Integrating Intercultural Competencies in an Introductory Business Information Literacy Course

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abstract: Librarians at a large Midwestern university integrated intercultural competencies into an information literacy course taught annually to over 100 first-year business students. The interventions aim to improve intercultural skills and characteristics as defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric. Student intercultural competencies were assessed via online surveys according to the VALUE Rubric, comparing pre-, retrospective, and post-self-assessments. Students' intercultural competencies changed as a result of engaging with the course material. This paper describes the classroom interventions implemented by librarians, results from survey data analysis, and implications for library instruction.

Introduction

Business professionals and students are required to work directly with individuals from across different cultures, which can pose clear challenges relating to interpersonal dynamics; language and communication; and a lack of relatability with varying customs, perceptions, and attitudes. Affinity for one's culture may result in bias and adverse effects that can impact or stifle the hiring, training, promotion decisions, and retention of diverse individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural interactions can occur when engaging with someone from a different international culture and can also occur domestically when communicating with someone from a different subgroup (different gender, ethnicity, age, status as a first-generation college student, or disability). Learning the skills to navigate successfully in a diverse world

continues to be an important skill set for business students to function effectively and equitably as future business leaders.

Intercultural competencies have carried many definitions, but are described as the knowledge and skills that allow individuals to effectively interact with different cultures.[1] At Purdue University, a curriculum mapping project compared the undergraduate core management curriculum with the Business Research Competencies and found a gap in the area of international business research.[2] To address this gap, content on international business, including intercultural competence, was added to a first-year, first-semester business course taught by business librarians; for this reason, we will refer to the course as a business course. This course focuses on information literacy in the context of introductory business concepts, covering topics such as company, finance, market, and industry research as well as traditional information literacy concepts such as search strategies and information evaluation. This paper focuses specifically on the intercultural competence component of the course, which included instructional activities designed to help increase the intercultural competencies of first-year students, and addresses the question of how students' intercultural competency levels changed after completing the intercultural learning activities.

Literature Review

The need for students to develop intercultural competencies has increased over time, especially as they transition into business settings. Additionally, the globalization of business has resulted in a call for employees to be well-versed in a spectrum of intercultural competencies to foster connections with other business colleagues on an international scale.[3] Exposing business students to the value of intercultural competencies and helping them develop these skills is crucial to their success, as gaining intercultural competence is a lifelong process.[4] "[L]earners advance through stages of progressively more sophisticated levels of understanding. This understanding includes that of different cultures as well as their own."[5] By examining the definitions of intercultural competence, justifying its importance, and engaging students in activities that boost their intercultural competence, educators in the business classroom can help students to demonstrate these essential skills that can serve them well in the business setting.

Definitions of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence has been defined in numerous ways over the years.[6] In fact, intercultural competence has been synonymously referenced as intercultural learning; intercultural communicative competence; intercultural sensitivity; global competence; cross-cultural adaptation; and cultural intelligence.[7] "Although these terms demonstrate nuanced differences, they speak to the same fundamental ideal—that is, how individuals fare in intercultural settings. The focus on 'interculturality' (taking place between cultures) is arguably the core spirit shared by all these terms."[8] For the purpose of this paper, this concept will be referred to as intercultural competence, which is "most often viewed as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts."[9] This

definition is connected directly to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE rubric applied in this study.[10] The skills pertaining to intercultural competence will be referred to as intercultural competencies.

There are three intercultural skill constructs, which include intercultural adroitness, intercultural awareness, and intercultural sensitivity.[11] Intercultural adroitness refers to the behavioral aspect of intercultural communication competence, which includes the facets of behavioral flexibility, interactional management, and verbal and nonverbal skills.[12] Intercultural awareness describes the cognitive component of intercultural communication, focusing upon the understanding of basic cultural traits as well as cultural values.[13] Finally, intercultural sensitivity pertains to the affective aspect of intercultural competence, connecting with self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, and a suspension of judgment in order to develop positive emotions toward cultural differences.[14]

Intercultural Competence and Information Literacy Instruction

Generally, the literature surrounding intercultural competence tends to focus on intercultural learning activities in the language learning context.[15] However, intercultural learning is crucial to explore alongside information literacy. Instruction librarians can establish a common learning space in which both information literacy and intercultural competence are supported.[16] Further, different types of libraries have begun to address "cultural and linguistic diversity while providing information sources and services."[17] As campuses grow in cultural diversity, "instruction librarians must work toward developing cultural competence" through intentional means of preparation, instructional design, assessment, and reflection.[18] Through holistic evaluation of instructional practice, librarians can become better equipped to educate students from various cultural backgrounds and make themselves relevant to an even broader population.[19]

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A disruption in the information environment in a more diverse society or workplace can lead an individual to "develop a series of adaptive information literacy practices in order to adjust to new cultural norms and realities."[20] Moreover, a lack of engagement with scholarship that examines information literacy as a complex social practice "means that librarians are unable to account for both the diversity and the demands of today's dynamic information societies."[21] For these reasons, it is critical that librarians prioritize the development of intercultural competencies in students in the business setting and beyond. Furthermore, librarian prioritization of intercultural competence can lead to sustaining a culturally competent organization through librarians' ability to learn about, reflect upon, and evaluate intercultural competence in full courses or one-shot sessions.[22]

Intercultural Competence in the Business Setting

Developing intercultural competencies for collaboration on a global scale is critical for student employability.[23] "It is important to recognize that the term 'global,' as used in reference to global learning and education, is an inclusive term that refers to domestic, intercultural, and international engagement across borders of difference."[24] Diversity in work environments can include different genders, ages, languages, value systems, disabilities, ethnicities, and many other factors of identity. As a result, "educational institutions must promote their development with innovative strategies that transform the training scenarios of a society in permanent social change."[25] "[I]ntercultural skills are not just an advantage but an essential professional skill. International companies expect employees to be flexible in terms of accepting overseas assignments or working in global teams."[26] Due to this demand, there are universities in the United States and beyond that maintain an intercultural requirement, which focuses on assisting students with analyzing global issues, addressing stereotypes, recognizing their cultural values, and interacting with individuals from different cultures.[27] Likewise, "managers must develop international knowledge, personal leadership skills, and intercultural competence."[28]

As businesses continue to build their presence and relationships internationally, the need for intercultural competence will remain relevant to students aiming to work in the business setting. Intercultural competence is a highly sought-after, transferable skill with influence across a wide array of fields, including "communicating, problem-solving, flexibility, persistence, resilience and creativity."[29] With the significance of intercultural competence continuing to grow, "[b]usiness education must be at the forefront in preparing students to work effectively in these contexts, and in particular, help future managers develop the skills to establish high performing diverse teams within and across organizations."[30] Moreover, intercultural competencies not only remain important transferable skills but can also foster the development of other necessary skills. Intercultural competencies can be effectively examined with the guidance of experiential learning activities in the business classroom.[31] "Most undergraduate students lack general experience or motivation; they still need guidance through the intercultural development process to make sense of their experience, to convert their experience into learning, and to motivate them to engage in intercultural interactions."[32] Reflective learning is "essential for encouraging self-learning and critical thinking based on personal experience."[33] As a result, there is a need to further study effective methods of building intercultural competence among business students.

Student Engagement with Intercultural Competence

Arguably, students benefit from experiential learning when building intercultural competencies.[34] In particular, the incorporation of games as a pedagogical tool can further enhance student development of intercultural skills. The outcomes for intercultural skills-based activities can include an understanding that cultural values are relative rather than shared; recognition of the importance of differences; socialization into cultures and the problematic nature of ethnocentrism; how to overcome conflict through goals, shared values, and collaboration; applications of lessons learned to past experiences; as well as motivation, active learning, and engagement within the classroom setting.[35]

In response to today's global economy and technological progression, business educators work to prepare business students with a global mindset, "having key attributes and competencies that help individuals work more effectively within inherently complex and uncertain global environments and interact effectively with others unlike themselves."[36] By maintaining a global mindset, individuals can "display greater personal and social awareness and responsibility, which […] is vitally important for current and future business leaders."[37] Global course connections were explored in a human resource management course at Albion College as well as in an international management course at the American College of Greece. "[B]oth courses emphasized cross-cultural perspectives on human resource management and ethical issues faced by business managers and had compatible and/or contemporary learning outcomes."[38]

Intercultural competence has also been examined and applied in the collaborative setting, as evidenced in a study that examined business students' perceptions of their intercultural group work experience as a tool for developing intercultural competence and group work skills. There were differences in expectations, motivations, language fluency, trust, and relationship issues that manifested during group work, suggesting that "group assignments are potentially flawed mechanisms for delivering the goals of intercultural competencies and group work skills in business students."[39] This may not be the case, however, when business students are working with international groups. A study with undergraduate business students from Spain offered the opportunity for Spain-based students to collaborate virtually with undergraduate students from The Netherlands for one semester. The study examined which intercultural competence indicators were mostly developed as well as how much students enjoyed the tasks. Overall, students developed a positive attitude toward intercultural relationships, and their cultural knowledge and awareness were increased, with the majority of students enjoying participation in these tasks.[40]

A case analysis of intercultural studies electives taken by students who were part of a business studies degree program at Dundalk Institute of Technology in Ireland demonstrated success among graduates at the individual, societal, and organizational level "is strongly linked to the development and employment of intercultural competence in building and maintaining relationships."[41] The institute's educators implemented a module series that "seeks to ensure cultural competence as a key learning outcome, reinforced through emphasis on the role of history, geography and politics," with a focus on active learning methodologies.[42] The educators invited guest lecturers to discuss specific topics, with students reporting "that it was excellent to hear first-hand accounts of life in another culture."[43] The course was further supported by using movies, documentaries, and video clips with positive feedback from students. The students also completed worksheets that "helped them to focus on the specific topic and provided an opportunity for discussion in small groups which helped them develop their thinking and analytical skills" and reinforced material presented during lectures.[44]

In a study conducted in Russia, researchers found that university students had insufficient knowledge of cross-cultural competence, necessitating the introduction of a course of lectures that would allow them to delve into issues pertaining to intercultural and interethnic communication. According to this study, "[t]raining should be inductive, not prescriptive, and should start with a needs analysis, not with a pre-defined

curriculum."[45] "To develop cross cultural competence and the ability to communicate with representatives of different cultures, professional training of managers is necessary, which will contribute to the development of international activities in general and modern business in particular."[46] Ultimately, methods and frameworks for developing intercultural competencies must be examined and applied in the business school setting.

Assessing Intercultural Competence

While many models exist in relation to intercultural competence, few examine the process of acquiring intercultural competence. Educators must view intercultural competencies as a learner-centered process; once educators understand themselves as intercultural learners, they can go on to facilitate the intercultural learning of other individuals. "[G]uided intervention by teachers or trainers is only one way in which an individual becomes interculturally competent."[47] Educators can supply students with "conceptual models and frameworks for reflective learning" while also being "equipped with the intercultural competence to facilitate the intercultural learning of their students."[48] Overall, the emphasis on intercultural learning tends to be experiential and is often connected to study abroad. Awareness of learning culture and curriculum design varies from school to school, and instruments for assessing intercultural competence are neither uniform nor used uniformly. "[T]he acquisition of intercultural competence is better conceptualised as a process of intercultural learning, and that intercultural learning is a continuing journey for us all."[49] There is a demonstrated need for "better conceptualisation of intercultural learning on campus."[50]

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Additional methods for building intercultural competence include role-play, portfolio, and video diary.[51] Jiahui Luo and Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan identify six characteristics pertaining to the assessment of intercultural competence: analytic, reflective, expressive, creative, observation-based, and task-based. They follow these with four modes of assessment: written, verbal, performative, and multimodal. The written mode includes the analytic, expressive, and reflective; the verbal mode includes the analytic and expressive; the performative mode includes the task- and observation-based; and the multimodal mode includes the expressive, reflective, and creative. There is no one standard model of measurement for intercultural competence.[52] Additionally, neither cultural contact alone nor knowledge of other cultures leads to intercultural competence.[53] "Further research needs to be carried out to consider how best to measure students' intercultural competence and this knowledge and measurement tool needs to be integrated into the learning outcomes, delivery and assessment methods."[54]

Moreover, developing intercultural competencies can be fostered by recognizing unconscious bias within the classroom and beyond.[55] By having students identify their biases in the classroom, students engage in a lower-stakes environment in which they can work through cultural differences in order to productively navigate a multicultural

and more equitable work environment.[56] "[D]eveloping a culturally proactive role in understanding cultural variation and becoming culturally inclusive will help mitigate our own cultural biases."[57] For these reasons, an effort to include activities concerning the identification of bias is crucial to fostering intercultural competencies.

Developing intercultural competence is a lifelong process, and critical reflection is one of the most crucial ways to work toward achieving it. Among the key constituents of intercultural competence are the inclusion of knowledge enhancement; developing listening and critical thinking skills; and having respect for others besides viewing difference of cultural norms as a learning opportunity.[58] Universities, in particular, offer fruitful ground for students to build intercultural competencies in an effort to prepare for the global business environment.[59] Higher education offers a holistic approach to learning, particularly within the learning community setting. An emphasis on experiential learning guides students through the process of building meaning in addition to content mastery.[60] As a result, it is essential for business educators to continue to effectively prepare students for a globalized society and "to not only send students out to experience the world in person, but to also bring the world to [their] institutions."[61]

The VALUE Rubric

Among the many frameworks used to assess intercultural competence are the VALUE rubrics, which are explored in this study. The VALUE rubrics are used to evaluate and discuss student learning at the institutional level, with a specific rubric used to evaluate intercultural knowledge and competence. According to the AAC&U, "The intercultural knowledge and competence rubric suggests a systematic way to measure our capacity to identify our own cultural patterns, compare and contrast them with others and adapt empathically and flexibly to unfamiliar ways of being."[62] The rubric focuses upon the criteria of knowledge (cultural self-awareness; knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks), skills (empathy; verbal and nonverbal communication), and attitudes (curiosity; openness).

In addition to the VALUE Rubric, this study is supplemented with activities from the Intercultural Learning Hub (HubICL) aimed at building intercultural competencies. HubICL's mission is to promote intercultural learning and to provide "opportunities and resources for engaging with, adapting to, and bridging across cultural difference."[63] HubICL works to "mentor intercultural leaders, support innovative scholarship, and encourage best practices in teaching and learning."[64]

Additionally, the SPACE2 Model of Mindful Inclusion framework is explored alongside the activities from HubICL. This model is comprised of six evidence-based strategies that "activate controlled processing and enable individuals to detect and override their automatic reflexes."[65] The six strategies include:

- slowing down or being mindful in responses to others,
- perspective-taking or actively imagining the thoughts and feelings of others,
- asking yourself or active self-questioning to challenge one's own assumptions,
- cultural intelligence or interpreting one's behavior through their cultural lens,
- exemplars or identifying counter-stereotypical individuals, and
- expansion, or the formation of diverse friendships.[66]

These strategies are reinforced through the SPACE2 acronym as students work to cultivate a space between automatic reflexes and responses.[67]

This study used a pre-, retrospective, and post-test research design. A retrospective pre-test and post-test (RPP) design has been shown to be beneficial for measuring multicultural skills levels, as students often overestimate baseline knowledge when rating their multicultural competencies.[68] For example, in a study focusing on the assessment of multicultural growth, retrospective data were significantly lower than pre-test scores, suggesting that in-depth multicultural instruction prompted greater self-awareness from students, resulting in self-correction of baseline scores.[69]

Methods

Librarians at Purdue University integrated more intercultural competency in an introductory business course for first-year business students taught by business librarians. Utilizing the VALUE rubric and activities from the Intercultural Learning Hub, librarians designed a study to answer the research question:

How will students' intercultural competency levels change after completing the intercultural learning activities?

Participants in this IRB-approved case study were first-year undergraduate students in an introductory business and information strategies course. A total of 102 students were enrolled in 2021, and 147 were enrolled in 2022. Student demographic data for these iterations of the course were retrieved through the university's historical course report dashboard, which included student demographic data on gender, student identity, and ethnicity within a specified timeframe (see Table 1). Based on this data, the researchers hypothesized that using the VALUE rubric and implementing Intercultural Learning Hub activities would facilitate an increase in students' intercultural competency levels.

Using a pre-, retrospective, and post-test design, instructors asked students to rate their intercultural attitudes, skills, and knowledge using the ASKS2 Short Scale, an instrument adapted from the AAC&U Value Rubric.[70] The ASKS2 Short Scale includes 14 questions that ask participants to reflect on and rate behaviors and knowledge relating to openness, curiosity, communication, empathy, worldview, and self-awareness. A full list of questions can be viewed in Table 2.

Following the pre-test, instructors presented content related to intercultural competencies and employed multiple active learning activities (see Table 3). A grade was not associated with any of these activities, and students were given the option to opt-out if they were not comfortable sharing personal information. These activities included Revealing Questions; the Name Game, Circle of Trust; Universal, Cultural, or Personal; Pronouncing Indian and Chinese Names; and Case Analysis: Safe Home Inc. Descriptions of these activities are located in Appendix A.

After the intercultural activities were administered, student participants received course credit for completing the post-test survey. Survey responses were not anonymous, and identifiable information, including student names and email information, was gathered to offer participation credit.

The post-test survey was divided into two parts. First, participants were asked to provide a retrospective reassessment to the ASKS2 Short Scale, where they were prompted

Table 1.

Introductory Business and Information Strategies Course Student Demographics, 2021 and 2022

	2021	2022
Enrollment	102	147
Gender (%)		
Male	54.9%	59.2%
Female	45.1%	40.8%
Student Identity (%)		
First Generation	9.8%	4.1%
International	3.9%	4.8%
Underrepresented Minority	11.8%	4.1%
Ethnicity		
2 or more races	5.9%	2.7%
Asian	10.8%	17%
Black or African American	3.9%	1.4%
Hispanic/Latinx	4.9%	2.7%
Unknown	4.9%	4.1%
White	65.7%	67.%

to re-evaluate their intercultural knowledge and behaviors before participating in intercultural class activities. Second, participants were then asked to rank their knowledge and behaviors following the intercultural class activities (see Appendix B for full survey). The 2021 and 2022 cohorts took the pre-test in week one of the course; the 2021 cohort took the post-test in week 15, and the 2022 cohort in week 16.

Data Analysis

Pre-, retrospective, and post-test data from students enrolled in the course during the fall semesters of 2021 and 2022 were collected using Qualtrics and downloaded into Excel for further analysis. Survey data were cleaned, de-identified, aggregated, and prepped for analysis. Due to variations in response rates among the pre- and post-tests, the means of the pre- and post-data were compared using independent t-tests and were not paired or considered dependent in our analysis. The yearly cohorts were analyzed separately due to differences in instructors and the differences in the student populations in the years directly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, because aggregated demographic data were pulled from the university's historical course report dashboard, demographics were not considered in the analysis because they were not collected directly from surveys in this study.

Table 2.
Survey Questions and Construct Key

#	Question	Related Construct
Q1	I welcome interactions with people who are different from me.	Openness
Q2	I reserve judgment during interactions with people culturally different from me.	Openness
Q3	I ask questions about other cultures different than my own.	Curiosity
Q4	I seek answers to questions about cultural differences.	Curiosity
Q5	I understand differences in forms of verbal communication in different cultures.	Communication
Q6	I understand differences in forms of non-verbal communication in different cultures.	Communication
Q7	I use a world view different from my own to interpret the views and actions of persons from different cultures.	Empathy
Q8	I act in a supportive way that recognizes the feelings of different cultural groups.	Empathy
Q9	I understand the importance of politics, history, beliefs, values, economics and communication styles to members of different cultural groups.	Worldview
Q10	I differentiate the complex beliefs, values, communications styles, customs, politics, history and economics among cultural groups.	Worldview
Q11	I am aware of my own cultural rules and biases.	Self-Awareness
Q12	I can describe my personal cultural rules and biases.	Self-Awareness
Q13	I actively seek to improve my understanding of the complicated differences among cultures.	Self-Awareness
Q14	I am aware of how my own experiences have shaped my personal rules or biases about cultural differences.	Self-Awareness

Multiple conditions are assumed when administering a one-tail independent-sample t-test. First, observations were independent of each other. Second, independent observations were approximately normally distributed. Third, variances of differences between observations were roughly equal. Finally, there were no extreme outliers. The assumptions within this study are satisfied, and the research team can assert that the following results are valid.

Results

In 2021, students reported significant improvement ($p < .05$) on 11 of the 14 questions when evaluating their pre-, retrospective, and post-survey scores (see Table 4) and re-

Table 3.

Mapping Intercultural Competency Activities to AAC&U Value Rubric Constructs

Activity	Related Construct from the AAC&U Value Rubric	Duration	Source
Revealing Questions	• Openness • Curiosity	10 minutes	HubICL, 2013; Prevost, 2013
The Name Game	• Self-awareness • Curiosity	10 minutes	Stringer & Cassiday, 2009
Circle of Trust	• Self-awareness	10 minutes	Menzies, 2018
Universal, Cultural, or Personal	• Worldview	5 minutes	Storti, 1999
Pronouncing Indian and Chinese Names	• Self-awareness • Communication • Curiosity	50 minutes	*Not applicable*
Case Analysis: Safe Home Inc., company move to Mexico	• Empathy	50-90 minutes	Mello, 2021

ported significant improvement on all 14 questions when evaluating their retrospective and post- survey scores (see Table 5). Figure 1 shows the substantial increases between both the pre- or retrospective surveys and post-survey responses across the board.

Figure 1 demonstrates a comparison of pre-, retrospective, and post- means of student self-ratings regarding intercultural competency levels from 2021.

In 2022, students reported significant improvement ($p < .05$) on 11 of the 14 questions when evaluating their pre- and post-survey scores (see Table 6) and reported significant improvement on 13 of 14 questions when evaluating their retrospective and post-survey scores (see Table 7). Question five (Q5) showed a decrease in both the pre- and post-, as well as retrospective and post- comparisons. This decrease was statistically significant in the retrospective and post-survey comparison. Figure 2 shows the substantial increases between both the pre-/retrospective and post-survey responses in all questions except Q5.

Discussion

This study explored whether self-reported intercultural competency levels changed or improved in an introductory business information course following multiple in-class activities, which were mapped to constructs from the AAC&U VALUE Rubric. These activities, in most cases, were adapted from the Intercultural Learning Hub (HubICL)

Table 4.

2021 Student Self-Ratings of Intercultural Competency Levels Pre- and Post-Instruction (Pre-survey N=99, Post-survey N=100). This table denotes 2021 student self-ratings at the start and end of the semester.

	Construct	Pre Mean[1]	Pre Variance	Post Mean[2]	Post Variance	t*	p*
Q1	Openness	5.212	0.658	5.47	0.413	-2.486	0.007
Q2	Openness	5.03	1.111	5.32	0.604	-2.208	0.014
Q3	Curiosity	4.879	1.128	5.28	0.547	-3.095	0.001
Q4	Curiosity	4.636	0.989	5.17	0.708	-4.09	0.00003
Q5	Comm.	4.818	1.212	5.04	0.7459	-1.582	0.058
Q6	Comm.	4.384	1.711	4.99	0.778	-3.773	0.0001
Q7	Empathy	4.495	1.253	5.08	0.741	-4.136	0.00002
Q8	Empathy	5.232	0.894	5.42	0.5692	-1.548	0.062
Q9	Worldview	5.182	0.9258	5.28	0.729	-0.762	0.224
Q10	Worldview	4.788	1.006	5.19	0.802	-2.984	0.002
Q11	Self-Awareness	4.808	1.218	5.22	0.78	-2.894	0.002
Q12	Self-Awareness	4.606	1.18	5.15	0.694	-3.966	0.00005
Q13	Self-Awareness	4.687	1.319	5.18	0.775	-3.401	0.0004
Q14	Self-Awareness	4.98	0.1	5.33	0.79	-2.613	0.005

Note: Scale: 1 = not at all; 6 = very high degree. Significant p-values are in bold.

*one-tailed, independent t tests

1. Ratings at the start of the semester

2. Ratings at the end of the semester

digital toolkit and were intended to support intercultural learning. The results from this two-year study show that librarian instruction can have a positive impact upon student development of intercultural competencies. The following will provide a discussion of the results, implications for intercultural competence training, and key takeaways for librarians.

This study used a pre-, retrospective, and post-test design to gather self-reported assessments of intercultural knowledge and competence. Incorporating the retrospective pre-test and post-test (RPP) design gave students the opportunity to modify their pre-test scores if they felt that they had overestimated their level of competence after completing the in-class activities. While the study did not measure whether there was

Table 5.

2021 Student Self-Ratings of Intercultural Competency Levels Retrospective and Post-Instruction (N=100). This table denotes 2021 student self-ratings at the end of the semester regarding their skills prior to the start of the semester and self-ratings at the end of the semester.

	Construct	Retro Mean[1]	Retro Variance	Post Mean[2]	Post Variance	t	p
Q1	Openness	5.29	0.551	5.47	0.413	-3.462	**0.0004**
Q2	Openness	5.03	0.757	5.32	0.604	-5.054	**0.000001**
Q3	Curiosity	4.62	1.026	5.28	0.547	-7.611	**0.000000000008**
Q4	Curiosity	4.55	1.078	5.17	0.708	-7.619	**0.000000000008**
Q5	Comm.	4.49	1.343	5.04	0.7459	-6.801	**0.0000000004**
Q6	Comm.	4.33	1.456	4.99	0.778	-6.683	**0.0000000001**
Q7	Empathy	4.61	1.028	5.08	0.741	-5.717	**0.00000006**
Q8	Empathy	5.1	0.778	5.42	0.5692	-5.479	**0.0000001**
Q9	Worldview	4.98	0.969	5.28	0.729	-3.822	**0.0001**
Q10	Worldview	4.69	0.964	5.19	0.802	-6.589	**0.000000001**
Q11	Self-Awareness	4.9	0.919	5.22	0.78	-4.26	**0.00002**
Q12	Self-Awareness	4.64	1.101	5.15	0.694	-6.843	**0.0000000003**
Q13	Self-Awareness	4.86	1.112	5.18	0.775	-3.926	**0.00008**
Q14	Self-Awareness	4.89	0.947	5.33	0.79	-5.922	**0.00000002**

Note: Scale: 1 = *not at all*; 6 = *very high degree*. Significant p-values are in bold.

*one-tailed, correlated *t* tests

1. Ratings at the end of the semester regarding skills prior to the start of the semester

2. Ratings at the end of the semester

a significant difference between pre-test and retrospective scores, the pre-test means presented a high or inflated base for comparison, which may suggest an overestimation bias that is consistent with findings from a 2023 study by José A. Soto et al.[71] Despite the high pre-test means, the results in this study showed that most students reported a statistically significant improvement in their development of intercultural competencies around several key constructs following in-class activities and lecture content in both the 2021 and 2022 samples, which supported the alternative hypothesis that the post-test means would be greater than pre-test and retrospective means.
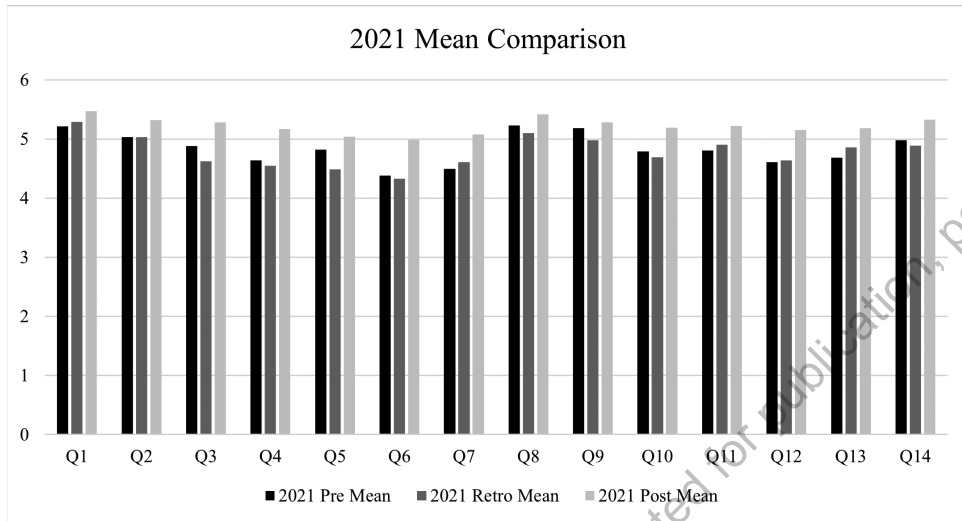
Figure 1. Visual comparison of 2021 Pre-, retrospective, and post- means of student self-ratings of intercultural competency levels, where 1 = *not at all and 6 = very high degree*.
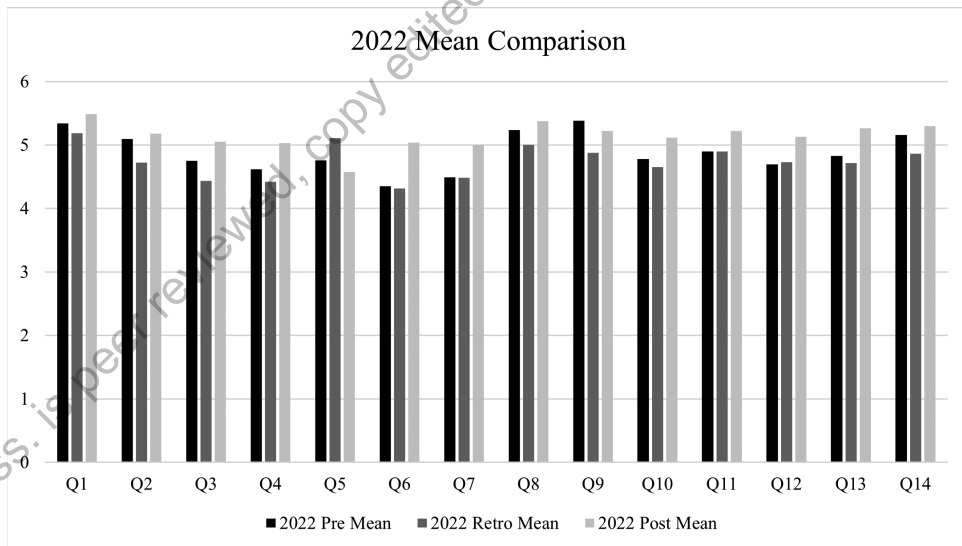

Figure 2. Visual comparison of pre-, retrospective, and post- means of student self-ratings regarding intercultural competency levels from 2022.

Table 6.

2022 Student Self-Ratings of Intercultural Competency Levels Pre- and Post-Instruction (Pre-survey N=150, Post-survey N=146). This table denotes 2022 student self-ratings at the start and end of the semester.

	Construct	Retro Mean	Retro Variance	Post Mean	Post Variance	t*	p*
Q1	Openness	5.34	0.588	5.486	0.541	-1.674	**0.048**
Q2	Openness	5.093	1.065	5.178	1.209	-0.0683	0.247
Q3	Curiosity	4.747	1.036	5.055	0.0838	-2.736	**0.003**
Q4	Curiosity	4.62	1.056	5.034	0.751	-3.745	**0.0001**
Q5	Comm.	4.76	1.177	4.575	1.156	1.47	0.071
Q6	Comm.	4.347	1.356	5.041	0.743	-5.82	**0.000000007**
Q7	Empathy	4.493	1.003	5	0.993	-4.362	**0.000009**
Q8	Empathy	5.233	0.069	5.377	0.664	-1.499	**0.0068**
Q9	Worldview	5.38	0.667	5.219	0.683	1.684	**0.047**
Q10	Worldview	4.78	1.086	5.116	0.862	-2.93	**0.002**
Q11	Self-Awareness	4.9	0.95	5.219	0.903	-2.852	**0.002**
Q12	Self-Awareness	4.693	1.368	5.13	0.0817	-3.588	**0.0002**
Q13	Self-Awareness	4.827	1.164	5.26	0.828	-3.732	**0.0001**
Q14	Self-Awareness	5.16	0.645	5.295	0.678	-1.423	0.078

Note: Scale: 1 = *not at all*; 6 = *very high degree*. Significant p-values are in bold.
*one-tailed, independent *t* tests

However, there were exceptions within the individual constructs. Question 5 from the survey addressed whether students understood differences in forms of verbal communication in different cultures, which falls under the communication construct. In 2021, students reported a slight improvement that was not statistically significant when comparing means from the pre- and post-test data. Although, when comparing the means of the retrospective and post-test data, this increase was significant, indicating that students felt they had overestimated their reported confidence in the pre-test, like the findings from a 2021 study by José Soto et al.[72]

In 2022, Question 5 presented a different result. When comparing the pre-and post-data and the retrospective and post-data, the mean scores revealed that students felt their knowledge of verbal communication lessened, with the retrospective and post-data comparison presenting a statistically significant decrease. This presents the possibility of greater self-awareness of their lack of knowledge or competence.[73]

Table 7.

2022 Student Self-Ratings of Intercultural Competency Levels Retrospective and Post-Instruction (N=146). This table denotes 2022 student self-ratings at the end of the semester regarding their skills prior to the start of the semester and self-ratings at the end of the semester.

	Construct	Retro Mean	Retro Variance	Post Mean	Post Variance	t*	p*
Q1	Openness	5.185	0.772	5.486	0.541	-5.821	**0.00000002**
Q2	Openness	4.719	1.403	5.178	1.209	-7.274	**0.00000000001**
Q3	Curiosity	4.438	1.324	5.055	0.0838	-8.239	**0.00000000000005**
Q4	Curiosity	4.418	1.169	5.034	0.751	-8.532	**0.000000000000009**
Q5	Comm.	5.11	0.705	4.575	1.156	7.538	**0.000000000002**
Q6	Comm.	4.315	1.307	5.041	0.743	-9.607	**0.00000000000000002**
Q7	Empathy	4.486	1.3	5	0.993	-7.244	**0.00000000001**
Q8	Empathy	5	0.979	5.377	0.664	-5.901	**0.00000000001**
Q9	Worldview	4.877	1.047	5.219	0.683	-5.116	**0.0000005**
Q10	Worldview	4.651	1.084	5.116	0.862	-7.053	**0.00000000003**
Q11	Self-Awareness	4.897	0.948	5.219	0.903	-4.941	**0.000001**
Q12	Self-Awareness	4.726	1.138	5.13	0.0817	-6.448	**0.0000000008**
Q13	Self-Awareness	4.712	1.31	5.26	0.828	-7.966	**0.0000000000002**
Q14	Self-Awareness	4.863	1.126	5.295	0.678	-6.482	**0.0000000006**

Note: Scale: 1 = *not at all*; 6 = *very high degree*. Significant p-values are in bold.

*one-tailed, correlated *t* tests

Question 9, which was mapped to the worldview construct, also presented a comparatively different result in 2022. This question addressed whether students understood the importance of politics, history, beliefs, values, economics, and communication styles to members of different cultural groups. When comparing the pre- and post-means, students reported a statistically significant decline in their perceived competence for this question. However, when comparing the retrospective pre- and post-mean, these results were corrected to show a significant improvement in worldview. Similar to the communication construct, this result suggests an enhanced self-awareness of intercultural knowledge gaps that ultimately improved through participating in intercultural competency activities.

In summary, students consistently reported a statistically significant improvement in their intercultural competencies when comparing the retrospective pre- and post-means, with the exclusion of Question 5 from the communication construct. This sug-gests that intercultural competency activities effectively improve perceived competence across various domains. It also highlights a greater need for further instruction relating to cross-cultural communication or additional activities to help solidify and practice course concepts. The challenges faced with the com-munication construct may also reveal broader difficulties experienced by students who have had limited exposure to multilingual environments. Cross-cultural and intercul-tural communication skills often present bar-riers in academic and professional settings, which can lead to high levels of anxiety or

> **Cross-cultural and intercultural communication skills often present barriers in academic and professional settings, which can lead to high levels of anxiety or uncertainty when working with people from different cultural backgrounds.**

uncertainty when working with people from different cultural backgrounds. Language barriers pose the greatest challenges for multicultural teams.[74] Language barriers can also affect trust formation in multicultural teams.[75] Business students often see the value of cross-cultural communication skills but may not be receiving training through their business communication courses.[76]

Implications for Intercultural Competence Training

This study contributes to a body of literature that presents the value and effectiveness of incorporating intercultural competency training within business courses.[77] Further, it presents a case that students do not need to do a deep dive into multicultural or inter-cultural competency content in order to gain significant self-reported improvements to several of the AAC&U Value Rubrics constructs. Many of the activities incorporated in this study took less than 10 minutes and resulted in higher levels of openness, curios-ity, and self-awareness. For this reason, there are opportunities to offer a wide range of lessons that facilitate intercultural competence, which could be implemented in various courses through different methods. From brief activities to lengthier approaches, incor-porating intercultural competence interventions in the classroom can foster important dialogue that prepares students to enter a globalized workforce that acknowledges and celebrates diversity.

Of course, some constructs are more difficult to improve upon in a short session, with cross-cultural communication posing the most significant challenges for students. While additional research is needed to determine more effective approaches to cross-communication instruction in introductory business and information literacy courses, attempting to address these constructs when possible is a step toward progress in this area. The results of this study affirm that the intercultural competence interventions explored in the business course were beneficial to students and are well worth continued implementation for both students and instruction librarians. Though this study examined

intercultural competence interventions within a business course, there is also potential in implementing intercultural competence activities within the context of other disciplines, as globalization is not unique to the field of business.

Takeaways for Librarians

While this study focused on the multiple instructional interventions over a 16-week business course, there are takeaways for librarians that should be considered beyond the confines of the business classroom. By becoming familiar with activities that build intercultural competence and weaving these activities into curricula, librarians can help students develop practical skills for increasingly globalized career paths. Librarians can address intercultural competence alongside information literacy and thereby broaden the relevance of libraries to various careers, ideally helping the institutions they serve become more interculturally competent. In doing so, librarians acknowledge the importance of recognizing, respecting, and participating in a diverse workforce within the context of the classroom.

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The instructional duties of librarians vary across different schools, departments, and positions. Interactions with students may differ and include some combination of reference consultations, one-shot sessions, embedded teaching, and credit-bearing courses. Regardless of the type of interaction, there are opportunities to integrate intercultural competency considerations into both instruction and practice. Librarians can reflect on their own cultural knowledge and awareness in preparation for working with students from different cultural backgrounds and consider inclusive approaches to their instructional design.[78] Additionally, the ALA and ARL Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity advocates for librarians to move beyond cultural competence to cultural fluency, where growth is ongoing and does not end with a single training session or activity.[79]

In terms of working with students, intercultural competence activities can vary in duration. Some can be covered as a full lesson, while others can be carried out as short activities. Regardless of how a librarian implements and executes these activities, students value experiential learning and note the overall relevance and practicality of such activities. One-shot sessions, in particular, may allow little time to develop intercultural competencies in the classroom; however, teaching repositories, such as the Intercultural Learning Hub Digital Tool Box, provide lesson plans and activities that can be filtered by group size and activity duration, with many activities that can be completed in five to 15 minutes.[80] Through participating in these classroom activities pertaining to intercultural competencies and connecting them to scenarios applicable beyond the classroom, librarians can help students practice, develop, and apply these intercultural competencies in preparation to participate in a diverse workforce.

Beyond the business classroom, implementing activities to build intercultural competencies allows librarians to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. Within the classroom, librarians can facilitate these activities, leading students to learn more about one another and acknowledge the diversity of backgrounds and experiences in the classroom. This offers rich opportunities for discussion and reflection while fostering classroom community and cultivating a comfortable, participatory environment. In turn, students are prepared to utilize intercultural competencies in their future careers and intercultural professional relationships or interactions. In addition, librarians are often involved in teaching outside of the classroom. An example of this is the training and development of student workers in our library spaces. These are excellent opportunities to help students gain proficiency in intercultural competencies that will help them as employees of the library and in their future careers. For information literacy instruction in business and non-business

> **For information literacy instruction in business and non-business courses, intercultural competency activities can aid interpersonal information-gathering by building trust within teams and demonstrating the value of diverse perspectives and worldviews.**

courses, intercultural competency activities can aid interpersonal information-gathering by building trust within teams and demonstrating the value of diverse perspectives and worldviews. [81] Incorporating bias instruction can also show how culture and society can shape worldviews, leading to different forms of bias. Students can then identify their own biases and evaluate bias in information through an intercultural lens. Overall, this study demonstrates that students can benefit from participating in short, practical, intercultural competency built into class lessons.

Limitations

Several limitations exist in this study and could impact the interpretation of the results. First, this study relied on pre-, retrospective, and post-assessments that were not anonymous. This may result in different forms of bias, including authority bias and social desirability bias. The survey also relied on students assessing their own levels of intercultural competence, which could result in self-reporting bias. Though the materials and activities were the same in both years, there were variations in instructors, which could have created differences in instruction.

While outside the scope of this article, it is also important to consider that information literacy and knowledge differ across cultural contexts, which presents opportunities for highlighting cultural factors that influence information and different ways of knowing.[82] Examining how cultural factors potentially influence information-gathering and consumption could be of interest as another avenue of research.

Conclusion

As the world becomes ever more globalized, it is essential that students understand the implications of culture on their interactions. Intercultural competence is intrinsically tied to information literacy, as all information lives within the cultural context in which it is created and communicated. While the initial results of these classroom interventions are promising, the authors will continue to iterate the course and assess their actions to better understand how student intercultural competence can be improved. Elements of this model have been incorporated into other courses taught by librarians, and the authors are actively looking for more opportunities to work the same pedagogical tactics into disciplinary areas beyond business. The authors are also interested in the long-term implications of this type of instruction. Do students retain the gains made during the semester over their academic and professional careers, or do they revert to their original ways of thinking after time has passed? Do students who receive this type of instruction make decisions differently regarding how they find and use information? These are some of the questions that can be addressed in future studies. The authors encourage other librarians to incorporate intercultural instruction and activities into their own information literacy classrooms.

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Appendix A

Intercultural Competency Activities

Revealing Questions

This question activity was adapted from a lesson plan developed by Purdue's Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE), which draws from Shelley Prevost's revealing questions to build better work relationships.[83] For this activity, participants were asked four revealing questions:

1) What one memory do you most treasure and why?
2) How did your culture teach you to react to stressful situations?

3) Fill in the blank: If you really know me as a [fill in cultural group you belong to], you know that I _____.
4) What is the one thing your family and/or community taught you to value above all others?

Participants were given time to think through their answers and then had the opportunity to share their responses with 3-4 group members. This exercise allows participants to reflect upon and express their own life experiences through the lens of their own culture, develop deeper connections with teammates, and value and appreciate how individual experiences and culture can shape an individual's worldview.

The Name Game

This in-class warm-up activity was adapted from Donna M. Stringer and Patricia A. Cassiday by the Center for Intercultural Learning at Purdue University.[84] The activity provides a novel opportunity for individuals to introduce themselves by exploring the background and significance of their names. During the activity, individuals list a few notes about their name, who named them, why that name was chosen for them, what their name means to other people, and what their name means to the individual themselves. Then, participants partner with other class members and share their information, which may reveal surprising and interesting meanings. Instructors then showed the video on the #SayMyName project from the University of Michigan, which shared stories that highlighted the importance of names and the challenges Asian and Pacific Islander students face surrounding how their names are pronounced by non-native speakers. In ethnically and culturally diverse groups, this activity and video helps individuals develop intercultural respect and understanding of names.

Circle of Trust

The Circle of Trust was adapted from Felicity Menzies' A-ha activities for unconscious bias training and seeks to help students recognize affinity bias and understand the implications of bias in the workplace.[85] For this activity, participants write down a list of initials of six to ten people they trust the most who are not members of their family. Once this is completed, students are asked to place a tick mark beside each person on the list who is similar to them under a specified dimension. This includes gender, nationality, native language, age, religion, and race/ethnicity. By the end of the activity, participants most often realize the trusted individuals they selected have dimensions similar to their own and display minimal diversity. Students are then prompted to discuss the implications of affinity bias in the workplace, particularly as it relates to hiring, promotion, team building, and leadership. This activity is paired with the SPACE2 Model of Mindful Inclusion, which offers students strategies for combatting reflexive biased responses.[86]

Universal, Cultural, or Personal

Adapted from Craig Storti's Universal, Cultural, or Personal Quiz, this activity asks participants to differentiate between human behaviors on the universal, cultural, and personal continuum.[87] In small groups, participants were given a list of behaviors and

asked to identify whether these examples could be considered universal, cultural, or personal. The instructor then requested the whole class share their determinations. Students were additionally asked to reflect on their own personal, cultural, and universal behaviors and consider how this knowledge will help with real-life interactions. This activity promotes knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks by helping participants differentiate between different forms of behaviors and expressions across the globe. Additionally, it allows participants to reflect upon their own behaviors when immersing themselves in a new culture.

Pronouncing Indian and Chinese Names

Personal names carry important meanings and associations that may hold personal, familial, and ethnocultural significance.[88] For international students, repeated mispronunciations of their names may result in negative psychological implications, such as embarrassment or shame.[89] While mispronouncing foreign-sounding names may be unintentional, more can be done to gain awareness of the importance of names and develop skills to pronounce them properly. For this lesson, participants were provided with strategies for pronouncing Indian and Chinese names from a guest speaker and supplementary video content. Students were also given examples and opportunities to practice their pronunciation in class. These two languages were selected because the largest populations of international students at Purdue University are from India and China. This lesson builds on the name game activity and prompts students to appreciate the significance of names.[90] It also offers strategies to improve cross-cultural communication through proper pronunciation.

Case Analysis: Safe Home Inc.

Stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying, understanding, and assessing persons or organizations with a vested interest in or possibly affected by a particular decision.[91] While empathy is not a guaranteed consideration with stakeholder analysis, emotion, and perspective-taking can play an essential role in decision-making.[92] For this activity, participants analyzed a case titled Safe Home, Inc., an international business case that explores whether the president and CEO of Safe Home, Inc. should decide to establish an assembly facility in Matamoros, Mexico.[93] During class, participants were asked to conduct a stakeholder analysis where stakeholders were identified and ranked in terms of importance. Additionally, students considered whether the company had ethical obligations to keep existing facilities, which employed over 2,000 workers. Following their analysis, participants had to decide on how to proceed. This case allowed students to empathize with different stakeholders, highlighting the complexity of international business decisions.

Appendix B.

Pre- and post-survey Instrument.

	1 not at all I am not aware of or do not recognize this behavior.	2 low degree I am only aware of and recognize this behavior.	3 somewhat low degree I cooperate or comply with this behavior if required by others.	4 somewhat high degree I recognize the value of and prefer this behavior.	5 high degree This behavior is an important priority to me.	6 very high degree This behavior is natural to me, is habitual to me, and embodies who I am.
I welcome interactions with people who are different from me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I reserve judgment during interactions with people culturally different from me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I ask questions about other cultures different than my own.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I seek answers to questions about cultural difference.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I understand differences in forms of verbal communication in different cultures.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

I understand differences in forms of non-verbal communication in different cultures.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I use a world view different from my own to interpret the views and actions of persons from different cultures.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I act in a supportive way that recognizes the feelings of different cultural groups.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I understand the importance of politics, history, beliefs, values, economics and communication styles to members of different cultural groups.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I differentiate the complex beliefs, values, communications styles, customs, politics, history and economics among cultural groups.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I am aware of my own cultural rules and biases.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

I can describe my personal cultural rules and biases.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I actively seek to improve my understanding of the complicated differences among cultures.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I am aware of how my own experiences have shaped my personal rules or biases about cultural differences.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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