while reducing this risk.

2. EFL Students and Pre-Service Teachers

Students are encouraged to view open-mindedness not only as a personal disposition but as a professional competency that must be actively translated into future teaching practice, as several participants in this study already intended to do. Students are also encouraged to recognize that open-mindedness developed within the relative safety of a classroom may be tested once they enter professional environments with their own demands and fixed expectations, and that sustaining this disposition in practice may require deliberate, ongoing effort rather than being assumed to transfer automatically.

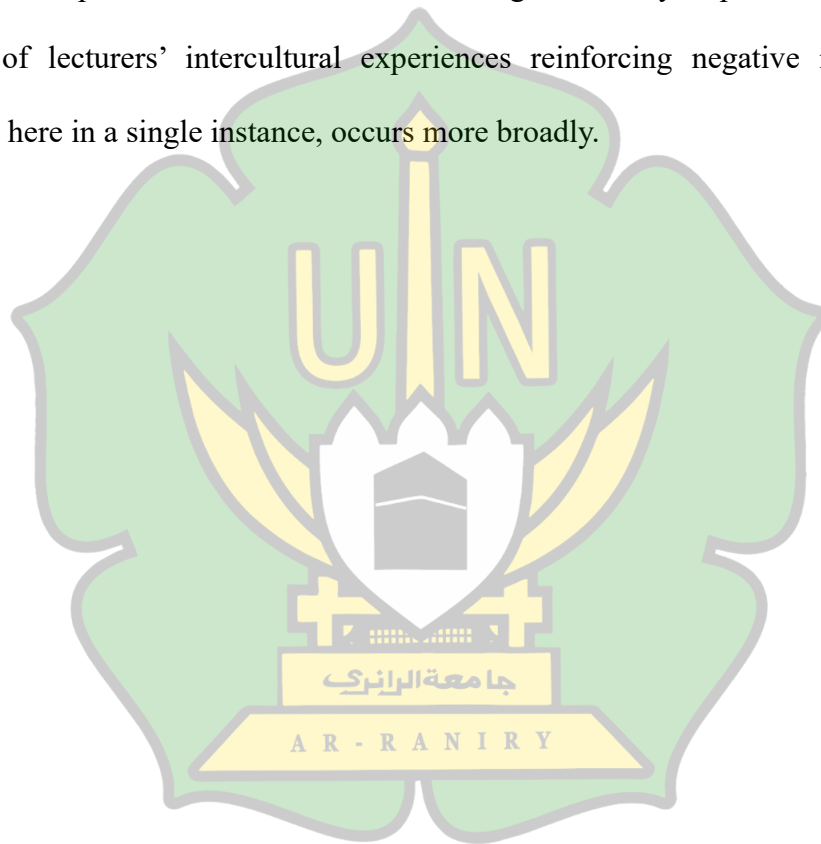
3. The English Language Education Department

The department is encouraged to consider structuring CCU and related courses to deliberately pair conceptual instruction with opportunities for lecturers to share their own intercultural experiences, rather than relying on conceptual instruction alone. Curriculum design might also consider providing lecturers with guidance on contextualizing personal intercultural experiences, in light of the risk noted above.

4. Future Researchers

Future research is encouraged to examine whether the open-mindedness developed within a CCU course is sustained once EFL students enter professional

teaching environments, given that this study's findings suggest such a transition may need to be revisited rather than continue automatically. Future research may also further investigate the relationship between pre-existing personal disposition and course-induced change, since the present study's findings indicate that these two factors are not always easy to tell apart in participants' own self-reports. Finally, future research involving a sample with more varied cultural backgrounds may help determine whether the risk of lecturers' intercultural experiences reinforcing negative impressions, identified here in a single instance, occurs more broadly.



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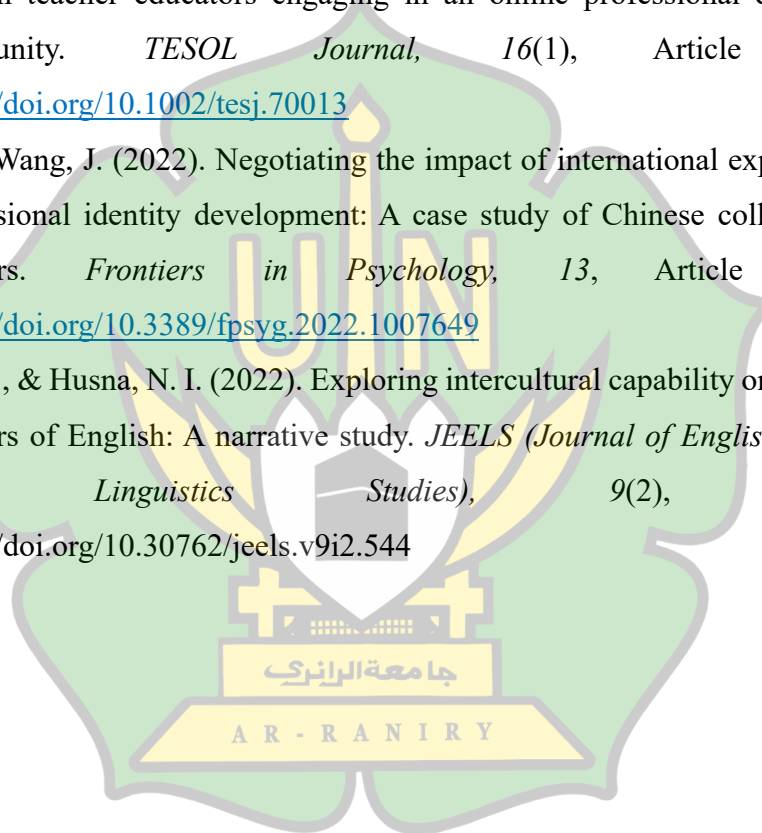
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Appointment Letter of Thesis Supervisor



KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
NOMOR: 374 TAHUN 2026

TENTANG:
PENGANGKATAN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI MAHASISWA
DENGAN RAHMAT TUHAN YANG MAHA ESA

DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

Menimbang : a. bahwa untuk kelancaran bimbingan skripsi mahasiswa pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh maka dipandang perlu menunjuk pembimbing skripsi;
b. bahwa yang namanya tersebut dalam Surat Keputusan ini dianggap cakap dan mampu untuk diangkat dalam jabatan sebagai pembimbing skripsi mahasiswa;
c. bahwa berdasarkan pertimbangan sebagaimana dimaksud dalam huruf a dan huruf b, perlu menetapkan Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

Mengingat : 1. Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional;
2. Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, tentang Guru dan Dosen;
3. Undang-Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012, tentang Pendidikan Tinggi;
4. Peraturan Presiden Nomor 74 Tahun 2012, tentang perubahan atas peraturan pemerintah RI Nomor 23 Tahun 2005 tentang pengelolaan keuangan Badan Layanan Umum;
5. Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 4 Tahun 2014, tentang penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Tinggi dan Pengelolaan Perguruan Tinggi;
6. Peraturan Presiden Nomor 64 Tahun 2013, tentang perubahan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
7. Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 44 Tahun 2022, tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
8. Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 14 Tahun 2022, tentang Statuta UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
9. Keputusan Menteri Agama Nomor 492 Tahun 2003, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang Pengangkatan, Pemindahan dan Pemberhentian PNS di Lingkungan Depag RI;
10. Keputusan Menteri Keuangan Nomor 293/Kmk.05/2011, tentang penetapan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh pada Kementerian Agama sebagai Instansi Pemerintah yang menerapkan Pengelolaan Badan Layanan Umum;
11. Surat Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor 01 Tahun 2015, Tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang kepada Dekan dan Direktur Pascasarjana di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

MEMUTUSKAN

Menetapkan : Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh tentang Pembimbing Skripsi Mahasiswa.

KESATU : Menunjuk Saudara:
Faishal, S.Pd.I., M.A., Ph.D.

Untuk membimbing Skripsi

Nama : Mira Anova

NIM : 220203136

Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Judul Skripsi : The Influences of Cross-Cultural Understanding Course and Lecturers' Experiences on English Students' Open-mindedness

KEDUA : Kepada pembimbing yang tercantum namanya diatas diberikan honorarium sesuai dengan peraturan perundang-undangan yang berlaku;

KETIGA : Pembiayaan akibat keputusan ini dibebankan pada DIPA UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor SP DIPA-025.04.2.423925/2026 Tanggal 01 Desember 2025 Tahun Anggaran 2026;

KEEMPAT : Keputusan ini berlaku selama enam bulan sejak tanggal ditetapkan;

KELIMA : Keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dengan ketentuan bahwa segala sesuatu akan diubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya, apabila kemudian hari ternyata terdapat kekeliruan dalam Surat Keputusan ini.

Ditetapkan di : Banda Aceh
Pada tanggal : 07 April 2026
Dekan

Saiful Muluk

Tembusan

1. Salinan Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
2. Ditans Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
3. Direktur Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Jakarta;
4. Kantor Pelayanan Perbendaharaan Negara (KPPN), di Banda Aceh;
5. Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh;
6. Kepala Bagian Keuangan dan Akuntansi UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh;
7. Yang bersangkutan;
8. Arsip.



Appendix B
Recommendation Letter from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
 UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
 FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN

Jl. Syekh Abdur Rauf Kopelma Darussalam Banda Aceh Telp/Fax. : 0651-752921

Nomor : B-4505/Un.08/FTK.1/TL.00/6/2026

Lamp : -

Hal : **Penelitian Ilmiah Mahasiswa**

Kepada Yth,

Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh
 Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry dengan ini menerangkan bahwa:

NIM : 220203136

Nama : MIRA ANOVA

Program Studi/Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Alamat : Jln T. Raja Angkasah, Desa Bukit Gadeng, Kec Kota Bahagia, Kab Aceh Selatan.

Saudara yang tersebut namanya diatas benar mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan bermaksud melakukan penelitian ilmiah di lembaga yang Bapak/Ibu pimpin dalam rangka penulisan Skripsi dengan judul **LEARNING BEYOND LANGUAGES: THE ROLE CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING COURSE AND LECTURES' INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN FOSTERING OPEN-MINDEDNESS AMONG EFL STUDENTS**

Banda Aceh, 11 Juni 2026

An. Dekan

Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan



Prof. Dr. Buhori Muslim, M.Ag.

NIP. 197508152001121002

Berlaku sampai : 17 Juli 2026

جامعة الرانيري

A R - R A N I R Y

Appendix C

Confirmation Letter of Conducting Research at the English Language Education Department


KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN
PRODI PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS
 Jln Syekh Abdur Rauf Kopelma Darussalam Banda Aceh
 Email : pbi.ftk@ar-raniry.ac.id. Website : <https://ar-raniry.ac.id>

SURAT KETERANGAN

Nomor: B-363/Un.08/PBI/Kp.01.2/6/2026

Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Darussalam Banda Aceh menerangkan bahwa yang nama tersebut di bawah ini:

Nama	: Mira Anova
NIM	: 220203136
Prodi	: Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Alamat	: Rukoh, Banda Aceh.

Benar telah melakukan pengumpulan data untuk penelitian pada Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh dalam rangka penyusunan Skripsi yang berjudul:

"LEARNING BEYOND LANGUAGES: THE ROLE CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING COURSE AND LECTURERS' INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN FOSTERING OPEN-MINDEDNESS AMONG EFL STUDENTS ["

جامعة الرانيري
AR - RANIRY

Demikianlah Surat Keterangan ini kami buat agar dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

Banda Aceh, 17 Juni 2026
Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris,


Syarifah Dahliana

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title : Learning Beyond Languages: The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Course and Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences in Fostering Open-Mindedness Among EFL Students

Researcher : Mira Anova

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. You are invited because you are a student in the Department of English Language Education (PBI) at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh who has successfully completed the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course and has been taught by lecturers who shared their personal intercultural experiences during classroom sessions. This research aims to explore how the CCU course and lecturers' intercultural experiences foster open-mindedness among EFL students.

If you agree to participate, you will be involved in a semi-structured face-to-face interview. The interview will include ten open-ended questions about your experiences in the CCU course, your perceptions of the lecturers' intercultural narratives, and how these have shaped your open-mindedness toward cultural diversity. Each session will last approximately 30–45 minutes, and with your permission, the conversation will be audio-recorded for accuracy.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, explanation, or any effect on your academic standing. You have the right to review, edit, or withdraw your data before it is analyzed.

Confidentiality

All information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name and any identifying details will not appear in any publication or report. Throughout the study, you will be referred to using a participant code (P1–P7) instead of your real name. Data will be stored securely in password-protected files and used only for academic and research purposes.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Principal Researcher:

Mira Anova

Department of English Language Education, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh

Email: 220203136@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

Statement of Consent

I have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any consequences. By signing below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Banda Aceh, 2026

Researcher,

Participant,

Mira Anova

(.....)

NIM. 220203136

Appendix E

Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol

Research Project Title : Learning Beyond Languages: The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding Course and Lecturers' Intercultural Experiences in Fostering Open-Mindedness Among EFL Students

Time of Interview :

Date :

Place : UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh

Research Investigator : Mira Anova

Participant :

Position of Interviewee : Student of English Language Education Department

This research explores how the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course and lecturers' intercultural experiences contribute to fostering open-mindedness among EFL students in the Department of English Language Education at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The purpose of this study is to understand how students experience the CCU course in developing open-mindedness, how they perceive and interpret their lecturers' intercultural narratives, and how both factors jointly shape their attitudes toward cultural diversity. Data will be collected through a semi-structured interview, and the conversation will be audio-recorded with the participant's consent. All data will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. The interview will take approximately 30–45 minutes.

Questions

1. How would you describe your overall experience taking the CCU course? What was it personally like for you as a learner?

2. Was there a particular moment or topic in the CCU course that genuinely shifted the way you think about people from different cultural backgrounds? Please describe it.
3. After taking the CCU course, how do you typically respond, emotionally and mentally, when you encounter perspectives or behaviors that differ from your own?
4. In what specific ways has the CCU course changed how you think or behave when facing cultural differences in your daily life?
5. Have any of your lecturers shared personal stories about living or studying in a different cultural environment during class? What was that experience like for you as a listener?
6. Was there a specific story shared by a lecturer that left a strong impression on you? What made it meaningful, and how did it affect the way you think about cultural differences?
7. Looking back, how do you feel those personal stories from your lecturers have shaped the way you understand, feel about, or respond to cultural differences?
8. Thinking about both the CCU course and your lecturers' personal stories, in what ways do you feel these two experiences have worked together in developing your openness toward cultural diversity?
9. Can you describe a specific situation where you responded differently to cultural differences because of what you experienced in the CCU course or through your lecturers' stories?
10. As a future English teacher, how do you feel these experiences, the CCU course and your lecturers' intercultural stories, have shaped who you are today in terms of openness to cultural diversity?

Appendix F

Sample of Interview Transcript

Interviewer : Mira Anova (MA)

Participant : P4

MA	How would you describe your overall experience taking the CCU course? What was it personally like for you as a learner?
P4	In my opinion, the experience of taking the CCU course was quite enjoyable and also gave me a lot of new knowledge. Before studying this course, I only knew a little about cultures outside of my own, and sometimes I still thought that everyone had more or less the same habits. But after taking the CCU course, I gradually came to understand that every culture has its own values, habits, ways of communicating, and ways of thinking. As a learner, I felt that this course made me more open to cultural differences. I also became more aware of the importance of respecting other people's cultures, and not immediately judging things from just one perspective. In addition, during our lessons we also often discussed examples of cultures from various countries, so the learning felt more interesting and not boring. In my opinion, the CCU course not only helped me in learning English, but also helped me understand how to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.
MA	Was there a particular moment or topic in the CCU course that genuinely shifted the way you think about people from different cultural backgrounds? Please describe it.
P4	Yes, there was. One of the topics that changed my way of thinking when studying CCU was the differences in habits and communication styles across cultures. Before, I often thought that what is considered normal in Indonesia would also be considered normal in other countries. But after studying this course, I realized that every culture has a different perspective on attitudes and behavior. For example, in Indonesia we are usually taught to speak politely, not too directly, and to be more mindful of other people's feelings when speaking. But in Western countries, people are more accustomed to speaking directly and openly. At first, I felt that way of speaking sounded a bit rude. But after it was explained in class, I came to understand that it is simply their communication culture and it does not mean they are being impolite. So indirectly, culture also influences the way we speak.

MA	After taking the CCU course, how do you typically respond, emotionally and mentally, when you encounter perspectives or behaviors that differ from your own?
P4	After taking the CCU course, I feel that the way I see differences has become more open. Now when I encounter opinions or behaviors that differ from what I am used to, I do not immediately judge, but instead try to understand the reason why they think or act that way. Emotionally, I have become calmer and am not easily offended when I see cultural differences or different ways of speaking. Mentally, I have also learned more to appreciate other people's points of view, even if they differ from my own. In my opinion, every person is raised with a different cultural background, so it is natural that their ways of thinking and habits are also different.
MA	In what specific ways has the CCU course changed how you think or behave when facing cultural differences in your daily life?
P4	After studying the CCU course, there are several things that have changed in the way I think and behave when facing cultural differences in everyday life. I have become more careful in judging others, especially when they have habits or ways of speaking that are different from what I am used to seeing. More understanding, not quick to judge. In addition, I also try harder to understand other people's perspectives before drawing conclusions. For example, if someone speaks very directly and has different habits, now I do not immediately consider it strange or impolite. I try to see that it might be part of their culture, from the place where they were raised. In everyday life, I also feel it is easier to appreciate differences and be more open when discussing with others. The CCU course made me aware that understanding culture is important, especially in learning English and communicating with people from different backgrounds.
MA	Have any of your lecturers shared personal stories about living or studying in a different cultural environment during class? What was that experience like for you as a listener?
P4	Yes, one of the most interesting experiences I have ever heard. During CCU, the lecturer once talked about their own experience living and interacting with a different culture abroad. From that story, I came to better understand that the culture abroad is really very different from what I am used to seeing in Aceh. For example, if you are late to class, people there usually just walk in quietly without saying excuse me. Because stopping to apologize is actually considered disruptive to the class. Whereas here, saying excuse me is considered

	polite. The lecturer also shared about how people address each other, even if the person is older. There, they usually just call them by their first name directly, without using terms like bang, kak, or sir. In addition, the lecturer also mentioned that asking personal questions is considered too private over there. It is not our business, too personal for them, and not considered appropriate either. Things that we consider polite in our own culture are not necessarily polite in someone else's country.
MA	Was there a specific story shared by a lecturer that left a strong impression on you? What made it meaningful, and how did it affect the way you think about cultural differences?
P4	One of the most memorable stories for me was when the lecturer explained about classroom culture in some other countries. The lecturer said that students who are late usually just walk into the class quietly without saying excuse me, because stopping to apologize is actually considered disruptive to the class. For me that was quite surprising, because we are taught that before entering a class we say excuse me first to be polite. But in other countries, that is what actually disturbs the class. What made that story meaningful for me was that I came to understand that every culture has its own way of showing respect. Before I heard that, I thought the way I normally do things was normal everywhere. After hearing the lecturer's experience, I became more open and aware that cultural differences cannot immediately be judged as wrong or strange.
MA	Looking back, how do you feel those personal stories from your lecturers have shaped the way you understand, feel about, or respond to cultural differences?
P4	Yes, in my opinion the stories from the lecturer have quite influenced the way I see cultural differences. Before, I sometimes thought that what I normally do would surely be considered polite in other places too. But after hearing the lecturer's experiences, I realized that every culture has its own rules and ways. Now when I see someone from a different culture doing something that might seem strange to us, I no longer immediately judge them, I try to understand first why they are like that. The lecturer's stories also made me more open and more careful when interacting with people from other cultures so as not to cause misunderstandings or offend them. So actually, whether something is polite or not depends on the culture. What we consider polite, others might not. And what we consider impolite, others might see as completely normal. So there is actually no right or wrong, it depends on each culture.

MA	Thinking about both the CCU course and your lecturers' personal stories, in what ways do you feel these two experiences have worked together in developing your openness toward cultural diversity?
P4	In my opinion, the lessons in the CCU class and the personal stories from the lecturer together helped me become more open to cultural differences. From the CCU material, I learned the theory and explanations about culture, while from the lecturer's stories, I got real examples directly from their own experiences. So I found it easier to understand that every culture does indeed have different habits and ways of thinking. From both of those things, I have learned not to be quick to judge people from other cultures. Now I try more to understand the reasons behind their behavior and to appreciate the differences that exist.
MA	Can you describe a specific situation where you responded differently to cultural differences because of what you experienced in the CCU course or through your lecturers' stories?
P4	Yes, I have. Before, when I saw habits from people with a different culture from mine, I would sometimes immediately feel that it was strange or be confused. But after studying in CCU and hearing stories from the lecturer, the way I see things has changed. For example, when I met someone who speaks more directly and does not use much small talk, at first I felt they were being a bit impolite. But then I remembered the lecturer's explanation that in some cultures, speaking directly is something normal, which does not mean they are angry or not respecting others. So I tried to understand first and not immediately judge negatively. From that experience, I feel I have become more open and more able to appreciate cultural differences.
MA	As a future English teacher, how do you feel these experiences, the CCU course and your lecturers' intercultural stories, have shaped who you are today in terms of openness to cultural diversity?
P4	As a future English teacher, I feel that the experience from the CCU class and the lecturer's stories have quite shaped the way I think now. I have become more open to cultural differences and more aware that every person has different habits, ways of speaking, and ways of thinking. From that experience I have also learned not to be quick to judge people just because their culture is different from mine. I think that is very important for an English

	teacher, because in the future we will definitely be learning and interacting with many people from different backgrounds. So I want to become a teacher who is more open, who appreciates differences, and who can make students feel comfortable without being afraid of being judged because of their culture.
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Appendix G

Research Documentations