Incorporating Korean Culture in English Language Teaching for Intercultural Communication: Adopting CCA Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of integrating Korean culture into the ELT curriculum adopting a critical cultural awareness approach on students' cultural understanding. Furthermore, the study extends its research to examine the extent to which the local cultural understanding in English acquired from the course contributes to enhancing learners' intercultural communication in global contexts. This nine-month longitudinal study employed a qualitative data approach derived from a mixed-method study involving pre- and post-survey questionnaires from college EFL learners and in-depth qualitative interviews. Overall, the findings have shown that the integration of local culture into the ELT curriculum helped students: (i) to enrich their understanding of local culture and history; (ii) to examine cultural values with critical perspectives; and (iii) to feel empowered and better prepared to engage in intercultural communication. The analysis also points out that students' self-/national identity was enhanced, and their English communication skills in global contexts were promoted. Some important implications of this study are discussed for teachers who consider teaching local culture by connecting critical cultural awareness approach in foreign language curricula.

Keywords: local culture, English language teaching, intercultural communication, critical cultural awareness

1. Introduction

In the realm of foreign language education, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of incorporating local culture into the curriculum, particularly with a focus on fostering intercultural communication. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected through globalization, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries has emerged as a critical skill. Intercultural communicative competence, which encompasses the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in both one's own and other cultures, has become a central aspect of foreign language education (Byram, 1997). Byram and Zarate (1997) identified key dimensions of intercultural competence, including knowledge of self and others, skills to interact, critical cultural awareness, relativizing self, and valuing others, for effective intercultural communication. Heightened critical cultural awareness is essential for lessening misunderstandings when communicating within international and cross-cultural contexts.

However, traditional approaches to foreign language education have often prioritized the teaching of the target culture while neglecting the significance of local cultural content (Kramsch, 2013). In response, educators and scholars (Khan, 2014, 2016; Prastiwi, 2013; Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011; Wutun, Arafah, & Yassi, 2018) have emphasized the value of integrating local culture into foreign language education to enrich the learning experience and equip students with the skills necessary for successful intercultural communication. The previous research focusing on incorporating local culture into English language education revealed the benefits of integrating local culture into English language curricula. The local content integration serves to contextualize language learning and make it more relevant to students' lives, which motivates learners to learn English. By connecting language acquisition to familiar cultural contexts, students also had a chance to develop a deeper appreciation for the richness of the local culture, reinforcing national and regional identities.

In Korea, with the globalization of English, English education has incorporated not only American and British cultures, but also various cultures including local culture. Culture education in English classes has aimed at helping effective intercultural communication with people from different cultures. However, while studies on the impact of Korean culture in English education have primarily focused on primary and secondary education, very few studies have explored its impact on English language learning within higher education settings (Kim & Sim, 2016). In addition, there is neither known study examining the impact of integrating Korean culture into foreign language classrooms utilizing critical cultural awareness (henceafter, CCA) approach for Korean students. Moreover, no known study has extended research to explore students' intercultural communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds in global contexts after they have completed the course. Therefore, this study aims to conduct in-depth research to examine the impact of teaching local culture utilizing CCA approach in a foreign language classroom impacts on Korean EFL learners' cultural understanding. Furthermore, it seeks to conduct the longitudinal research to explore its impact on Korean learners' intercultural communication skills in global contexts. It is important not only to consider what to teach by integrating materials of local culture, but also how to teach, focusing on developing critical cultural awareness. This research adopts critical perspectives in teaching local culture in English.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Integrating Local Culture in English Language Teaching

Contrary to the prevailing notion that learning a foreign language is always associated with the target culture, some studies suggested that learning a foreign language can serve as a means to understand local culture. Culturally responsive teaching has emerged as an essential approach to enhance student engagement and motivation (Vavrus, 2008). It incorporates students' cultures into instruction, values the cultural identities of students and strives to raise academic achievement. It adopts inclusive and welcoming classroom environments and makes learning more culturally relevant and effective for the students.

Research conducted in Indonesia underscores the positive impact of integrating students' culture into English language instruction. Prastiwi (2013) investigated the development of students' EFL skills and local cultural knowledge using Indonesian folktales in translation in primary schools located in Solo, Indonesia. In Indonesia, the government advocates for the inclusion of local cultural knowledge across various educational sectors, including foreign language education. Through the EFL teaching practices using Indonesian folktales, students could not only enhance their language skills, but also develop a sense of local cultural knowledge and identity. This approach allowed them to embrace the diversity of Indonesian culture, promoting the formation of national identity. As Prastiwi (2013) asserted, "Systematic exposure to Indonesian culture creates the possibility of cultural internalization by the students." (p.512).

Similarly, Wutun et al.'s (2018) study demonstrated the positive impacts of integrating local culture into English language learning in Indonesia. Their research revealed that incorporating local culture could aid the learners to focus on new language forms in speaking and facilitate them to learn English more easily. Local culture could serve as a cognitive tool, helping learners recall their existing knowledge and reducing cognitive load. In addition, integrating local culture allowed learners to personalize their learning experience by discussing themselves, their experiences, and their environment and encouraged them to engage in English learning. Khan (2016) also investigated the benefits of integrating Arabic culture into a foreign language classroom. The study found that teachers and students expressed positive attitudes toward integrating Arabic culture into the learning of the English language learning. Integrating local culture could facilitate the learning of both local cultural knowledge and a foreign language.

However, some challenges came up in the integration of local culture into foreign language education, as demonstrated by Shin, et al.'s (2011) study. They explored internationally distributed English learning materials used across several Asian countries including Korea, focusing on the presentation of culture in the textbooks. The study found that the cultural context predominantly featured cultures from English-speaking countries categorized within Kachru's (1985) inner circle. Learning materials play a crucial role in motivating students, and many of the materials examined in this study were not found culturally responsive and did not reflect learners' daily experiences. The findings highlight the need for textbook writers to consider integrating not only the target culture but also local culture within textbooks. The study asserted that this integration is seen as essential to assist learners in developing intercultural competencies.

The research examining the integration of local culture into English language instruction underscores how such an approach can significantly enhance cultural understanding and communication skills. Integrating students' local culture into language learning not only boosts students' ability to acquire and use the new language, but also deepens their appreciation and in-depth understanding of their own culture. Such culturally responsive teaching practices, therefore, serve dual purposes: they enhance linguistic skills while simultaneously enriching students' cultural insight, making them more competent and empathetic communicators in a diverse global landscape.

2.2 Developing Critical Cultural Awareness in Teaching Local Culture

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined, as noted by Kramsch (2013). In the realm of foreign language education, the significance of teaching culture can't be overemphasized. Byram (1997) further elaborated on this point, asserting that foreign language acquisition is enhanced by fostering CCA. It is defined as "the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products within one's own culture as well as those of others." (p.53) By developing CCA, learners not only gain insight into diverse cultures but also acquire a heightened awareness and the ability to critique their own cultures. The consideration of students' local culture is an essential component of the process toward CCA. This aspect of self-reflection and critical cultural exploration is one of the central purposes of English language teaching, promoting not just linguistic proficiency, but also intercultural competence in global contexts.

Moreover, CCA which is the deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding can empower learners to engage with real-world issues, exercise critical thinking skills, and raise the level of intellectual stimulation, enabling them to participate in local and global communities (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). In other words, for learners to interact with individuals of other cultures in global contexts, they need to reflect on their beliefs about their native culture as well as the target culture through active inquiry regarding the products, practices, and perspectives in foreign language classrooms. Teachers can incorporate critical thinking skills into the curriculum by providing opportunities for learners to practice skills in analysis, interpretation, and communication (ibid, 2015). Developing CCA requires identifying and reflecting upon preconceived ideas, judgments, and stereotypes and engaging with thoughtful evaluation of perspectives related to cultures. In addition, creating real or simulated opportunities for interactions with people from other cultural backgrounds will be helpful for students not only to improve communication with others but also to clarify their own ideological perspectives (Byram, 1997).

Additionally, critically examining cultural representations to discern authenticity is a significant aspect of developing critical cultural awareness when teaching cultures. Bishop (2003) defines cultural authenticity as "the success with which a writer is able to reflect the cultural perspectives of the people about whom he or she is writing, and make readers from inside the group believe that the writer knows what's going on" (p.29). This concept involves two dimensions. The first one is the extent to which the work reflects the cultural perspective of the people whose lives are reflected in the work. The second one is related to the accuracy of authentic details and taken-for-granted information possessed by members of a cultural group. Critical analysis of written works can unveil some sense of cultural authenticity. Despite internal cultural variations, cultural authenticity has to do with whether or not a book reflects the cultural values and facts that members of a culture as a whole consider worthy of acceptance (Mo & Shen, 2003). Thus, engaging in critical analysis of written works can provide valuable insights into cultural authenticity.

Therefore, when teaching local culture, it is important to adopt critical perspectives and to encourage students to develop CCA approach. By fostering CCA, learners not only gain understanding of various cultures but also develop a heightened ability to critically examine their own cultures (Byram, 1997). This emphasis on self-reflection and cultural exploration is one of the central purposes of English language education, enhancing not just linguistic proficiency, but also intercultural competence in global contexts. However, this section outlines research approach to data collection and analysis in this study. Since this study focuses mainly on investigating the impact of the English language class inserting local culture on participants' critical cultural evaluation in their own culture and on increasing English communication skills in global situation as a result of the course, it is essential to examine students' various critical perspectives and elicit their inner thought about their self/national identity, and effectiveness for English communication skills. For this reason, before- and- after survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews were chosen as the main research instrument in this study.

3. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative, mixed method research design for nine-month period: a before- and after-course survey questionnaire, two in-depth semi-structured interviews, and students' emails were collected.

Literature review section has shown that there has been a few empirical research on the impact of incorporating Korean culture in English language teaching for intercultural communication. Furthermore, there has been no research on the impact or outcomes of understanding local culture knowledge in global context. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of incorporating local culture in English language class on students' critical cultural perspectives, their identities, and communication skills in global context by investigating a Korean culture and English class.

The main research question of this study is 'What are the impacts of integrating Korean culture in English language class adopting CCA on students' better understanding of their own culture and cultural value with critical perspective. This is divided into three sub-questions according to the stages of research.

(1) Korean EFL learners' critical cultural awareness: what impact did the course on the participants' critical evaluation in one's own culture?

(2) Enhancing Korean EFL learners' self/ national identity (after completion of the course when they are in global context): Did participants experience of (re)discovering their self/ national identity in global context as a result of the course?

(3) Promoting communication skills in global context (after completion of the course when they are in global context): did the course contribute to enhancing English communication skills in global context?

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 39 university students who enrolled in 'Korean culture and English' course offered by English department at a university. Of the 39 participating students, 31 participants were majored in English language, while the major of another 8 participants varied such as Theology, Japanese language, and Social welfare. The table 1 provides specific details of the research sampling.

Table 1. Background information of interview participants

Participants	Grade	Major	Gender	English proficiency
S1	4th	English Language	Female	Intermediate
S2	3th	English Language	Male	Intermediate
S3	4th	English Language	Male	Advanced
S4	3rd	Theology	Female	Beginner
S5	3nd	English Language	Female	Intermediate
S6	4th	English Language	Male	intermediate
S7	4th	Japanese	Female	Intermediate
S8	3rd	Social Welfare	Male	Advanced
S9	3rd	Japanese	Female	Intermediate

Note. The participants' English proficiency was self-reported by themselves in the pre-course questionnaire.

This study adopted a mixed sampling approach according to the interview stage: (i) a 'homogeneous sampling' was used for the questionnaire survey; (ii) 'convenience sampling' for the first interview session according to participants' availability and accessibility; and (iii) three out of nine students were invited to the last stage of interview session on purpose.

Dörnyei (2007, p.127) stated that homogeneous sampling is "selecting participants from a particular subgroup who share some important experience relevant to our study" and people who have participated in a certain program can be an example of this sampling. This enables the researchers to gain common patterns of responses and information about a particular group with similar characteristics (Dörnyei, 2007, Patton 2002).

With regard to a purposeful sampling, Patton (2002) explained that purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of *information-rich cases* (my emphasis) for the most effective use of limited resources. In this sense, the three students in the 2nd stage of interview were selected purposely in the hope that they would be able to provide a richer picture of the impact of the knowledge learned from the course by providing their living, hands-on experience in global context.

3.2 Interviews

The main aim of the two semi-structured in-depth interviews was concerned with responding to given research questions: (i) to what extent does the 'Korean Culture & English' class impact on students' cultural understanding; and (ii) to what extent does the knowledge obtained from the course contribute to increase learners' communication skills in global context? The participant students were interviewed in two stages: nine students participated in the first interview and three out of the interviewees in the second interview session. At the first interview, students were asked to respond to a set of questions about their background about English, the course, and pedagogical issues such as general critical cultural awareness of Korean culture and English communication skills. However, in the second interview session, three students took part in the interview through online and were asked to the impact of the local culture knowledge gained from the course in global context.

Like survey questionnaires, the interview questions were further developed, modified, and adapted according to the purpose of the study based on Kim and Sim (2016). This study extended its research by conducting additional interviews (2nd interview) with three participants who had been involved in the global context. It means that this study not only helps explore the improvement of students' critical cultural awareness through the class with, but also provides further insights into real-life experiences within a global context. The table 2 shows the research procedures.

Table 2. Research samples and procedures

Stage	Research method	Number of participants	Sampling	Time
1	Pre-and-post questionnaire survey	39	Homogeneous	Before-and after the course
2	1st interview	9	Convenience	After final exam
3	2nd interview	3	Purposeful	3 months after completion of the course

Nine interviewees were invited to the 1st interview after the final exam. The primary aim of the interview is to discern the impact of the course on students' cultural awareness, as well as to understand the significance of local cultural knowledge in the global context and how it prompts students' communication skills. The 2nd interview was followed by three months after the completion of the course when three of the interview participants had firsthand experiences in the global context: student 2 went to New Zealand for language course, student 6 went to Australia for working holiday, and student 5 was a homestay host for American students coming to Korea to attend an international camp.

The prime goal of the interview is to elicit the inner thoughts or cognitive processes that "cannot directly observe; however, it does not mean that observational data are more desirable, valid, or meaningful". (Patton, 2002, p. 340-341). However, in-depth interview data offers insights into individuals' perspectives on certain experiences or matters. In particular, the 2nd interview focused more on "participants' narrative reconstructions of aspects of their lives and experiences" (Duff, 2008, p. 133). All interviews were fully recorded and transcribed, and participants' anonymity was secured.

3.3 Data Analysis

The researchers meticulously scrutinized the students' interview data by systematically identifying recurring themes that emerged through inductive analysis. This method involved the development of patterns, themes, and categories, a process. Patton (2002, p. 453) categorizes it as content analysis, defining it as "the examination of text for recurring words or themes". Following content analysis, the data underwent coding, involving three sequential steps: pre-coding, open-coding, and coding, which entailed breaking down recurring themes into more granular elements (Sim, 2011). The researchers double checked each other and comment on their data analysis in order to enhance the coder reliability of the findings.

3.4 Context

This course was offered by English department at a university as an optional module for all major students, aiming to help students to (i) develop critical cultural awareness of Korean culture; and (ii) enhance English communication skills to express their own culture. The course covered the broad topics of South Korean history, geography, economy, and entertainment, providing valuable insights from the standpoint of the coursebook author.

Gong and Holliday (2013, cited in Kim & Sim, 2016) stressed the importance of incorporating content that is relevant to learners' lives and interests. This facilitates the cultivation of intercultural communication skills, enabling students to communicate effectively about their own culture in English in the global context. Accordingly, the 'Korean Culture and English' course fosters a deeper comprehension of the 'self,' as addressed by Byram (2008). To achieve the aims of the course, the following teaching methods were used.

3.4.1 Teaching Local Culture Utilizing CCA Approach

There are steps in the process toward CCA (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). In this study, the first step begins when students could reflect on their preconceived ideas and prejudices regarding their own culture. Next, students discussed and critically examined strengths and weaknesses associated with values and perspectives of Korean culture connected with real-world issues. They could also point out accurate and inaccurate description of Korean culture portrayed in the textbook as cultural insiders. Lastly, even though this course did not offer all students the opportunity to communicate with people from different backgrounds in the classroom for all students, some of the students were able to interact with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds in global contexts after completing the course.

3.4.2 English Communication Skills through Local Culture

As a main classroom activity, students were offered an opportunity to engage in experiential learning through fieldwork, wherein they want to visit one of the locales in Korea. This fieldwork offered to acquire authentic and genuine knowledge regarding Korean culture, allowing them to engage with the subject matter in an experiential way beyond the confines of traditional lectures and textbooks. Garcia (2011) suggested that employing local-culture-related vocabulary and terminology can not only enhance the understanding of local cultural knowledge, but also improve students' language skills. In this sense, vocabulary quiz show was conducted to facilitate the use of Korean cultural terminology that was familiar with students, group discussion related to current issues in Korea. Through the learning, students were able to do various activities including 'how to make a kimch or how to play yut (a traditional board game played in Korea, especially during Korean New Year).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Impact of Learning Local Culture on Students' Cultural Understanding

Based on the analysis of survey and interview data, the learners' perspectives were classified into three themes. The themes reflect how local culture can influence learners' cultural understanding for preparing intercultural communication. The themes are presented and discussed as follows:

4.1.1 Rediscovering Korean Culture and History

Integrating local culture in English language teaching by utilizing CCA approach had a positive impact on broadening students' knowledge about native history and culture. The survey result showed that regarding how much knowledge students gained about Korean history and culture from the course, 66.6% (26 students) indicated that the course was very helpful (10 students) or somewhat helpful (16 students) in acquiring knowledge. Thirteen students opted for neutral (10 students) or not really (3 students), and no one chose not at all. Incorporating local cultural values into the curriculum could serve as a way to enrich learners' understanding of their own cultural background and national identity. It creates the opportunity to internalize one's own culture and promote the formation of national identity (Prastiwi, 2013). In this study, learners' interviews revealed that

participation in this course facilitated a more profound understanding of Korean history for students. Students were able to delve into the origins and development of Korean culture, rediscovering the roots and gaining a deeper insight into Korean history and culture.

"So, when it came to culture, Korean culture, I used to think of things like history, hanbok (traditional clothing), and food, and that was about it. But now, taking this course has made me realize that our culture encompasses not only these aspects but also our values, beliefs, religion, and overall consciousness… Through this course, I've found myself gaining a deeper understanding of history along the way." (S8)

One student above acknowledged that prior to taking the class, his perception of Korean culture was limited to elements such as history, traditional clothing, and culinary traditions. Through this course, his understanding of culture expanded to encompass values, thoughts, religion, and so forth. The use of local culture texts can be a way to stimulate students' motivation since contents of learning are the part of students' life. By doing so, the students feel motivated in English class which brings a positive impact in learning English (Royani, 2013).

In addition, exposure to local culture creates the opportunity to internalize their own culture and promote the formation of national identity (Prastiwi, 2013). The learners had the opportunity to re-evaluate often overlooked, yet valuable facets of Korean culture. The process of expanding and deepening their comprehension of Korean history emerged as a means to instill confidence in their cultural and historical heritage.

"This course has been an opportunity for me to rediscover aspects of Korean culture that I might have overlooked before. Particularly, as I researched places to introduce Korea, I realized that there were things I had missed or now known about. This class has been an opportunity for me to grow with a global perspective and in English and developed interest and pride in Korean culture."(S3)

The field trip experiences had also an impact on students, providing them with eye-opening moments as they rediscovered the exquisite beauty of ancient palaces. As can be seen in the interview, the experiences provided students a chance to appreciate the delicacy of ancient palaces and the practicality of the floor heating system. The focus on local culture and visits to specific research sites not only deepened students' understanding, but also bolstered their confidence in their cultural identity (Sudartini, 2012).

"Through field research during the course, I've come to realize how beautiful our heritage is and how well-structured it is. When I visited the palace, I noticed how intricately each tile was laid out, and even to a foreigner's eyes, it would appear remarkably sophisticated and beautiful. As a native, I had seen it so much that I didn't appreciate its beauty before." (S6)

"This class has made me deeply grateful for my own culture and history. I realized that there's so much more to dishes like kimchi than just their recipes—they're products of our rich history. Learning how to explain our culture in English was incredibly fulfilling."(S1)

Students appreciated how Kimchi has been developed with specific procedures, and how the nation has swiftly overcome economic crises. Researching and studying local culture provided them with an opportunity to reassess the value of their cultural heritage, ultimately fostering a stronger sense of confidence in their own cultural identity. Respecting and having confidence in one's own culture could be a means to empower students to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. One of the students expressed that a sense of pride in her own culture and explaining Korean culture and the life she has lived in English can facilitate better communication with people from different cultures, allowing for a better mutual understanding. The student stressed the significance not only of understanding other cultures, but also of explaining one's own culture in English for better communication between people. Confidence in local culture and being able to explain one's own culture in English plays a crucial role to build intercultural communication (Wutun et al., 2018).

4.1.2 Developing Critical Perspectives

Adopting CCA approach in teaching local culture had a positive impact on developing students' critical perspectives. The survey findings revealed that regarding the enhancement of students' critical thinking skills throughout the course, 74.3% of the respondents (29 participants) reported that overall, the course was beneficial in fostering their critical perspectives. Specifically, 15 students found it as very helpful and 14 considered it as somewhat helpful. Ten students expressed a more neutral stance by selecting neutral, and no one chose not really. The positive impact of the CCA approach on enhancing students' critical thinking skills was further underscored by the data from individual interviews. The interview data offer insights into how the course facilitated deeper understanding of their culture through a critical lens.

When students read works about local culture written by foreigners, they can critique the portrayal of the cultural descriptions in the textbook. During the interview, students critiqued the portrayal of Korean cultures in the textbook from the perspectives of cultural insiders, pointing out accurate and inaccurate depictions of Korean culture. Students expressed:

"It (the textbook) said that Koreans often smile to hide embarrassment or to soften the blow before delivering bad news. This is something that might not be readily understood unless you're deeply familiar with Korean culture. Foreigners might simply take a smile at face value, but the author seemed to grasp the deeper nuances." (S3)

"Koreans value their group identity, like the book says. When we meet new people, it's common to ask things like 'Are you married?' or 'How old are you?' These questions help us connect and build better relationships. Reading that part made me think the author, even if not fully detailed, knows about people's feelings here in Korea." (S4)

Despite not being Korean, the author had a profound understanding of Korean culture. According to one of the interviewees above, the author interpreted the significance of Koreans' smiles in various contexts, noting that laughter in Korea is often used to conceal shame or to lighten the atmosphere before delivering unfavorable news. Furthermore, the author pointed out that Koreans place a significant value on group identity and inquire about marital status and age as a means to foster solidarity and develop relationships. Students also emphasized that one can accurately understand and describe Korean culture through experiences and research even if he/she is from a different cultural background. The author' writing is able to reflect the cultural perspectives of Korean people, and make Korean students believe that the writer knows what's going on, which has to do with the success of "cultural authenticity" (Bishop, 2003, p.29).

On the other hand, depictions from the perspective of cultural outsiders could produce inaccurate portrayals of Korean culture. Even though writers combine research and experiences for writing about Korean culture, it might not have been enough to prepare for representing cultural experiences that were outside his own (Bishop, 2003). Writers who attempt to do so might feel difficulties and the risks when trying (ibid, 2003). For instance, the author said that cultural norms in Korea may not involve offering tea or coffee to guests after a meal. Regarding such descriptions, students pointed out that such encounters vary among Koreans, and the author might be generalizing cultural values based on limited experiences.

"I think because the author is writing from a foreigner's perspective, he may have described only what he's personally experienced, which could be as somewhat narrow. For example, in the part about invitations at home, where it mentions that in Korea, hosts do not serve tea or coffee after a meal and sends guests back. I felt a bit disappointed because I believe people differ, and it's not typically like that." (S9)

Students who become more aware of cultural nuances through CCA will become better prepared to engage in appropriate and effective intercultural communication and relationships (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Students stated that through this class, they could become empowered and better prepared to engage in intercultural communication. One student stressed:

"I think in this globalized context, it's important to open our hearts to differences rather than setting boundaries. Well, now that I'm aware of my biases, I think I can converse with people by understanding and accepting differences more maturely. If I didn't realize them, those unconscious biases could subtly affect conversations, even though it might be a small talk." (S1)

Through the course, students could reflect their personal prejudices and realize that cultures could not be labelled as right or wrong. Recognizing her preconceived prejudices is essential for being open-minded to people from different cultures and promoting a more inclusive conversation in global contexts. Through thoughtful reflection and evaluation of perspectives related to cultures, students could clarify their own preconceived ideas and stereotypes, which is a way to develop critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

This course also provided learners the opportunity to critically examine Korean cultural values by connecting to real-world issues. Foreign language acquisition is enhanced by CCA, which is an ability to evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures (Byram, 1997). Examining students' native culture with critical perspectives is a deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding, which is a way to develop CCA. One student said:

"I think our country might be more helpful in cooperating with others. Because in our country, there is an atmosphere of adjusting to the other person rather than oneself. In that sense, I think cooperation might work better... But it seems that superiors don't really like it when subordinates present their opinions. They seem to prefer just going along without much resistance. While this might lead to harmony, it also gives the impression of lacking in one's own assertion." (S7)

As can be seen in the interview data above, the student highlighted strengths and weaknesses associated with the collectivism prevalent among Korean people. According to her, fostering a collaborative environment might lead to more effective cooperation, however, following along too much the supervisor's viewpoint might impede the advancement of one's individuality and personal growth. From students' perspectives and experiences, collectivism can pose obstacles on young generation's growth in global context.

In addition to the issue of collectivism, students also critiqued authoritarian tendencies and values highly regarded in Korean society. A student pointed out that authoritarian values might lead to the development of an undesirable trait, commonly referred to as 'kwon-dae' behavior. This term is often used to describe individuals who, due to their seniority or perceived superiority, may engage in patronizing actions, rigidly adhere to traditional norms, and resist embracing new ideas or perspectives.

"In other countries, the idea of respecting seniors isn't as strict as it is in South Korea. Even if you're just a year older, there's a big emphasis on showing respect. When people join society, those who are older sometimes tend to act too bossy. I feel like those behaviors and attitudes might be unnecessary" (S3).

As can be seen in the interview data, students could reflect upon their own culture, especially regarding the issues of collectivism and authoritarianism, with critical perspectives and feel more connected to the material and real-world issues. Students who are given the opportunity to explore CCA in the language classroom feel more connected to learning materials by connecting to real-world issues (Kramsch, 2004), and reflect on their own culture and discover personal stereotypes and prejudices with critical perspectives (Houghton, 2013).

4.2 The Impact of Learning Local Culture on Intercultural Communication in Global Context

The results from the in-depth qualitative interviews are discussed with a thick-and-rich description of impact of local cultural knowledge on learners' self/ national identity and English communication skills.

4.2.1 Local Culture and Self Identity

Many authors asserted that integrating local culture in ELT curriculum can be a way of enhancing learners' cultural background and self-identity, ultimately fostering a sense of national identity. (Holliday, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Sudartini, 2012; Shrestha, 2016). This is because content of local culture contains the local history, economy, beliefs, values, and culture that enable learners to identify their identities. Therefore, "the sole emphasis on target language and culture makes foreign language learning incomplete and handicapped" (Shrestha, 2016, p.56).

Holliday (2013, p. 36) stated that a foreign language can be integrated with speakers' own cultures as they stamp their cultural identities on it. In this view, local culture requires appropriate implementation without the risk of loss of learners' local identities. Moreover, through rigorous inquiry and thoughtful reasoning of local culture adopting CCA approach, students can gain more profound understanding of their own culture (Byram, 1997). According to Ushioda (2011), self and identity is people's sense of who they are, how they relate to the social world and what they want to become in the future. One student commented:

"When I was in New Zealand, I realized that many foreign people only know Korea as a former colony of Japan. I explained as far as I know. Specifically, how Korea is now on the path to becoming an economic powerhouse." (S2)

"It's incredibly prideful to talk about what we are! However, I need to revisit my 'Korean culture and English' class assignments again to explain in more detail." (S2)

As can be seen in the interview data, the embedment of local culture utilizing CCA approach can promote students' pride of their own culture that triggers them to widely promote to global societies. Furthermore, the student (S2) went on to say:

"There's a world map at school that labels sea in the east as the 'Japanese sea,' so I asked them to change it into East see, and they apologized, saying they did it as shown in Google map". (S2)

The interview data is tied up with Shrestha (2016) in that she addressed that the fundamental purpose of incorporating local culture in ELT is to not only represent indigenous knowledge, but also strengthen national identity. Likewise, two students said:

"I've become more confident in discussing our culture and history and came to discover my identity as a Korean. If I hadn't taken this course, I would not have been frustrated while explaining about Korean culture, particularly Korean history […]." (S6)

"My cultural identity is a crucial indicator of my beliefs and of who I am. The identity discovered as a Korean while talking with foreign friends enables me to explore and understand my cultural heritage. There's a saying that the most Korean thing is the most global. How can one claim to be a global citizen without knowing their own country?" (S5)

The interview data is supported by Pierce (1995). He (p. 18) argued that when L2 learners convey their views in the target language, they are "not only exchanging linguistic information with target language partners, but they are constantly constructing and reconstructing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world". As can be seen, students can discover who they are through interaction with interlocutor by weaving of diverse cultural threads in global context. This point may be consistent with some recent research (Baum, 2014). In other words, one's identity is not a singular entity but rather a dynamic process involving interaction with others. Through a 'dialogic circuit,' individuals establish their identity by engaging in relationships with others (Woodward, 1997). Accordingly, rich in intercultural communication in ELT that has emphasized 'self' would help "engage students in the process of constructing self-identity and cultural negotiation" (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

4.2.2 Local Culture and Intercultural Communication Skills

Most of English teachers might have thought about how they encourage language learners to become more communicatively competent and how they facilitate interaction between L2 learners and international speakers. Every time L2 learners speak, they are "not only exchanging information with their interlocutors" (ibid, 1997, p. 410). Learning local culture itself can serve as benchmark for students engaging in intercultural communication since content familiarity assists students to facilitate their communication by using their own culture (Jenkins, 1999, cited in Margana, 2009). In particular, the deep process of cultural understanding such as reflecting and examining local cultural values and perspectives in developing CCA is a vital component of the process of learning local culture (Negent & Catalano, 2015). The two interview data from a student below shows well how content familiarity and critical examination of her own culture can lead active participation, interest, and motivation during communication.

"Before taking this course, American students came to our school for a camp, and we had some kind of party. At that time, I hadn't taken this course yet. I didn't have many topics to talk about. I didn't know what to say…so I just sat on the terrace..." (S5)

"We played yut during class, and I actually played it with my host family (two American students), and they found it very enjoyable. I was able to tell how to play it very actively because it is Korean traditional play. We had a chance to talk about the differences about food habit between two countries. I shared about Korean food we learned in class. I felt a sense of pride in myself in that I was able to share my knowledge in English." (S5)

This is supported by Barker (2012). He stated that if local culture is used for communication, an understanding of culture may uncover cultural differences, potentially helping negotiation process between two foreign speakers.

"Actually, I hadn't thought about Korean culture and history in English before taking this class. My English is quite weak and I haven't got good knowledge about Korean culture and history. However, when my New Zealand friends visited Korea and we went to Gyeongbokgung (This is called "Gyeongbokgung Palace." The Palace is a renowned historical site located in Seoul, South Korea). I was able to explain about the Palace. I had an experience to visit Gyeongbokgung Palace with my group members during field trip in 'Korean Culture & English' class, so I was able to explain well when my European friends visited. Even though I didn't know the details, I could communicate with my foreign friends".

The interview data above reveals that the knowledge of Korean culture is one of the significant factors to influence the success for communication with international speakers. It is evident that communication skills are improved with the experience of learners' lives since local culture is the culture where the learners live. Another interview data shows this well:

"My two American friends ate Korean food well, used chopsticks more than forks. I was able to explain to them what I had learned in class by exemplifying such as using chopsticks, eating tangpyeongchae (a court cuisine characterized by its colorful appearance and for the harmonious taste created by its ingredients), and bulgogi. I wasn't very familiar with what tangpyeongchae is before the class." (S5)

The relationship between implementing local culture in ELT class and improvement of students' intercultural communication skill is highly interrelated. The figure 1 demonstrates the connections between the knowledge of local culture and improvement of intercultural communication skills.
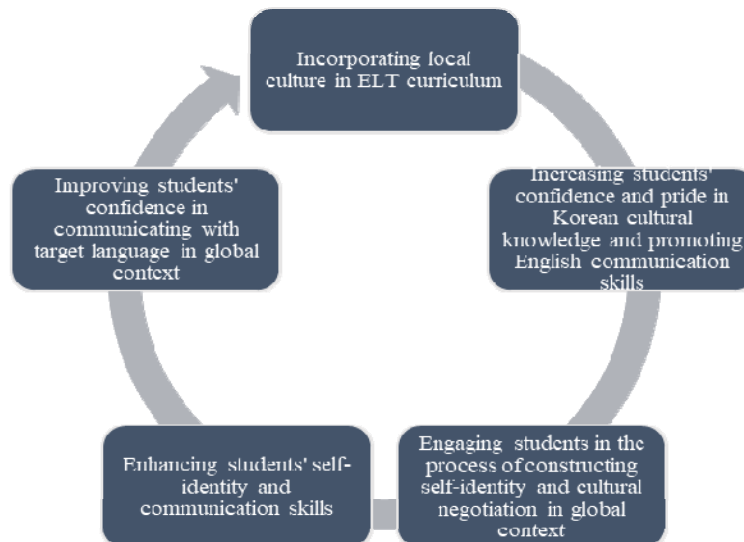

Figure 1. The interrelation between local culture and intercultural communication competence

5. Conclusion

Integrating local culture into foreign language education can enrich learning experiences and equip students with the skills necessary for intercultural communication (Prastiwi, 2013). It can be a way of enhancing self-identity, ultimately fostering a sense of national identity (Holliday, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Sudartini, 2012; Shrestha, 2016). When teaching local culture in English, developing CCA is beneficial in that students being more aware of cultural nuances through CCA will become better prepared to engage in appropriate and effective intercultural relationships in global contexts (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Examining students' local culture with critical perspectives can provide students to experience a deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding (Byram, 1997).

In this study, students demonstrated that incorporating local cultural values into English language curriculum could serve as a way to enrich learners' understanding of their own cultural background and national identity. What is more, it had a positive impact on their English language learning. The opportunities to evaluate perspectives, practices, and products regarding one's own culture could also provide students chances to critique the portrayal of Korean cultures in the textbook and to critically examine Korean cultural values by connecting to real-world issues. Through the course, students could become empowered and better prepared to engage in intercultural communication.

Specifically, learning local culture using the CCA method allowed students to improve their intercultural communication in global context in three aspects: i) encouraging a deeper comprehension of one's cultural awareness; (ii) supporting the discovery of personal or national identity; and (iii) improving English communication skills. With regard to the discovery of self, learners were able to be involved in the process of constructing the identity toward their home culture (Lee, 2002; Milville et al., 2000, cited in Lin, 2009). Consequently, learners could reduce language learning conflicts coming from the incompatibility in identities between home and target cultures (Berry et al., 1987; Domanico et al., 1994, cited in ibid). Moreover, as Dalton-Puffer (2011, p. 196) stressed "well-embedded in the matrix culture of the L1 and possess a high degree

of familiarity for the learners", familiar content allowed students to gain confidence in discussing their own culture in English, leading to improvement of English communication skills.

When foreign language learning is enhanced by critical cultural awareness, students are equipped with the skills in global communities because of the deeper level of cultural understanding (Byram, 1997). Therefore, it is highly recommended that language teachers consider connecting critical cultural awareness to themes that are already being explored in the regular foreign language curricula (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Teachers need to create an open environment of reflecting on their own culture and discovering personal stereotypes and prejudice in the foreign language classroom (Houghton, 2013). Reflecting and critiquing perspectives and values in one's own culture can be a way to encourage students to adopt a more open-minded approach for better communication with people from different cultures.

Moreover, when teaching local culture in English, it is vital to select materials that portray Korean culture accurately and authentically, as this significantly motivates students (Shin et al., 2011). Often, these materials might not be culturally responsive or reflective of students' daily experiences. When learning materials are written and portrayed by native speakers of English, teachers can encourage students to critique these depictions of local culture by examining accurate and/or inaccurate descriptions in the written works. Additionally, for practical use, there is a need to convince teachers of the benefits of integrating local culture in foreign language classrooms. Demonstrating the benefits of incorporating local culture by adopting CCA approach in a foreign language curriculum and providing the necessary support for teachers are crucial to encourage them to teach autonomously and effectively.

While this study highlights the impact of integrating Korean culture into English language teaching utilizing CCA approach, it's essential to acknowledge the limitations of the study. Providing opportunities for intercultural communication with people from different culture in English language classrooms would be beneficial, especially for students who lack opportunities to engage in intercultural communication in global contexts. If it is not feasible with contextual constraints, synchronous communication with students in other countries can serve as a beneficial alternative, allowing practice in English and facilitating intercultural experiences. Further research needs to explore the effectiveness of adopting CCA approach in teaching Korean culture in English language classrooms, incorporating structured opportunities for intercultural communication. The research will examine how intercultural communication impacts on language proficiency and intercultural understanding among learners, providing deeper insights into the benefits of such educational practices.

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