

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**CREATING A CLIL COURSE FOR TEACHING  
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION TO ESTONIAN  
GYMNASIUM STUDENTS**

**MA Thesis**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present thesis aims to design a CLIL elective course on Intercultural Communication for Estonian upper secondary school students, enhancing their intercultural competence while developing their English proficiency. The thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction explains why this thesis was written and briefly describes its structure. The first chapter outlines the theoretical background of intercultural communication and the CLIL methodology, focusing on their relevance in the educational context. The second chapter describes the development of the course, its structure, learning outcomes, and an overview of the lessons, for which lesson plans and materials were created. The thesis ends with a conclusion that summarises the main points about CLIL, intercultural communication, and the course created. The course outline, five lesson plans and materials of those lessons are included in the appendices.

Keywords: CLIL, intercultural communication, elective course, foreign language

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly globalized world, the ability to navigate intercultural communication and adapt to growing plurilingualism is essential. Globalization has made the world more interconnected, which has impacted not only the use of languages (Mehisto et al 2008: 10), but also communication between people from different cultures. The widespread influence of globalization highlights the reality that isolation is no longer viable in today's world. This means that schools must prioritize not only effective language teaching and learning but also fostering intercultural competence to equip students with the skills necessary for meaningful communication in a diverse and interconnected world.

Intercultural communication has been recognized as a distinct field of study since the mid-1980s (Raitskaya & Tikhonova 2019: 152). Scholars have defined intercultural communication in various ways, emphasizing different aspects of cultural interaction. It has been described as 'interactions among people from different cultures', as well as 'the exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally' (Raitskaya & Tikhonova 2019: 152). Zhu (2014) presents a broader perspective, defining it as both a situation in which individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact and a field of study that examines interactions between people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups.

According to the Estonian National Curriculum for upper secondary schools (2011, Appendix 5:1), students should develop an understanding of different cultures and their specificities and show respect towards individual and cultural differences. They should also be able to understand the meaning and necessity of dialogue between cultures (2011, Appendix 5: 24). To prepare students for effective communication in culturally diverse environments, schools must take on the responsibility of equipping young people with the necessary skills to navigate these interactions. This requires an educational approach that goes beyond mere linguistic proficiency and supports an understanding of cultural perspectives, communication

styles, and social norms. While it is theoretically possible to develop intercultural communication competence within language lessons, in practice, there are probably not enough language lessons to sufficiently address this need. Moreover, the focus in language classes is often on linguistic accuracy rather than the broader cultural and communicative skills essential for successful intercultural interactions. Therefore, there is a clear need for additional learning opportunities that specifically target intercultural competence development alongside language learning.

This is where Content and Language Integrated Learning emerges as a powerful pedagogical approach. Content and Language Integrated Learning (hereinafter CLIL), which emerged in the 1990s, is a dual-focused teaching and learning approach, in which an additional language, which is not the learner's first language, is used for both subject content and language learning (Mehisto et al 2008: 9; Coyle et al 2010: 1; Mehisto 2012: 15; Marsh 2000: 2, Eurydice 2006: 7). In this context, 'content' refers to either a traditional school subject, such as math, science, geography, or history, or it refers to a broader topic organized around a specific theme. The term 'additional language' refers to the learners' foreign or second language, in other words a language that is not the students' first language (Coyle et al 2010: 1). The ratio between content and language in a CLIL lesson may vary from, for example, 90% content and 10% language, to 25% content and 75% language, meaning that as long as there exists a dual focus between language and non-language content, it is still considered a form of CLIL (Marsh 2002: 17).

The growing interest in CLIL comes from its alignment with modern educational needs. Coyle et al (2010: 2) explain that globalization and social and economic changes shape who learns which language, when, and how. While the motivations for language learning differ across regions, they share a common goal: achieving optimal results in the shortest possible time (Coyle et al 2010: 2). This suggests that CLIL is appealing because it enhances language

learning efficiency by integrating content and language, making the process more effective and relevant to real-world needs. In addition, research into the benefits of implementing CLIL in schools has yielded positive results, showing that the students not only learn how to properly speak another language, but also gain many socio-cultural skills that improve their professional and personal lives (Mehisto et al 2008: 21).

The Estonian National Curriculum (2011) also recommends that upper secondary schools incorporate elective foreign language courses into their curricula and, for the languages with the target level of B2, it is recommended that these courses follow a CLIL approach. However, there is currently a lack of established syllabi and materials for such elective courses. As a result, schools that may not have the resources, expertise, or time to develop their own course plans and materials could greatly benefit from a well-structured CLIL course. This highlights the necessity of creating such a course, as it would provide a valuable solution for schools seeking to offer high-quality, content-integrated language learning opportunities.

The aim of this thesis is to design an elective CLIL course on Intercultural Communication for Estonian upper secondary school students, with the goal of enhancing their understanding of intercultural interactions and increasing their awareness of the cultural and communicative competencies necessary for effective engagement in diverse social and professional contexts. The thesis consists of two main chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of intercultural communication and explains why it is a necessary concept, as well as provides an overview of the theoretical framework of CLIL and the guidelines for developing CLIL lessons. The second chapter explores the key principles behind designing the course, while focusing on the characteristics of CLIL and the aspects of intercultural communication that were discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter also offers a detailed overview of the course structure and the lessons for which sample materials were created. The created study materials and lesson plans are included in the appendices.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE CLIL APPROACH**

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides an overview of Intercultural Communication, explaining its key concepts and underlying principles. Additionally, it presents the theoretical framework of CLIL, outlining its core principles, benefits, challenges, and its relevance to the topic of Intercultural Communication.

### **1.1 Intercultural Communication**

Culture is deeply intertwined with communication, as it shapes how people understand the world, structure their societies, and express shared values, beliefs, and ways of life (Liu et al 2015: XV). The connection between the two is what binds communities together, transmitting traditions, meanings, and norms from one generation to the next. Central to this process is communication: the act of sharing thoughts, hopes, and knowledge (ibid.). In this sense, culture and communication are inseparable. However, as globalization accelerates and individuals from different cultural backgrounds come more into contact in areas such as business, education, politics, and travel, the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries has become essential. Intercultural communication is a skill that does not develop automatically. Rather, it must be consciously learned and practiced, particularly while navigating the growing diversity of our interconnected world (ibid.).

The essence of intercultural communication revolves around engaging with individuals who differ from us, in other words, interacting with an intercultural 'stranger' (Liu et al 2015). While intercultural communication might appear to be a straightforward process of verbal or nonverbal interaction, it in fact involves a complex interaction of cultural identities, values, and perspectives. Beyond the surface level of differing nationalities or ethnicities, the process of intercultural communication encompasses a dynamic negotiation of various cultural

resources, such as class, gender, profession, sexuality, and language, all of which intersect in the local, national and global contexts (Baker 2024: 212). Intercultural communication should not be romanticized as the pursuit of harmonious mutual understanding or cultural communion. Zhu (2014: 220) cautions against the assumption that intercultural dialogue necessarily leads to unity, noting instead that it serves as an analytical lens through which difference, whether linguistic, cultural, or ideological, can be better understood and critically examined. Rather than smoothing over differences, effective intercultural communication acknowledges and navigates them.

The term *intercultural communication* is often used interchangeably with the term *cross-cultural communication*. However, there are important distinctions between them, both in focus and in methodological approaches. Cross-cultural communication typically involves the comparison of communication styles, norms, and behaviours across two or more cultural groups, often at the national level (Gudykunst 2003, as cited in Jackson 2014: 45). For example, researchers might examine how politeness strategies differ between Japanese and Irish management meetings, or how greetings vary in English and Chinese contexts (Jackson 2014: 45). These comparisons, while useful, have been criticized for promoting stereotypical or essentialist views of culture by reducing individuals to static representations of national identity (Holliday 2011, as cited in Baker 2024: 213). In contrast, intercultural communication focuses on the actual interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds and explores how cultural differences are negotiated in real-time communicative encounters (Jackson, 2014; Baker, 2024). Rather than assuming that individuals always communicate in ways typical of their national culture, intercultural approaches recognize that communication is dynamic and context-dependent, often shaped by intersecting cultural identities and the immediate situation (Scollon et al 2012, as cited in Baker 2024: 213). This makes intercultural communication

particularly valuable for understanding how people adapt their communicative practices during interactions across cultural boundaries.

Simply being able to speak a foreign language does not ensure an effective communication between people of different cultures – understanding the cultural background, values, and beliefs of others is equally important. This is where intercultural communication skills become essential. Awareness of these differences is the first step towards acceptance, which in turn encourages mutual respect and enriches people's collective experiences (Liu et al, 2015). Often, people are unaware of the cultural rules governing their own behaviour until they encounter customs that challenge their assumptions. According to Liu et al (2015), the key to navigating cultural differences lies in acquiring intercultural knowledge and developing the skills necessary for culturally sensitive communication. Ultimately, engaging in intercultural communication is essential for building knowledge of both other cultures and our own, leading to greater intercultural competence and understanding.

In today's interconnected world, it is essential to develop the ability to adapt to and thrive in unfamiliar environments while contributing to the global society in a constructive and peaceful manner. Engaging with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds not only enhances our awareness of others but also supports self-reflection and promotes respectful and meaningful intercultural relationships (Jackson 2014: 48). As Liu et al (2015: 17) emphasize, meaningful communication across cultures enriches rather than hinders interaction; it broadens our understanding of others' beliefs, values, and worldviews. This deeper understanding helps us make sense of culturally different behaviours and approaches to communication, reinforcing the idea that diversity, when approached with openness, can be a powerful resource for mutual growth (ibid.).

### 1.1.1 Intercultural Communication Competence

The concept of intercultural communication competence is generally understood as having the ability and the skills to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts (Martin & Nakayama 2010: 47). A foundational assumption in intercultural communication competence (hereinafter ICC) is that it is more than just knowledge of another language or another culture. According to Kim (1991, as cited in Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005: 141), ICC must be seen as an internal capacity rooted in adaptability – the ability of an individual to adjust their psychological framework to meet the demands of unfamiliar cultural environments. This adaptability is not the same as being culturally competent in one specific setting; rather, it reflects a dynamic flexibility that allows individuals to perform successfully in new and diverse intercultural contexts. Such flexibility is supported by what Miller & Poston (2020) call *cognitive flexibility*, or the capacity to revise existing knowledge frameworks in response to new cultural encounters.

There are multiple components to ICC, such as **motivation, self- and other awareness, and tolerance for uncertainty** (Miller & Poston, 2020). Motivation is a component that plays a central role in ICC. Without a genuine desire, either intrinsic or extrinsic, to engage with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, there exists no foundation for further developing attitudes and skills essential to ICC, and progress toward competence may stall (Miller & Poston, 2020). Members of dominant cultural groups may lack this motivation due to fewer perceived benefits, while individuals from nondominant groups often experience the daily necessity of adapting to dominant cultural norms, sometimes through mechanisms like code-switching, in which members of nondominant groups adjust their communication style to fit in with the dominant group (ibid.). This brings attention to a crucial barrier in ICC: *ethnocentrism*. Defined as the tendency to view one's own culture as the norm or superior, ethnocentrism can prevent the development of meaningful intercultural interactions (Martin &

Nakayama 2010: 5; Miller & Poston, 2020). When individuals act from an ethnocentric mindset, they are less likely to engage empathetically and respectfully in intercultural encounters, as they may dismiss other cultural practices or beliefs as inferior or illogical (Liu et al, 2015). Ethnocentrism can often lead to prejudice and stereotyping, where individuals from different cultural backgrounds are unfairly grouped together and judged in a typically negative and generalized way (Jackson 2014: 420; Liu et al 2015: 16).

Intercultural competence involves challenging these biases by stepping outside one's cultural comfort zone and encouraging self-awareness alongside other awareness. According to Martin & Nakayama (2010: 4), one of the most compelling reasons for studying intercultural communication is the development of greater self-awareness. While the focus in intercultural contexts is often placed on understanding the 'other', true competence begins with a deeper understanding of an individual's own cultural frameworks. By engaging with people from other cultural backgrounds, people are challenged to step outside their usual assumptions. Such self-reflection is essential in developing an *ethno-relative* outlook, which, according to The European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL 2018) is an ability to see the world from multiple cultural perspectives without positioning one's own as the default. Jackson (2014: 90) notes that developing an enhanced self-awareness and a deeper appreciation of other worldviews enriches not only the individual but also their communities and society at large. As Liu et al (2015: 16) emphasize, cultural differences are not obstacles to communication – they are opportunities for enrichment. Intercultural communication provides a way to overcome ethnocentrism by encouraging direct engagement with people from other cultures, which in turn supports an appreciation of diverse worldviews and practices.

Tolerance for uncertainty is another important component of ICC. Intercultural situations often involve ambiguity, and individuals vary in how comfortable they are with such uncertainty. As Martin and Nakayama (2010) explain, those with a high tolerance for

uncertainty are more likely to stay engaged, seek information, and communicate more effectively. On the other hand, a low tolerance may result in miscommunication or withdrawal out of anxiety (*ibid.*). This tolerance can be supported by intrinsic motivation, especially curiosity, which drives individuals to pursue intercultural encounters despite initial discomfort, as the personal growth and learning that result are highly rewarding (Miller & Poston, 2020). Intercultural competence is about being prepared for the unexpected, perceiving situations carefully, and managing ambiguity (EFIL 2018). Therefore, ICC can be built and achieved by fostering attitudes that are motivating, discovering knowledge that is informative, and developing skills that are enabling (Miller & Poston, 2020).

The ongoing process of ICC is naturally tied to language learning. As Baker (2024: 212) notes, language acquisition is inherently an intercultural process. Learners of additional languages must navigate linguistic and cultural codes that are often unfamiliar, which means developing communicative competence necessarily involves intercultural competence. Zhu (2014: 219) emphasizes that language is key to understanding culture, and that culture is an essential part of learning any language. This perspective draws attention to the fact that language education cannot be separated from cultural context; rather, it should support learners in developing intercultural awareness and sensitivity. In an increasingly interconnected society where English is often used as a *lingua franca* among speakers of different native languages, the focus of English language teaching needs to shift from achieving native-speaker-like proficiency to fostering the skills necessary for effective communication across cultural boundaries (Jackson, 2014). In this sense, ICC challenges traditional notions in language education, pushing away from native-speaker criteria towards intercultural awareness. As Baker (2024: 213) emphasizes, language learners must be prepared to interact across diverse cultural and linguistic landscapes, and thus their education must incorporate intercultural dimensions.

### 1.1.2 Theories and models for understanding Intercultural Communication

Several theories and models have been developed to try and explain the cultural differences that have been observed between representatives of different cultures as well as to suggest ways of coping with such differences.

One of the earliest theories was the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**, which addresses the relationship between language, thought, and cultural worldview. This hypothesis, developed by linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, suggests that language influences the way we think and shapes how we perceive social reality (Martin & Nakayama 2010: 47), thus becoming an important concept in the study of language and intercultural communication. The strong form of the hypothesis, *linguistic determinism*, proposes that our language determines what we can think, while the more widely accepted *linguistic relativity*, also known as the weaker version, suggests that language influences our thought patterns without strictly limiting cognitive capabilities (Jackson 2014: 105-106). In intercultural communication, this perspective invites critical reflection on how linguistic structures and vocabulary shape cultural interpretations and meaning-making. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has significantly influenced academic thought on how language affects everyday communication. It challenges the common belief that everyone experiences and interprets the world in the same way (Martin & Nakayama 2010: 222).

One of the most widely recognized and cited frameworks in the field of culture is **Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions**. Developed by Geert Hofstede in the 1970s, the model emerged from a large-scale study based on employee value surveys collected from over 50 countries through the multinational corporation IBM (Panocová 2020: 28). While Hofstede's model has been the subject of both praise and criticism, it remains a valuable tool for identifying and comparing cultural patterns across societies.

Although culture cannot be matched directly with nationality, people often refer to national characteristics when discussing cultural differences, using expressions like ‘typically German’ or ‘typically American’ (Hofstede et al 2010: 21). Hofstede et al (2010: 21-22) recognized that using nations as units of analysis provides a practical advantage: governments regularly collect extensive statistical data, which makes large-scale comparative studies more possible. This approach allowed Hofstede to identify underlying value dimensions that distinguish cultures, based on consistent patterns observed in national-level data.

Initially, Hofstede (1980) identified four main cultural dimensions. The first, power distance, refers to the extent to which inequality and hierarchy are accepted and expected in a society. Cultures with high power distance tend to accept unequal power distribution, whereas low power distance cultures strive for equality and question authority (Hofstede, 1980). The second dimension, uncertainty avoidance, deals with how societies cope with ambiguity and the unknown. High uncertainty avoidance cultures have a low tolerance for unpredictability and prefer clear rules and structure, while low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more comfortable with ambiguity and change (ibid.). The third dimension, individualism versus collectivism, focuses on the relationship between the individual and the group. Individualist cultures emphasize personal goals, autonomy, and individual rights, while collectivist cultures prioritize group harmony, loyalty, and interdependence (ibid.). The fourth dimension, masculinity versus femininity, concerns the distribution of emotional roles between the genders. Masculine cultures value competitiveness, achievement, and assertiveness, whereas feminine cultures emphasize care, cooperation, and quality of life (ibid.).

In response to later research, Hofstede introduced a fifth dimension in his 1991 book: long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede et al 2010: 239). Long-term orientation refers to encouraging values that focus on future benefits, especially perseverance and saving resources. In contrast, short-term orientation refers to promoting values linked to the past and

present, such as respecting traditions, maintaining one's reputation, and meeting social expectations (ibid.). Finally, a sixth dimension was added by Hofstede et al (2010): indulgence versus restraint. This dimension contrasts societies that allow relatively free enjoyment of basic and natural human desires (indulgence) with those that regulate and suppress such desires through strict social norms (restraint) (Hofstede et al 2010: 281).

Each country is assigned a score on each of the six dimensions, positioning it in relation to other countries. Importantly, these dimensions are statistically independent and can appear in any combination, though some patterns are more commonly observed than others (Panocová 2020: 29). Together, Hofstede's six dimensions offer a comprehensive framework for analysing and comparing cultural values and behaviours across various national and social contexts. Despite its limitations, such as its emphasis on national averages and its roots in corporate settings, Hofstede's model continues to serve as a foundational theory for exploring how cultural values shape perceptions, behaviours, and communication styles across the world.

Edward T. Hall, who is a foundational figure in the study of intercultural communication and has even been named as the father of the intercultural communication research field (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005: 138), introduced the concepts of *high-context* and *low-context* cultures. According to his theory, most of the information conveyed during communication in high-context cultures is embedded in the physical surroundings or internalized by the individuals involved, with only a small portion explicitly stated in the verbal message (Hall 1976: 91). Asian cultures typically favour high-context communication, where understanding a message relies on minimal yet necessary activation of the surrounding context, which includes culturally specific cues (Broeder 2021: 14). People from these cultural groups are accustomed to implicit, indirect messages often supported by visual or situational associations. In contrast, in the communication of a low-context culture, the majority of the information is conveyed through explicit, clearly articulated verbal messages (Hall 1976: 91).

Western cultures (Americans, Germans, Scandinavians and other Northern Europeans) typically fall under this category, as they prefer low-context messages, which are mostly expressed through words. They require detailed background information each time they engage in communication with others (Hall & Hall 1990). Nam (2015: 378) emphasizes that in low-context cultures, the focus is primarily on *what* is said, while in high-context cultures, greater emphasis is placed on *how* the message is conveyed, including tone, gestures, and contextual cues.

Misunderstandings can arise when speakers rely on different communication scripts shaped by high- or low-context cultures. According to Jin & Cortazzi (2022: 488), in high-context interactions, suggestions and hints may go unnoticed by low-context speakers, making the communication seem vague or ambiguous. In contrast, direct communication typical of low-context cultures may be perceived by high-context individuals as impolite, forceful, or aggressive. The distinction between high- and low-context communication can be a useful principle within intercultural communication repertoires, though it should also be critically examined (Jin & Cortazzi 2022: 488).

Besides the aforementioned theories, other various alternative models have evolved to capture the more dynamic, social, and communicative components of international contact. According to Gudykunst (2003, as cited in Panocová 2020: 114), there are now at least 15 different theories in the field of international communication, which all look at it from various angles. These are grouped together into five main classes: 1) theories focusing on effective outcomes; 2) theories focusing on accommodation and adaptation; 3) theories focusing on identity management or negotiation; 4) theories focusing on communication networks; 5) theories focusing on acculturation or adjustment (ibid.).

The first class of theories focuses on achieving successful results in intercultural communication. These theories aim to explain how and why certain interactions lead to

effective communication or good group decisions. One example, which belongs to this category, is Gudykunst's **Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory** (Panocová 2020: 114). AUM theory is based on the idea that effective communication with strangers – individuals who are present in the situation but not members of the ingroup – depends on managing the levels of anxiety and uncertainty during interaction (Gudykunst 2003, as cited in Panocová 2020: 69). Gudykunst (1983, as cited in Panocová 2020: 69) extended the concept of the stranger to include members of other groups who behave in ways that differ from what is expected in one's own culture. Such encounters typically lead to uncertainty and anxiety, as individuals may not know what constitutes appropriate behaviour (Gudykunst 1998, as cited in Panocová 2020: 70). According to AUM theory, communication is most effective when anxiety and uncertainty are kept at optimal, moderate levels – neither too high, which can cause fear and avoidance, nor too low, which may result in automatic and inattentive responses (Jandt 2004, as cited in Panocová 2020: 70). Maintaining this balance requires mindfulness and active engagement during intercultural interactions.

The second class of theories centres on how people adjust their communication when interacting with others (Panocová 2020: 114). These theories explore how individuals adapt their speech or behaviour to improve understanding and connection. A key example, which falls into this category, is **Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)** (Panocová 2020: 115). Howard Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) examines how individuals modify their communicative behaviours, such as speech rate, accent, or lexical choices, in response to their interlocutors in order to manage social distance (Giles & Soliz 2014). The term 'accommodation' refers to how people adjust their way of speaking to either lessen or highlight differences during interaction (Giles & Soliz 2014: 158-159). This process helps people feel more similar to each other and can reduce feelings of distance or uncertainty in social situations. The concepts of *in-groups* and *out-groups* are central to CAT, meaning that

individuals are more likely to accommodate members of groups with which they identify and where they feel they belong, aka in-groups (based on ethnicity, gender, religion, race, job, etc.) and may diverge when interacting with social groups to which they feel they do not belong, aka out-groups (Giles & Coupland, 1991, as cited in Panocová 2020: 57). CAT offers valuable insight into how social identity, group membership, and power dynamics play out in real-time interactions, especially in multilingual and multicultural settings.

The third class includes theories on how people manage their identities during intercultural interactions (Panocová 2020: 115). These theories focus less on specific communication behaviours and more on identity adaption. An example of this is Stella Ting-Toomey's **Face Negotiation Theory (FNT)**, which examines how individuals manage face, in other words the emotional significance of their public image and how they want to present themselves in public, especially in intercultural conflict situations (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi 1998: 187, as cited in Panocová 2020: 42). The theory distinguishes between *positive face*, the desire to be appreciated, accepted and valued by the group, and *negative face*, the desire for autonomy and to act without any constraints coming from other people, both of which vary across individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Panocová 2020: 42). FNT also introduces *facework*, which refers to the communicative behaviours individuals employ to manage their own social dignity and to either uphold or challenge the social dignity of others (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998: 188, as cited in Panocová 2020: 42). The theory distinguishes between *preventive facework strategies*, which aim to avoid face threats, and *restorative (or corrective) facework*, which seek to repair face once it has been challenged (Panocová 2020: 44). Central to Ting-Toomey's model is *intercultural facework competence*, which comprises three key dimensions: *knowledge* of cultural patterns and communication styles; *mindfulness*, or the ability to consider multiple perspectives; and *interaction skills*, which refer to the adaptive use of communication strategies in contextually appropriate ways (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998,

as cited in Panocová 2020). Overall, FNT highlights the emotional and strategic dynamics of intercultural communication beyond general cultural values.

The fourth category includes theories that focus on communication networks (Panocová 2020: 115). These theories are based on the idea that people's behaviour in intercultural situations is shaped more by their relationships with others than by their individual traits. These are closely related to the fifth and final category, which is why no specific theories were mentioned in the given source by Panocová (2020: 115). The fifth and final class, according to Gudykunst, consists of theories that examine acculturation or adjustment (Panocová 2020: 115). These theories explore how individuals, such as immigrants or temporary residents, adapt to new cultural environments. One example is Kim's **Integrative Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation**. Notably, some theories like AUM can also fit into this category, showing that Gudykunst's classifications are not strictly exclusive (Panocová 2020: 115). Kim's Cross-Cultural Adaptation theory explains the active process by which individuals who relocate to unfamiliar cultural environments, such as immigrants, refugees and sojourners, strive to establish and maintain stable and functional relationships with their new surroundings (Kim 2001: 31). The process typically begins with culture shock, a phase marked by psychological and physiological disorientation (Panocová 2020: 95). Successful adaptation requires the individual's ability to communicate according to the norms and expectations of the host culture and to actively participate in both interpersonal and mass communication within the new environment (ibid.). The theory emphasizes that communication plays a central role in enabling individuals to gradually fit into the host society.

In summary, the field of intercultural communication encompasses a wide range of theories and models that attempt to explain how cultural differences influence perception, interaction and adaptation. These frameworks provide valuable insights into the complexities of intercultural encounters.

## 1.2 CLIL – its benefits and challenges

According to many educational researchers (Mehisto et al 2008; Coyle et al 2010; Klimova 2012), the CLIL approach offers a wide range of benefits. Some academic results show that CLIL students often perform as well as or even better than non-CLIL students, outperforming their peers in regular programmes on first-language reading, writing, and listening tests (Mehisto et al 2008: 20). Meyer (2013: 295) further supports this by stating that CLIL students tend to be equally, if not more, successful in mastering subject content compared to those learning the subject in their first language. This suggests that CLIL is mutually beneficial for both language and content learning.

One of the key strengths of CLIL lies in its ability to make language learning more meaningful. Rather than learning a language in isolation, CLIL students have an opportunity to immediately put it to use while learning the content of the lesson, making the language learning more ‘hands-on’. To support this, CLIL provides ‘just-in-time’ language, enabling students to quickly apply what they have learned while collaborating with their peers (Mehisto et al 2008: 27). The process enhances not only linguistic competence but also cognitive flexibility. According to Coyle et al (2010: 10-11), the diverse thinking processes and perspectives that result from CLIL can influence conceptualization – essentially shaping the way learners think. This approach deepens understanding, expands conceptual mapping skills, and strengthens the ability to connect different concepts, ultimately guiding learners towards a more advanced level of learning (Coyle et al 2010: 11). Marsh (2007, as cited in Pavón Vázquez & Ellison 2013: 69) highlights additional cognitive benefits, noting that CLIL promotes risk-taking, problem-solving, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical awareness, and spontaneity in language use. These skills help contribute to increased learner motivation and confidence, both important factors in language development and academic performance.

CLIL lessons have a great level of authenticity, active learning, and scaffolding (Mehisto et al 2008: 29). Authenticity is achieved by allowing students to request the language support they need, incorporating their interests into the learning process, and making meaningful connections between lesson content and their daily lives (ibid.). Additionally, students engage with real-world materials from the media and have opportunities to interact with other speakers of the CLIL language. Active learning is another essential element, as CLIL classrooms prioritize student communication over teacher talk, encourage learners to take part in setting content, language, and learning outcomes, and involve them in evaluating their own progress (ibid.). Peer collaboration is strongly emphasized, with students negotiating meaning and engaging in cooperative work, while teachers take on the role of facilitators rather than sole knowledge providers (ibid.). Scaffolding plays a crucial role in supporting students by building on their prior knowledge, experiences, and skills. Information is presented in accessible ways, taking different learning styles into account and fostering both critical and creative thinking (ibid.).

One of the most frequently cited advantages of CLIL is its ability to boost learners' motivation and engagement. By integrating both language and subject content, CLIL offers students authentic and meaningful reasons to use the foreign language, making it more than just an abstract system to be memorised. As Harrop (2012: 62) points out, CLIL promotes motivation by placing the language in a legitimate and real-world context, where it becomes means of learning rather than the goal. This shift from language as an end to language as a tool reduces the affective barriers often associated with traditional language learning, such as anxiety. In fact, studies have shown that CLIL learners tend to experience less anxiety and show more confidence and positive attitudes in using the target language (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2009).

In addition to academic and cognitive gains, CLIL also contributes to broader educational and societal goals. As outlined in the CLIL Compendium and summarized by Klimova (2012: 573), CLIL helps build intercultural knowledge and understanding, fosters intercultural communication skills, and prepares students for international contexts. It introduces students to a wider cultural context, raises awareness of minority groups or neighbouring countries and supports the development of plurilingual attitudes (Klimova 2012: 573). From a more practical and institutional perspective, CLIL can enhance the school's profile, create a more dynamic learning environment, and better prepare students for further education (ibid.). Finally, CLIL encourages collaboration, not only among CLIL and non-CLIL teachers, but also between schools, families, communities, and even employers (Mehisto et al 2008: 30). These interconnected elements make CLIL an effective pedagogical approach.

On the other hand, CLIL forces educational institutions to face a range of significant challenges. One of the biggest challenges with CLIL implementation is the shortage, or lack, of qualified CLIL teachers. In many countries, teacher training programmes have not yet started to prepare teachers for CLIL, leaving many educators feeling unready to focus on both language and content goals (Mehisto et al 2008: 21; Klimova 2012: 573). Klimova (2012: 573) highlights the fact that there is a lack of teachers who are both competent linguists and subject experts. As emphasized by Coyle et al (2010: 12), and in the Eurydice report (2006), 'CLIL is not simply education *in* an additional language; it is education *through* an additional language based on connected pedagogies and using contextual methodologies.' Even though this dual approach is beneficial as it helps improve the students' language proficiency, it requires a more integrated approach to teaching and learning, where teachers must consider not only how to teach language, but also how to enhance the overall educational experience (Eurydice 2006: 7). This situation results in considerable pressure on existing staff, who may not feel fully equipped to manage the complexity of CLIL instruction.

Pavón Vázquez & Ellison (2013: 69) stress that CLIL requires teachers to adapt their practices and enhance their competencies, making prior training essential. CLIL programmes can take various forms, ranging from content-based instruction, where language teachers incorporate subject matter into their lessons, to a more language-sensitive approach, in which content teachers integrate a foreign language into their instruction (Pavón Vázquez & Ellison, 2013: 70). Ideally, content teachers should possess both a strong command of the second language and a deep understanding of their subject to effectively deliver academic content. Unfortunately, many content teachers are apprehensive about CLIL because they do not feel comfortable with their foreign language competences, therefore leading to doubt regarding their teaching performance (*ibid.*). This has prompted suggestions that training foreign language teachers to teach specialized content may be a more effective approach (Bowler, 2007, as cited in Pavón Vázquez & Ellison, 2013: 70).

There are also practical concerns about the actual use of the additional language in the classroom. Pavón Vázquez and Ellison (2013: 70) outline two key risks: firstly, teachers with low confidence in their language skills may rely on compensatory strategies, such as teaching content in the first language and only summarizing it in the second language. Secondly, in an attempt to enhance students' language development, content teachers may introduce linguistic explanations that shift the focus away from subject content, effectively turning the class into a language lesson (*ibid.*). Both of these outcomes undermine the dual-focus intention of CLIL and reduce its effectiveness.

Apart from teacher preparedness, students' linguistic readiness can also be a challenge. Klimova (2012: 573) notes that learners often have varying levels of target language competence, and these mixed abilities within the same classroom make it difficult to design lessons that meet everyone's needs. In some contexts, students' lower overall language

proficiency can hinder their ability to grasp subject matter, especially when language is not taught systematically alongside content.

Another challenge that educational institutions face when trying to implement CLIL is the issue of increased workload for teachers. Teaching in a CLIL setting demands extensive preparation and close collaboration among teachers. Careful planning is needed to establish content, language, and learning skills objectives for each lesson while providing activities that engage as many students as possible. Due to the limited availability of ready-made CLIL materials, teachers often invest significant time in creating or adapting resources (Mehisto et al 2008: 22). Therefore, it is understandable that some individuals are unwilling or unable to dedicate the necessary time for all this preparation.

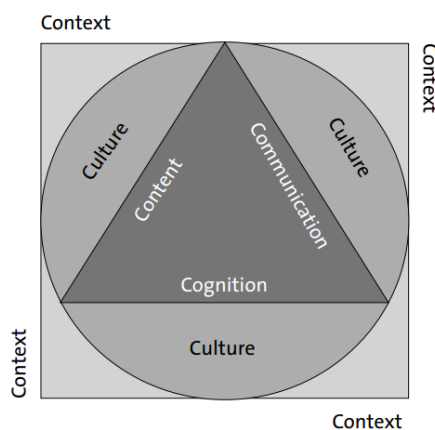
The quality of learning materials is a related concern. Effective CLIL materials must not only support subject learning but also promote language development in a meaningful and integrated way. According to Mehisto (2012: 16-17), high-quality CLIL materials should support critical and creative thinking, student autonomy, and scaffolded learning, while also being clearly structured and interconnected. However, as Klimova (2012: 573) points out, a general lack of suitable materials for certain subjects remains a pressing issue. Furthermore, language teachers may struggle to teach unfamiliar content, and there may be reluctance to cooperate across subject areas, further complicating materials development and lesson planning (*ibid.*).

Ultimately, CLIL aims to support independent, motivated bilingual or multilingual learners equipped with essential content knowledge, language skills, and intercultural competencies (Mehisto et al 2008: 30). By linking language learning with real-world content, CLIL creates an engaging and purposeful educational approach that prepares students for academic and professional environments where multilingual competence is essential.

### 1.3 The frameworks of CLIL

CLIL is a flexible approach with a variety of different models that adapt to different contextual factors. There is no single, standardized model; however, all CLIL variations share the fundamental principle of integrating content and language learning in some form (Coyle 2005: 2). It is also important to note that there is no single, universally preferred CLIL model or CLIL methodology: the CLIL approach is characterized by its flexibility, allowing it to be adapted to a diverse array of educational contexts (Coyle et al 2010: 48).

The most widely recognised framework for CLIL is Coyle's 4Cs framework, which provides a comprehensive structure for integrating **content** (subject matter), **communication** (language learning and using), **cognition** (learning and thinking processes), and **culture** (developing intercultural understanding and global citizenship) in CLIL lessons (Coyle et al 2010: 41). This framework emphasizes the integration of content and language learning within specific contexts, highlighting the mutually supportive relationship between these elements. It suggests that effective CLIL emerges from this dynamic interaction, as learners simultaneously progress in their knowledge, skills, and understanding of subject content, engage in cognitive processing related to that content, participate in meaningful communication, and develop both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness (Coyle et al 2010: 41). The four key features of this framework are outlined in more detail below.



**Figure 1.** The 4Cs framework (Coyle et al 2010: 41)

According to Coyle et al (2010: 27), a useful starting point in CLIL is defining the concept of **content** in learning. Unlike traditional subject-based curricula, where content is clearly categorized into disciplines like geography, music, biology, or physics, CLIL adopts a more flexible approach. In a CLIL setting, content can range from elements directly taken from a national curriculum to project-based learning centred on real-world issues, such as the Olympic Games, global warming, or ecosystems (Coyle et al 2010: 28). This flexibility allows CLIL to provide learning opportunities both within and beyond the standard curriculum, promoting skill acquisition and development. It is beneficial to think of content in terms of the knowledge, skills and understanding we aim for learners to develop, rather than viewing it solely as the acquisition of factual knowledge (Coyle et al 2010: 53).

For CLIL to be effective, it must actively challenge learners to think critically, reflect, and engage in higher-order thinking skills (Coyle 2005: 4). Rather than simply transferring knowledge from an expert to a beginner, CLIL encourages learners to construct their own understanding and be intellectually challenged, regardless of their age or ability (Coyle et al 2010: 54). Regarding **cognitive** development, Anderson & Krathwohl's revised Bloom's taxonomy (2001) is considered a valuable framework for providing a structured approach to fostering critical and creative thinking, making it a useful reference for designing CLIL lessons that promote deep learning (Coyle 2005: 4). Bloom's taxonomy progresses from lower-order thinking skills, such as remembering, understanding, and applying, to higher-order skills, such as analysing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001). According to Coyle et al (2010: 54), in CLIL settings, higher-order skills are more dominant.

Language serves as both a medium for communication and a tool for learning. The principle of *learning to use language* and *using language to learn* is central to CLIL (Coyle et al 2010: 54). In this context, **communication** extends beyond mastering grammatical structures (although it does not reject the vital role of grammar and lexis in language learning); it engages

learners in authentic language use, distinct from traditional language lessons (ibid.). It is therefore helpful to distinguish between language learning, which often focuses on grammatical development, and language use, which prioritizes meeting the communicative and learning demands of the immediate context (ibid.). While CLIL does involve language learning, it does so in an integrated and purposeful manner, emphasizing practical application in content-based contexts (Coyle 2005: 4).

Harrop (2012: 59) highlights the importance of recognising the specific linguistic demands that content tasks place on learners. In line with this, Coyle et al (2010: 36) distinguish three strands of language teaching in CLIL lessons: the **language of learning**, the **language for learning**, and the **language through learning**, altogether forming The Language Triptych model. **Language of learning** refers to the specific words and phrases students need to understand the main ideas of a subject. In CLIL, this language depends on the topic. For example, in a lesson on intercultural communication, students may need to learn terms like ‘stereotype’, ‘cultural identity’, or ‘nonverbal communication’. Instead of focusing only on grammar rules, teachers help students use these words in meaningful ways, with the goal of supporting understanding and communication in the subject (Coyle et al 2010: 37). **Language for learning** is the language students need to take part in classroom activities and during work with others in a foreign language environment. It includes aspects such as asking questions, discussing ideas, working in pairs or groups, explaining thoughts, memorizing information and so on. In a CLIL classroom, teachers must plan carefully to help students develop these skills, as they are necessary for tasks to be carried out effectively (ibid.). **Language through learning** means that students learn new language while they are learning new content. As they talk, ask questions, or explain their ideas, they naturally need to use new words and phrases – this helps them understand the topic better and also improves their language skills. This kind of learning cannot always be planned in advance; it grows naturally from the tasks and thinking that happen

in class. Over time, this approach helps learners build both their subject knowledge and their language in a meaningful way (Coyle et al 2010: 37-38).

Learning through a foreign language plays a crucial role in promoting international understanding by encouraging students to engage with different perspectives (Coyle 2005: 4). The concept of *otherness* is particularly significant, as it not only helps individuals appreciate cultural diversity but also facilitates self-discovery (ibid.). **Culture**, in this context, can be interpreted broadly, encompassing aspects such as pluricultural citizenship, identity formation, and intercultural awareness (ibid.). As Coyle et al (2010: 54) explain, culture is not a postscript in CLIL, but a thread that runs through every topic or theme. When culture is placed at the centre of CLIL, and appropriate authentic materials are used, it enables learners to understand both differences and similarities between cultures in a way that leads to deeper personal insights (Coyle et al 2010: 55). This aligns with the view of Byram et al (2002: 10), who argue that developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves not only encouraging linguistic competence but also preparing learners to interact meaningfully with people from other cultures, understand their perspectives and values, and experience such encounters as enriching. However, not all European CLIL models prioritize culture equally – some place greater emphasis on language and communication, with culture taking a secondary role (Dalton-Puffer 2008).

Although the 4Cs can be described individually, they do not function as isolated components – integrating them into a cohesive whole is essential for effective CLIL planning (Coyle et al 2010: 55). CLIL brings together language learning and content learning in ways that are cognitively and culturally appropriate for the learners. This integration, according to Coyle et al (2010: 55-56), creates unique learning experiences that differ from traditional language or subject lessons. To support this, careful planning is required to ensure progression across all four components of the 4Cs framework. It is also important to recognise that each of

the Cs may develop at a different pace, depending on the specific teaching and learning context (Coyle et al 2010: 56).

#### **1.4 Intercultural communication in CLIL lessons**

CLIL offers a powerful framework for fostering intercultural communication competence alongside language learning. Among the common reasons for introducing the CLIL method of learning in educational institutions is its strong emphasis on the element of 'culture'. According to Coyle et al (2010: 17), one of the primary benefits of CLIL is its capacity to build intercultural knowledge, understanding and tolerance, as well as to develop intercultural communication skills. CLIL encourages learners to explore specific neighbouring countries/regions and/or minority groups, while also introducing a wider cultural context. These elements align with the core of CLIL's pedagogical philosophy, which is structured around the 4Cs framework. Within this model, culture is not an add-on but a key component that spreads throughout the learning experience, making CLIL a particularly suitable approach for promoting intercultural awareness.

The cultural dimension of CLIL is reinforced by educational research that highlights the essential role of culture in language learning. Koro (2018: 79) notes that there has been a sustained effort to ensure that language curricula incorporate opportunities for developing intercultural skills, which are increasingly necessary in a rapidly changing global society. In this regard, language education is not just about teaching grammar and vocabulary, it is about preparing learners to navigate and contribute to a world marked by cultural diversity. This requires deliberate pedagogical choices that integrate both language and culture into the curriculum.

Scarino (2010: 325) also argues that language learning should provide opportunities not only for linguistic development but also for the acquisition of cultural knowledge and

intercultural capability, further emphasising the importance of fostering intercultural understanding as a core educational goal. In particular, Scarino (2010: 325) draws a distinction between cultural awareness and intercultural capability, which involves actively engaging learners in the negotiation of meaning with people from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that foster engagement, critical reflection, and the development of intercultural communication strategies.

The CLIL approach is well-suited to meet these needs. As Romanowski (2018: 73) argues, the content matter in CLIL does not have to be limited to traditional curriculum subjects; what matters most is that both language and content are developed with a purpose that is authentic and relevant to the context in which CLIL is implemented. Humanities and citizenship education, in particular, are commonly identified as ideal content areas for CLIL, as they naturally lend themselves to exploring issues of otherness, identity, and multiple perspectives (Byram 2010: 320) These subject areas not only complement language learning but also provide fertile ground for the development of intercultural communication skills.

Given the increasing necessity of teaching intercultural issues, CLIL becomes not just a suitable but a strategic approach for contemporary education. As Aktor and Risager (2001, as cited in Romanowski 2018: 78) argue, the teaching of critical intercultural skills is a responsibility that educators must fulfil if they are to contribute to the development of globally aware and culturally competent citizens. Furthermore, the prerequisites for intercultural learning are often already embedded in CLIL contexts. Various researchers suggest that the potential for intercultural learning is particularly high in CLIL environments (Breidbach 2007, as cited in Romanowski 2018: 81). This is because CLIL enables learners to approach culturally embedded topics from both their own cultural perspective and that of others, allowing for a meaningful reconstruction and comparison of viewpoints. Such opportunities for reflection,

analysis, and dialogic learning are essential to developing the competencies necessary for intercultural communication.

Thus, teaching intercultural communication in a CLIL setting is especially valuable because it allows language learning to be situated within real-world, culturally rich contexts. The dual focus on content and language enhances learners' ability to understand and interpret global issues through multiple lenses. Intercultural communication, as a subject of CLIL instruction, aligns seamlessly with the approach's core pedagogical principles. Regardless of whether CLIL lessons focus on intercultural communication or any other similar, culture-related subjects, the CLIL approach inherently promotes an understanding of culture, as it is a fundamental component of the 4Cs framework. This makes intercultural communication not just a fitting topic for CLIL but an ideal one, providing purposeful, authentic content that naturally integrates with language development.

### **1.5 Designing CLIL Lessons and Developing Learning Materials**

The development of effective CLIL lessons and materials requires careful pedagogical consideration and a clear understanding of its underlying principles. As Coyle et al (2010: 48) emphasize, simply teaching or learning in another language does not automatically mean it is CLIL. Given the flexibility of the CLIL framework, it is particularly important for those involved in planning and delivering CLIL curricula to develop a clear, context-specific understanding of the approach. Teachers must apply systematic planning tools and frameworks, such as the 4Cs framework, which structures CLIL through the interconnected dimensions of content, cognition, communication, and culture. This approach encourages educators to design lessons that are both relevant and effective. Additionally, high-quality materials provide students with a sense of security, encouraging them to experiment with the language, engage with content, and take greater responsibility for their own learning (Mehisto 2012: 17). These

materials need to be highly interactive and multilayered, increasing the likelihood that both content and language learning will be meaningful and deeply connected (ibid.).

One of the core challenges in CLIL design lies in achieving an integrated focus that does not compromise either the subject content or the language objectives. As Pavón Vázquez and Ellison (2013: 72) argue, traditional instructional models must give way to participatory classrooms where learners engage actively with content through its use and manipulation. A CLIL lesson is most effective when it transforms passive learning into an active process involving not only teacher-student interaction but also student-student interaction (Pavón Vázquez and Ellison, 2013: 72).

The initial stage of planning, as suggested by Coyle et al (2010: 55), begins with the careful selection of content. This involves considering not only what students should learn, but also how that content contributes to broader educational goals. Importantly, the content should not be simplified to match learners' current proficiency; instead, appropriate scaffolding should be employed to support access to linguistically and cognitively challenging material (Meyer 2013: 299). This view is echoed in Klimova's (2012: 574) statement that CLIL lessons must simultaneously foster knowledge and communicative competence, necessitating materials and activities that push learners toward meaningful language use. Scaffolding is thus a vital component in CLIL lesson design. In his article, Meyer (2013) established some quality principles for a successful CLIL teaching and learning. One of these principles – scaffolding learning - underscores the importance of providing learners with sufficient support to convert complex input into comprehensible and actionable knowledge (Meyer, 2013: 299). In practice, questions and tasks should be designed so that students can grasp the general meaning of a text even without fully understanding every detail. Additionally, to enable students to construct their own learning, it is important to teach effective learning strategies. This includes not only general learning skills, but also subject-specific study skills, such as interpreting maps,

diagrams, and images, which should be regularly practised and embedded into every CLIL lesson (Meyer 2013: 300).

Since there is no universal template for planning CLIL lessons, due to the unique nature of each subject and context, the aforementioned 4Cs framework offers a valuable foundation for guiding teachers' planning processes. It helps raise awareness of the key elements that should be considered when designing CLIL instruction. When used as a planning tool, the framework proves particularly useful for formulating learning objectives, designing tasks, and developing appropriate learning materials (Pavón Vázquez and Ellison, 2013: 72). Despite the growing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of CLIL, there remains a lack of methodological resources and practical guidance to help teachers address CLIL's multiple focus in the classroom; therefore, the 4Cs framework provides a strong theoretical and methodological starting point for both planning lessons and creating materials (Meyer 2013: 295). Coyle et al (2010: 56) recommend using a mind map or a similar visual tool to design a unit of work, as it helps to visualize the complex relationships between the 4Cs. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, each C (content, cognition, communication, and culture) can be considered individually, but they do not function in isolation, which means that integrating them into a cohesive whole is essential for effective planning (Coyle et al, 2010: 55). For instance, examining how cognitive demands interact with content knowledge will shape the types of tasks designed, while linking cognition and communication will require thoughtful planning of classroom activities to ensure students have access not only to the content language but also to the functional language necessary for participating in learning tasks (ibid.).

The planning map that Coyle et al (2010: 53) propose is based on four key steps aligned with the 4Cs framework. As previously mentioned, the planning process begins with content selection. The second step includes linking content with cognitive development, ensuring that the cognitive demands of the lesson match the developmental level of the learners (Coyle et al,

2010: 58). Similarly, Mehisto (2012: 23), when introducing criteria for quality CLIL materials, emphasises that effective CLIL materials should foster critical thinking by moving beyond factual recall to activities that require students to apply, analyse, evaluate and create something, aligning with Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Meyer (2013: 305) reinforces this point by stating that creating high order thinking (HOT) environments is key to successful CLIL teaching, ensuring that students are cognitively challenged without being overwhelmed.

The third step focuses on communication, requiring a systematic analysis of the language needed for learning. Coyle et al (2010: 59) propose that language learning within CLIL can be addressed through the Language Triptych: language *of* learning (subject-specific vocabulary), language *for* learning (functional language necessary to engage in classroom tasks), and language *through* learning (emergent language developed during engagement with new content). Using this framework in CLIL lesson planning ensures that language objectives are not limited to vocabulary acquisition and basic grammatical structures identification but extend to broader linguistic competence. It focuses on language essential for learners to fully engage with the subject matter and supports the development of learners' ability to use language creatively and spontaneously (Coyle et al, 2010: 59). This idea is supported by Mehisto (2012: 18), who stresses the importance of systematically fostering academic language proficiency. According to him, CLIL materials must provide additional contextual support and make visible the differences between social and academic language. Meyer (2013) discusses through Long's Interaction Hypothesis that language acquisition is facilitated by meaningful communication and feedback during interaction. Therefore, tasks should encourage the use of spontaneous language and dialogue, enabling learners to engage deeply with both content and language.

The fourth step integrates cultural awareness, emphasizing that intercultural experiences are essential for creating meaningful and authentic learning (Coyle et al, 2010: 64).

CLIL can allow students to experience different cultural perspectives and deepen their global understanding. Through intercultural dialogue, students learn to mediate between their own and other cultures, starting with increased awareness of their own culturally influenced attitudes and behaviours (Coyle et al, 2010: 40). Meyer (2013: 303) similarly underlines the necessity of incorporating an intercultural dimension, emphasizing that understanding different worldviews prepares students to function successfully in a globalized world. Mehisto (2012: 22) adds that authentic materials, such as media texts and real-world tasks, naturally introduce cultural connections and help foster students' intercultural competence.

The authenticity of tasks and language use must be a constant consideration. Both Mehisto (2012: 22) and Meyer (2013: 297) stress the importance of connecting classroom tasks to real-world purposes, such as designing solutions to school or community issues. They should also connect to students' everyday lives and personal interests (Meyer 2013: 297). Authentic resources, such as video clips, flash animations, web quests, podcasts, and other interactive materials available on English-language websites are particularly effective, as they offer both motivating, illustrative content and exposure to genuine language use (*ibid.*). The learning materials can also be drawn from other authentic sources such as newspaper articles, books, web pages, or blogs. To support students in engaging with these materials, texts can be adapted by breaking information into manageable sections and incorporating synonyms or glossaries for clarity. Additionally, visual or textual organizers are frequently provided to give students an overview or summary of the content they will be exploring (Mehisto et al 2008: 33). These authentic resources serve as a valuable foundation for designing challenging tasks that promote creative thinking and encourage meaningful language production.

Throughout the process of creating this planning map, careful attention must be paid to adapting the 4Cs framework to fit specific global goals, learning aims, and teaching contexts (Coyle et al, 2010: 65). As the framework is designed to be flexible, it can be adapted, modified,

and restructured to meet different contextual priorities. Once the key elements have been identified, they are then developed into a series of lessons, which is a process often considered the most time-consuming stage of planning. Given the lack of ready-made materials suited for CLIL, teachers often need to develop their own resources and afterwards monitor and evaluate their own practice.

In any learning situation, whether it is CLIL or not, quality materials are of great necessity. High-quality learning materials go beyond simply conveying information; they encourage critical and creative thinking, foster discussion, and support learner autonomy (Mehisto 2012: 16). When emphasizing CLIL-specific learning materials, it is vital that they create rich learning environments where students can develop both their subject knowledge and language skills at the same time. Good CLIL materials challenge students to think critically while also learning in a second language, which can be difficult. However, according to Mehisto (2012: 17), this challenge can be made easier with strong support, such as scaffolding, to help students go beyond what they could achieve alone. Additionally, high-quality CLIL materials are well-structured and interconnected, making both subject and language learning more effective and meaningful (Mehisto 2012: 17).

Designing CLIL lessons and developing CLIL materials is a complex but highly rewarding process. It demands a dual focus on content and language, careful attention to student needs, and a commitment to creating meaningful, authentic, and supportive learning experiences. Following the principles outlined by experts provides a strong foundation for creating materials that not only foster academic success but also help students become confident, independent, and interculturally competent learners.

### 1.5.1 Assessment criteria

Assessment in CLIL settings is a complex and sometimes controversial issue, as it reflects the fundamental challenge of balancing content and language integration. Regardless of how a subject is taught, the way it is assessed ultimately shapes students' perceptions of learning priorities and influences their performance (Coyle et al, 2010). In CLIL contexts, the selection of appropriate assessment practices is crucial as both content knowledge and language skills are intertwined and contribute to students' overall cognitive development.

Central to effective assessment in CLIL is the clarity of learning objectives. According to Morton (2019: 12), it is essential to identify precisely what is being assessed, ensuring that language is not treated as an isolated element but as an integral part of content knowledge. Thus, rather than asking whether language should be assessed alongside content, teachers should focus on assessing the language that is integral to the expression of content knowledge (Morton, 2019). Similarly, Coyle et al (2010) emphasize that defining precise learning objectives is a necessary step for determining which aspects of learning will be assessed, thereby ensuring clarity and fairness in the assessment process.

Given the dual focus of CLIL, assessment should consider the integrative nature of content, language, and cognition. However, it is rarely possible to assess every aspect simultaneously. Therefore, teachers must prioritize, often giving precedence to content while ensuring that language is learned meaningfully through its use in authentic contexts (Coyle et al 2010: 115). In this respect, formative assessment is particularly well-suited for CLIL settings. Unlike summative assessment, which provides a judgment of students' abilities at a fixed point in time, formative assessment serves as an ongoing, diagnostic process aimed at supporting learning and informing the next steps for both students and teachers (Coyle et al 2010; Morton 2019).

Formative assessment in CLIL not only enhances content understanding but also makes the language component more visible. Morton (2019: 13) warns that without careful attention, language can become an ‘invisible’ factor in assessment, leading to unfair advantages for more linguistically fluent students, even when their content knowledge is weaker. By using formative assessment strategies, such as continuous feedback, observation, and dialogic interaction, teachers can ensure that students are evaluated on their ability to use subject-specific language effectively, rather than on superficial fluency or grammatical accuracy alone. This approach also aligns with the broader goals of intercultural communication, where the ability to express complex ideas clearly and appropriately is more important than linguistic perfection.

In addition, self- and peer-assessment play an important role in CLIL classrooms, as they encourage learners to reflect on their own understanding and learning processes. Coyle et al (2010: 118) point out that peer-assessment, in particular, can foster deeper cognitive engagement by prompting students to articulate and justify their evaluations. This reflective practice not only develops metacognitive skills but also enhances intercultural awareness, as students learn to consider multiple perspectives and assess their own attitudes and assumptions.

Assessing intercultural competence poses unique challenges. As Byram et al (2002: 29) note, it is quite straightforward to test factual knowledge, but much more difficult to evaluate whether students can adopt new perspectives, develop tolerance towards other cultures, or critically reflect on their own cultural assumptions. For these affective and attitudinal aspects, traditional summative tests are not suitable. Instead, portfolio-based assessment, which emphasizes self-reflection and documentation of learning experiences, is a more appropriate and meaningful method (Byram et al 2002: 29). Portfolios enable students to track their growth in intercultural competence over time, fostering greater awareness of their learning and promoting lifelong learning skills.

While summative assessment cannot be entirely dismissed, especially when schools require formal reporting of students' progress, its role in CLIL should be carefully considered. Summative assessments in CLIL contexts should focus on evaluating content mastery using clear success criteria, presented in student-friendly language (Coyle et al, 2010). However, these assessments should avoid penalizing students for minor language errors that do not hinder communication of content knowledge (Morton, 2019). Rubrics and checklists can support this process by making expectations explicit and ensuring consistency and fairness in grading.

Ultimately, the primary function of assessment in a CLIL course should be to support learning rather than merely to measure it. Formative assessment strategies, with their focus on continuous feedback, reflection, and the integration of content and language, are best suited to achieving this goal. By creating a learning-oriented assessment culture, teachers can help students develop not only their intercultural knowledge and language skills but also the cognitive and affective competencies necessary for effective intercultural communication.

## **CHAPTER 2: DESIGNING A CLIL COURSE FOR TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

The aim of Chapter 2 is to take into consideration the information gathered in Chapter 1 regarding the principles of CLIL lessons and materials as well as the elements of Intercultural Communication, and to develop an elective course that demonstrates CLIL's potential for simultaneously fostering subject-specific knowledge and enhancing foreign language proficiency. Given that the Estonian National curriculum (2011, Appendix 5:1) also advocates the development of culturally aware individuals who can navigate diverse social contexts, a course on Intercultural Communication aligns well with these objectives. This course would provide students with the tools to engage meaningfully with people from various cultural backgrounds, fostering both linguistic and cultural fluency.

This elective course comprises 23 academic lessons with the duration of 70 minutes each, aligning with the requirements set forth in the Estonian National Curriculum (Division 4, §11) for a single course. It is designed as an elective subject for gymnasium-level (10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) students in Estonian schools. Given the diverse range of ages, skills, and language proficiencies among gymnasium students, careful consideration must be given to the linguistic demands of the course to ensure accessibility and effectiveness. The course is intended for students with a B2 level of English proficiency, as this level is necessary for full participation and comprehension of the course's subject topics. However, students with a lower proficiency level, such as B1, are also welcome to enrol, provided they are prepared to engage in lessons where the language demands may exceed their current abilities.

The steps for designing this course begin with establishing the learning outcomes, then continue with creating the structure of the course, including the topics that will be covered. After that, selected five lesson plans are described in more detail, along with reasons for why

they are necessary for this course. All the sample lesson plans and materials used in the lessons are included in the appendices.

## 2.1 Learning outcomes

The formulation of learning outcomes is a critical step in designing an effective course, ensuring alignment with both content-specific and learning objectives. In the case of this elective course on Intercultural Communication, the learning outcomes are determined with reference to **Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competences** outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereinafter CEFR) Companion Volume (2020). Given that the course is designed for students at a B2 proficiency level, the B2 sections of the CEFR Illustrative Descriptor Scales (see Appendix 1) serve as the primary framework for identifying and formulating the expected learning outcomes of this elective course.

The CEFR Companion Volume (2020: 123) categorizes Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competences into three key subsections: **Building on pluricultural repertoire**, **Plurilingual comprehension**, and **Building on plurilingual repertoire**. Each of these areas is examined in relation to the course's objectives, leading to a set of structured learning outcomes that will guide the development of course planning, lesson planning and instructional activities.

Within the first subsection, Building on pluricultural repertoire, the CEFR B2-level descriptors emphasize the learner's ability to critically engage with and reflect on both their own and other cultures. At this level, learners are expected not only to recognize cultural difference but to evaluate and explain the viewpoints and practices of various cultural groups, acknowledging the inherent values, assumptions, and potential for misunderstanding that may arise in intercultural encounters (CEFR 2020: 125). This focus on reflection and explanation is particularly relevant to the aims of this elective course, which seeks to move students beyond

superficial cultural comparisons and toward a deeper understanding of the sociocultural norms which affect human interaction.

Key descriptors at the B2 level include the ability to describe and evaluate viewpoints and practices, explain cultural assumptions and prejudices, and assess the objectivity of media portrayals, which are aligned with the course's aim to promote intercultural awareness. By encouraging students to reflect on both their own and others' cultural behaviours, including communication styles and social norms, the course supports the development of empathy, tolerance, and perspective-taking. Moreover, B2-level learners are expected to interpret cultural cues appropriately and adjust their behaviour accordingly, which is crucial in developing the ability to act and communicate effectively in intercultural settings. In classroom practice, this means that students will engage with authentic intercultural materials, such as texts, videos, and case studies, and be encouraged to analyse them not just for content, but for the underlying values and communicative expectations they reflect.

The ability to negotiate mutual understanding and respond appropriately when encountering unfamiliar cultural norms is also central to the CEFR descriptors at this level. Through discussions, role plays, and reflective analysis tasks, students will have the opportunity to practice these competencies in a supportive environment. As such, the learning outcomes related to Building on pluricultural repertoire focus not only on knowledge of cultures, but also on the development of flexible, reflective, and responsive intercultural communication strategies.

The second subsection, Plurilingual comprehension, plays a slightly different role in this course. While the B2 descriptor here is limited – focusing on the use of genre conventions and textual patterns from different languages to support comprehension (CEFR 2020: 126) –, it nonetheless underscores the importance of linguistic awareness in intercultural communication. Since the primary language of instruction for this course is English, with

Estonian used occasionally for support and clarification whenever necessary, the relevance of plurilingual comprehension lies mainly in the strategic use of existing linguistic knowledge to facilitate understanding of unfamiliar material. Students at B2 level are expected to draw on similarities and contrasts between languages in their repertoire, including knowledge of how information is structured, how meanings are conveyed, and how tone or formality might shift between languages. Although plurilingual comprehension is not the primary focus of the course, it complements the development of intercultural competence by reinforcing the interconnectedness of language and culture.

The final scale, Building on plurilingual repertoire, integrates elements from both previous subsections. At the B2 level, learners are expected to manage their plurilingual resources flexibly and appropriately in order to enhance communication. Relevant descriptors include the ability to alternate efficiently between languages, introduce and explain culturally significant expressions from another language, and facilitate communication between interlocutors with different linguistic backgrounds (CEFR 2020: 128). These competences are particularly relevant in Estonian upper secondary schools, where students often operate in both Estonian and English, and may be exposed to other languages through personal or academic contexts.

In addition to the CEFR descriptors, the learning outcomes of this course are also informed by selected objectives from the Estonian National Curriculum for upper secondary schools (Appendix 2: 10). Relevant B2-level goals that can be developed in this course include the ability to explain one's viewpoint and evaluate different perspectives, create coherent and logical texts on diverse topics, and take into account cultural norms of the target language when communicating. These align naturally with the course's focus on intercultural awareness and communication skills. Furthermore, students will enhance their ability to use reference

materials and online resources to research and analyse intercultural topics, supporting the integration of content and language learning typical of CLIL.

Based on the CEFR descriptors and the selected objectives from the Estonian National Curriculum, the learning outcomes of this elective course on Intercultural Communication are as follows:

By the end of the course, the students will be able to

- reflect on and explain cultural assumptions, practices, and values within their own and other cultural groups,
- demonstrate an awareness of different aspects of intercultural awareness, such as stereotypes, biases, and the potential for intercultural misunderstanding,
- interpret and evaluate intercultural materials, including texts, events, and media,
- identify and respond appropriately to culturally determined behavioural norms in both verbal and nonverbal communication, adapting their interaction strategies to promote mutual understanding,
- use their knowledge of language structure and conventions across their linguistic repertoire to support comprehension and analysis of intercultural content,
- use spoken and written English to describe key features of intercultural communication, articulate personal views, and compare diverse cultural perspectives
- comprehend and analyse spoken and written English to find specific information and evaluate the relevance of different details
- explain and critically evaluate diverse viewpoints in both spoken and written interaction on intercultural topics
- produce coherent and well-structured texts on intercultural issues, using appropriate vocabulary and register.

## 2.2 Structure of the course

Intercultural communication is a broad and multifaceted field that encompasses a wide range of concepts, models, and perspectives. Given that this elective course consists of only 23 lessons with a duration of 70 minutes each, it is essential to prioritise the most relevant aspects of intercultural communication, while maintaining a balance between depth and accessibility. To align with the previously established learning outcomes, the course structure will be designed to ensure a logical progression of topics that would cover the most important elements of intercultural communication. The syllabus (see Appendix 2) will be organised into thematic blocks, with each block consisting of two to three lessons focused on the specific theme.

The course has a total of 9 thematic blocks. It begins with an introductory block consisting of 2 lessons, where the students are firstly familiarized with the course structure, objectives and expectations, as well as with each other with the help of different icebreaker activities, followed by the explanation of intercultural communication, highlighting its significance and real-world applications. This foundational block provides the necessary context for understanding the themes explored in the forthcoming lessons. The course ends with a conclusionary block consisting of 3 lessons, where students present their final projects, reflect on how their skills and perspectives have developed throughout the course and recapitulate all the key concepts. Most of the remaining 18 lessons are organized into 6 thematic blocks, while some lessons stand alone as individual lessons without belonging to any specific thematic block. The 6 thematic blocks are as follows:

1. Cultural dimensions and models: Hofstede's cultural dimensions; Hall's high- and low-context cultures.
2. Identity, stereotypes, and bias: exploring national and cultural identity; exploring cultural stereotypes; strategies to recognise and overcome biases.

3. Verbal and nonverbal communication across cultures: how language reflects cultural values; the roles of gestures, eye contact, personal space, and body language; politeness and directness in different cultures.
4. Intercultural communication in everyday life: understanding cultural expectations in professional and travel settings.
5. Adapting to new and unfamiliar cultural environments; culture shock; cultural briefing.
6. Introducing Estonia to the world: how to effectively communicate Estonian cultural identity to international audiences; what should visitors/immigrants coming to Estonia take into consideration?

Each thematic block includes interactive and role-playing activities designed to reinforce the knowledge gained by applying it in a practical, interactive context. These activities provide students with the opportunity to integrate and reflect on the key concepts explored in the block, creating a deeper understanding of intercultural communication. Additionally, role-play activities encourage students to adopt different cultural perspectives, enhancing their ability to navigate real-life intercultural interactions. To further enrich the learning experience, real-world materials and case studies will be incorporated, allowing students to analyse authentic examples of intercultural communication in various contexts. Engaging with real-life scenarios will help students develop the ability to critically assess and apply theoretical concepts, ultimately strengthening their communication skills and cultural awareness. This experiential approach not only solidifies their learning but also helps them develop the critical thinking and adaptability skills necessary for their final project.

Since this is a CLIL course, each lesson also integrates language-focused activities alongside intercultural content, ensuring that students enhance their English proficiency while deepening their understanding of intercultural communication. Language development is

incorporated through various activities tailored to support comprehension, production, interaction and mediation skills. Vocabulary building exercises introduce topic-specific terminology and key concepts related to intercultural interactions. Listening and reading comprehension tasks, such as analysing articles, interviews, and videos, expose students to authentic materials and diverse perspectives. Speaking activities, including discussions, debates, role-plays, and presentations, provide opportunities for students to actively engage in meaningful conversations and apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

The criterion for passing the course is to actively participate in the lessons and the activities, complete and present the final project and hand in a portfolio of collected works during the course. The aim of forming a portfolio is to document the students' learning journey and to encourage ongoing reflection and language practice. It must include all the hand outs received and filled out during the lessons, reflection entries on at least 3 different topics covered throughout the course, and a self-assessment at the beginning and at the end of the course.

The final project of this course aims to bring together all the topics explored during the course. Working in groups of 3 or 4, students will select one culture (other than Estonian) and conduct a comprehensive analysis of its intercultural communication practices. This project will integrate theoretical concepts, practical examples and critical reflections on the following aspects covered in the course:

- Cultural identity and values: a brief overview of cultural self-perception, national identity, values, norms
- Stereotypes, bias and perception: common stereotypes about this culture and how they influence intercultural perceptions
- Cultural dimensions and models: application of Hofstede's model and Hall's theory of high- and low-context cultures
- Verbal and nonverbal communication elements in that culture

- Communication in their everyday lives: greetings, farewells, professional and academic situations
- What should tourists travelling to this culture be aware of?
- What should individuals from that culture be aware of when coming to Estonia?

The project is delivered as an in-class presentation, using visual support and an interactive element, such as a quiz or a short activity related to their presented culture. Academic vocabulary related to intercultural communication should be used, along with functional language for presenting, explaining, comparing, and discussing.

The purpose of the final project is to provide students with an opportunity to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout the course in a meaningful context. By conducting in-depth research into a chosen culture, students will demonstrate their understanding of key intercultural communication concepts. The project encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and the practical application of theory to analyse intercultural interactions and challenges. Additionally, the project supports language development by requiring students to use the necessary vocabulary and functional English. Overall, the project aims to deepen students' intercultural awareness, enhance their communicative competence, and prepare them for effective interaction in diverse cultural environments.

### **2.3 Sample lesson plans and materials**

For this thesis, sample lesson plans have been developed for a selection of five lessons within this course: lessons 2, 7, 10, 13 and 17. Each chosen lesson is taken from a different thematic block of the course. When designing the activities, key CLIL principles were applied, including the integration of content and language, fostering cognitive engagement, ensuring authenticity, providing scaffolding, and promoting active learning. These principles helped

maintain a clear focus on both intercultural content and language development, in line with the 4Cs framework.

### **2.3.1 Lesson 2 – Introduction to Intercultural Communication (see Appendix 3)**

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the basic concepts of intercultural communication and to lay the foundation for further exploration. The lesson is structured to move from activating prior knowledge to introducing key concepts, followed by deeper application and reflection tasks, thus gradually increasing cognitive and linguistic demands.

The lesson begins with a warm-up brainstorming activity called ‘What is culture for you?’ (Utley 2004: 12). The teacher first explains how to create a mind map, using a simple example on the board. Once students understand the format, the teacher prompts discussion about the concept of culture, asking guiding questions such as ‘What is culture for you?’, ‘What does it involve?’ and ‘What shapes culture?’ Then the students receive a handout of a mind map with the word ‘culture’ in the centre (Utley 2004: 12). After checking to make sure they understand all the vocabulary, students work in pairs to fill out the missing gaps on the mind map. First, they find suitable words for gaps 1-6, after which the whole class compares and discusses. Following that, the pairs continue to fill out the rest of the gaps on the mind map. This activity is a great method for encouraging critical thinking and vocabulary use, as well as developing knowledge regarding cultural aspects.

Then, a short lead-in discussion is conducted. The teacher poses a couple of thought-provoking questions to the class: ‘What is communication?’ and ‘What makes communication across cultures difficult?’. Students contribute their ideas through the digital platform of Padlet, where each of them can (anonymously) write down their ideas. This digital format allows all students to participate simultaneously, encouraging written expression in English. The purpose

of this step is to help focus the students' attention on the core topic and provide the teacher with insight into students' initial understanding.

During the content input stage, the teacher introduces key concepts of intercultural communication using a short Google Slides presentation. Foundational terms such as *culture*, *norms*, *values*, *assumptions*, and *intercultural communication* are explained. This explicit teaching stage is essential for establishing a common conceptual foundation and introducing the academic vocabulary necessary for students to engage meaningfully with the topic.

The lesson continues with an activity based on the metaphor of the 'cultural iceberg'. Students receive a visual of an iceberg and are asked to decide in pairs what aspects of culture are immediately visible, and which are hidden beneath the surface. This activity serves several important purposes: it activates students' prior knowledge about culture, encourages immediate engagement through visual stimulus, and introduces the idea that culture is complex and multilayered, which is a foundational concept for the continuation of the course. As Benthien (2021) notes, the iceberg analogy is widely used to illustrate the visible and hidden dimensions of culture. Working in pairs encourages communication in English in a low-pressure setting, as the students are not put on the spot individually.

Next, the lesson transitions into a role-play activity. In this interactive role-play, students take turns acting as interviewers and intercultural experts. After preparing 5-10 interview questions on the topic 'How intercultural am I?', pairs conduct a live interview using a marker as a microphone. The intercultural 'expert' responds as a knowledgeable globetrotter, while the class observes. After each 2-minute interview, a short feedback round follows, reflecting on challenges and insights. This activity raises students' awareness of cultural differences and develops speaking and improvisation skills.

Finally, the lesson ends with a brief wrap-up activity, where students return to the Padlet board to post one thing they learned during the lesson and one question they still have. This

task reinforces the key takeaways of the lesson and provides the teacher with valuable insight into student understanding.

This lesson integrates both language and content learning, encourages student interaction, and fosters critical thinking through a series of scaffolded tasks. It follows key CLIL principles, including the 4Cs framework and active engagement with authentic concepts. Students are actively encouraged to use English in meaningful, communicative ways. The content is cognitively challenging yet accessible, thanks to the focus on real-life relevance and cooperative learning.

### **2.3.2 Lesson 7 – Stereotypes and their impact (see Appendix 4)**

The main aim of this lesson is to help students understand what stereotypes are, analyse how they affect our perceptions and interactions with others, and reflect on their own experiences with stereotyping. In addition to developing content knowledge, the lesson also supports students in expanding their vocabulary related to stereotypes and practising speaking and listening skills in structured discussions and group work.

The lesson begins with a short warm-up activity, in which students are asked to anonymously submit two to three cultural stereotypes they have encountered, using the interactive tool Mentimeter. The teacher then reads out the submissions and prompts discussion by asking questions like ‘What do these have in common?’ and ‘How do we conjure up these stereotypes?’. This activity activates students’ prior knowledge and personal experiences, while introducing the topic in a non-threatening way, encouraging reflection and curiosity. It also provides insight into the range of stereotypes students are already aware of and helps prepare them for deeper engagement with the topic.

Following the warm-up, the teacher then gives a brief input on the concepts of stereotyping and prejudice, outlining their main characteristics and potential consequences.

This part of the lesson provides students with basic background knowledge about the topic, therefore enabling them to engage more deeply in later tasks. It builds an understanding of what stereotypes are and to recognise how they affect perception and behaviour. At the end of this stage, the teacher introduces the activity for the rest of this lesson called ‘What is Stereotype and Prejudice?’, adapted from EFIL (2018: 95-100).

In phase 1 of the main activity, students work in pairs to explore definitions of stereotypes presented in a handout. They are asked to think of examples that illustrate different aspects of the definition, then conduct an online search to find real-world cases of discrimination. Their task is to identify and share at least one case that has not yet been discussed in class. This phase is intended to deepen students’ awareness of how stereotypes function in society and the serious consequences they can have. Through researching and presenting real-life examples, students engage with otherness and develop empathy and critical thinking. The collaborative nature of the activity encourages meaningful peer interaction and use of English in an authentic context.

Phase 2 continues the theme of challenging assumptions. Students are divided into groups and given the handout ‘If the World Were 100 People’, which presents global demographic data in simplified form. Students must discuss together in their groups and estimate figures related to world population, health, and wealth distribution. All groups have to share their answers, after which, the teacher presents the actual statistics, either by writing them on the board or distributing a separate handout. This is followed by a class discussion on the differences between perceived data and actual data. This phase is particularly effective in raising awareness of unconscious biases and the limitations of one’s own worldview. It encourages students to reflect critically on their assumptions and to question how stereotypes may be informed by limited or distorted information.

In Phase 3, students work in groups with a final handout that contains two tasks related to stereotypes. In Part 1, they discuss whether the given statements are true or false. Part 2 involves matching words about stereotypes with their correct definitions. After these are finished in their groups, the teacher facilitates a class discussion to check everyone's answers, ensure understanding and address any questions. The lesson concludes with a short reflection task, in which students are asked to consider what they have learned about stereotypes and how their thinking may have changed. This reflective closing supports the internalisation of content and allows students to connect their personal emotions with the topic of the lesson.

Overall, the lesson is designed to promote intercultural awareness and critical thinking through active engagement, collaboration, and personal reflection. The use of real-world examples and meaningful tasks support both language development and the development of intercultural communication competence.

### **2.3.3 Lesson 10 – Exploring Body Language Across Cultures (see Appendix 5)**

This lesson was selected to be included in this thesis because it highlights the multimodal nature of intercultural communication. It offers an opportunity to explore nonverbal communication cues, such as gestures, eye contact, personal space, and body language, that vary significantly across cultures and can be sources of misunderstanding. The lesson combines watching videos, discussing observations, learning key terms, and practicing role-plays. It illustrates CLIL principles such as authenticity, active learning, and dual focus – students not only acquire vocabulary and discourse strategies in English but also develop cultural awareness and interpersonal skills crucial for real-life intercultural interactions.

The lesson begins with a silent video analysis and the students are tasked with interpreting what they see. Working in pairs, they discuss what they think is happening. This activity immediately engages students and introduces the concept of nonverbal

communication. At B2, learners can handle this kind of interpretive task and use different terms to describe what they observe. The teacher uses student guesses to elicit the idea that cultural background strongly influences how we interpret nonverbal signals. The following lead-in stage leverages the students' initial reactions and allows them to reflect on the topic.

During the content input stage, the teacher gives a brief presentation about nonverbal communication, along with key academic terms related to the concept, such as gesture, proxemics, eye contact, haptics, etc. The students are reminded of high-context and low-context cultures that they were introduced to in a previous thematic block.

After the presentation, students do an observation task. They receive a handout with a checklist of different types of body language to look for in nonverbal communication. They watch the same videos again, this time more carefully, and tick off the items they notice. Then, the class shares their observations, practicing new vocabulary and analysing what certain gestures or actions might mean.

The lesson peaks with the role-play task, where students perform short intercultural encounters in pairs, switching between their own cultural norms and those of a different cultural context. This encourages students to apply what they have learned by contrasting familiar and unfamiliar norms. Acting out scenarios twice helps students not only experiment with different behaviours but also reflect on their own cultural habits.

The reflection stage helps bridge experience and theory. Students analyse what happened in their role-plays, link it back to earlier video clips and discussions, and discuss potential problems and solutions. This stage allows for deeper learning and supports content-language integration – phrases for comparison, evaluation, and interpretation emerge naturally during these discussions. Finally, the wrap-up activity, where students post on Padlet one insight they gained and one question they still have, ties the lesson together, prompting students to summarise key ideas and leaving room for curiosity.

Throughout this lesson, language is learned in and through content, as vocabulary and discourse functions emerge from and support the exploration of cultural phenomena. The scaffolding is both cognitive and linguistic, guiding students from observation to analysis to real-life application. It prepares students to navigate intercultural situations with both awareness and sensitivity, using English as a tool for global understanding.

### **2.3.4 Lesson 13 – Greetings (see Appendix 6)**

This lesson focuses on greetings across cultures, helping students explore how people greet each other differently around the world and why. The aim is to raise students' awareness of how greetings reflect cultural values and to practice appropriate language and nonverbal communication skills.

The lesson starts with a whole-class discussion where students are asked how people greet each other in Estonia. The teacher prompts them to think about factors like age, gender, and formality, encouraging them to reflect on their own cultural norms.

Next, students watch two short videos showcasing greeting customs from various cultures. Before watching, they are tasked with counting how many different greeting styles they notice. After watching, students discuss their observations in pairs and then share with the whole class. This stage introduces diversity in greetings and encourages students to notice small details.

Following this, students take part in an interactive greeting activity. Each student receives a card describing a unique way of greeting and then they walk around the classroom, greeting each other according to their card's instructions. Some of the instructions can be quite uncomfortable to students, such as 'touch your nose to the other person's nose', but the activity is aimed to showcase the variety of different greeting customs around the world and how they can be normal for some cultures but unimaginable for other cultures. After the activity, the class

reflects on how the greetings felt, which ones were comfortable or awkward, and whether anyone modified their greeting to feel more at ease. This exercise serves as a metaphor for cultural diversity and personal adaptation.

The teacher then introduces the main role-play task called ‘Greeting Rituals.’ The teacher divides students into two roles: hosts and guests, to simulate real-life encounters. Students with the role of the guest imagine that they have arrived at an airport looking for their hosts. Each student receives an instruction card describing a specific cultural greeting ritual they must perform (specific bows, distance keeping, or touching rituals). Without using words, students move around the classroom acting out these rituals to find others from the same cultural group. Once the role-play ends, the class comes together for a debrief and reflection. Students discuss how it felt to greet people differently, what they noticed about nonverbal communication, personal space, and how factors like hierarchy and gender might influence greetings in different cultures. This reflective stage connects practice with theory, deepening students’ cultural understanding.

To wrap up, students post one thing they liked about the lesson and one remaining question they have on a Padlet board. This allows the teacher to measure their understanding and encourages students to continue thinking about cultural differences in greetings.

### **2.3.5 Lesson 17 – Cultural briefing (see Appendix 7)**

The following lesson introduces students to the concept of cultural briefing, which is the process of preparing for interaction with a different culture by acquiring relevant cultural knowledge. The lesson begins with a warm-up to activate students’ prior knowledge and set the context. The teacher checks students’ understanding of the term ‘cultural briefing’ by eliciting examples of situations where such preparation is necessary. The teacher then briefly explains typical elements of cultural briefing, including customs, etiquette, geography, and

historical norms. This stage connects the new concept to students' existing knowledge and frames the lesson's purpose.

In the next stage, students receive a handout (Utley 2004: 19) listing various cultural elements. Working in pairs, they select the six most useful things they would want to know before visiting a completely unfamiliar culture. The teacher ensures comprehension of the vocabulary before students begin. After discussing their selections in pairs, students present their choices to the class, providing reasons for their decisions. This activity deepens students' understanding of what a cultural briefing involves and encourages critical evaluation of cultural information.

Task 2 builds on this by shifting focus to a culture that is more familiar to the students. Working individually, students again select key items for a cultural briefing and then compare their selections with classmates. This comparison exercise helps students reflect on how cultural briefings vary depending on prior knowledge and cultural proximity, reinforcing the idea that cultural preparation is context dependent.

The lesson then moves to a more concrete example with a task about Sweden. The teacher introduces Sweden by asking students what they know about its location, landscape, weather, people, culture, and other aspects. Students receive a handout (Utley 2004: 21) about Sweden and, in pairs, prepare a list of six cultural elements (from the list on the handout) that they would include in a briefing for a visitor. This activity not only reinforces the concept of cultural briefing but also highlights the challenge of selecting relevant information for visitors, especially when prior knowledge might be based on stereotypes or generalisations. Pair and class discussions following this task encourage students to justify their choices and question assumptions.

The final task of the lesson is a productive task, where students can apply their learning. Working in groups, they create a short cultural briefing for a culture they have chosen for their

final project, presenting their ideas in the form of a poster. This collaborative task supports communication, negotiation, and critical thinking as students must decide which elements are most important to include. At the end, each group shortly presents their briefing to the class, allowing for comparison of different approaches and providing a platform for practicing presentation skills.

The lesson concludes with a wrap-up reflection, where students discuss with a partner what they have learned about cultural briefings, how their understanding of the concept has evolved, and why such briefings are both useful and potentially problematic (e.g. risks of stereotyping). This reflective discussion helps consolidate the lesson's content, ensuring that students leave with a clearer and more critical understanding of the topic.

Through a combination of receptive and productive tasks, individual and group work, this lesson effectively develops both intercultural competence and language skills, aligning with the overall aims of the course.

## **2.4 Discussion**

The second chapter of this thesis has focused on the practical aspect of developing an elective CLIL course for Estonian upper secondary schools, aimed at enhancing students' intercultural communicative competence while simultaneously supporting their English language development. The chapter provided an overview of the course design process, including the formulation of learning outcomes, the structure of the syllabus, and the thematic content. Even though the course framework was carefully planned, there are some clear limits and challenges in the development process. Since this thesis focused on creating a full syllabus but only provided detailed lesson plans for five sample lessons, the course remains at a theoretical level. It has not been tested in a real classroom. Without piloting, it is impossible to

know how well the course design, activities, and methods will work in practice or how they will support students' learning.

Another challenge was balancing the dual focus of content and language. Designing tasks that simultaneously promote intercultural competence and language development required careful consideration to ensure that neither aspect would be overshadowed. Particular attention was given to maintaining the authenticity of content while making it accessible to B2-level learners. However, this balancing act presented difficulties, especially in selecting topics that are both culturally significant and linguistically appropriate for the target group.

The integration of assessment methods within the course also required thoughtful planning. Since intercultural communicative competence involves subjective and reflective dimensions that are not easily measurable, developing suitable assessment tools that capture both the process and the product of learning was a complex task. The inclusion of a portfolio and a final group project provided opportunities for students to document their learning journey and demonstrate their understanding of intercultural concepts. Nevertheless, assessing the depth of intercultural learning remains inherently subjective and would benefit from empirical testing and feedback from real classroom practice.

While these challenges highlight the areas that require further development, the work done in this thesis provides a good foundation for future advancements. The course structure, topics, and sample lessons give a clear plan that can be improved with real classroom testing and teacher feedback. Creating this course also gave useful experience in how to include intercultural communication in language lessons using the CLIL method. It showed that CLIL can help make learning more interesting and meaningful compared to traditional language teaching.

## CONCLUSION

In an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, the ability to communicate across cultures has become an essential skill. Language education plays a key role in equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate culturally diverse environments. The Estonian National Curriculum (2011) highlights the importance of fostering students' understanding of cultural diversity and promoting dialogue between cultures. However, traditional language education often prioritizes grammatical and lexical knowledge over the development of intercultural communicative competence.

To address this gap, the first part of this thesis explored the theoretical foundations of intercultural communication and the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology. Intercultural communication was examined as a multifaceted concept that involves not only knowledge of cultural differences but also the ability to understand, reflect upon, and appropriately respond to cultural diversity in real-life situations. Key components of intercultural communication include motivation, self- and other-awareness, tolerance for uncertainty, and the development of greater self-awareness through intercultural encounters. Additionally, CLIL was analysed as a pedagogical approach that integrates language learning with meaningful content, supporting the simultaneous development of linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural skills. Through its emphasis on authentic contexts, active learning, and the integration of content, communication, cognition, and culture, CLIL offers an effective framework for developing students' intercultural communicative competence alongside their language proficiency. The dual focus on content and language allows language learning to be situated within real-world, culturally rich contexts, enhancing learners' ability to understand and interpret global issues through multiple lenses. This makes CLIL particularly effective for fostering intercultural competence and preparing students for international environments.

The second part of the thesis focused on the practical application of these theoretical principles through the design of an elective CLIL course for Estonian gymnasium students. Rooted in the 4Cs framework and by incorporating principles such as authenticity, active learning, scaffolding, and formative assessment, the course aims to develop students' intercultural communication skills while enhancing their English language abilities. Designed for B2-level learners, the course consists of 23 70-minute academic lessons, organised into nine thematic blocks, each addressing a specific aspect of intercultural communication. The CEFR Companion Volume and the Estonian National Curriculum served as the primary frameworks for formulating the course's learning outcomes, ensuring that the goals of the course are both internationally relevant and locally applicable. The course design process was guided by the principles of CLIL, ensuring that language learning is embedded in meaningful, culturally relevant content. In addition to content learning, the course incorporates language-focused tasks, interactive and role-playing activities, and opportunities for reflection and critical thinking. To demonstrate the practical implementation of the course concept, five detailed sample lesson plans were developed, illustrating how the integration of content and language can be achieved in classroom practice. Assessment in this course is designed to support both process and product: students are required to actively participate in lessons, complete a final group project analysing the intercultural communication practices of a selected culture, and submit a portfolio documenting their learning journey. This approach encourages continuous reflection, language practice, and the development of critical thinking skills

In conclusion, the elective CLIL course designed in this thesis offers a helpful contribution to the field of language and intercultural education in Estonia. By addressing the current lack of structured materials and providing a pedagogically sound framework, the course has the potential to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence and prepare them for meaningful engagement in a diverse global society.

However, the thesis acknowledges certain limitations. As the course has not been empirically tested, its practical effectiveness remains to be verified. Furthermore, while the syllabus provides a comprehensive framework, detailed lesson plans and materials were created for only five sample lessons. To transform the course into a fully implementable program, further development and piloting are necessary. In this regard, future research and practical implementation will play a crucial role in validating and refining the course, ensuring its long-term relevance and impact.

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## APPENDIX 1

### The B2 sections of the CEFR Illustrative Descriptor Scales

Building on pluricultural repertoire.

<b>B2</b>	<p>**Can describe and evaluate the viewpoints and practices of their own and other social groups, showing awareness of the implicit values on which judgments and prejudices are frequently based.</p> <p>**Can explain their interpretation of the cultural assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices of their own community and of other communities that they are familiar with.</p> <p>**Can interpret and explain a document or event from another culture and relate it to documents or events from their own culture(s) and/or from cultures with which they are familiar.</p> <p>**Can discuss the objectivity and balance of information and opinions expressed in the media about their own and other communities.</p> <p>Can identify and reflect on similarities and differences in culturally determined behavioural patterns (e.g. gestures and speech volume or, for sign languages, sign size) and discuss their significance in order to negotiate mutual understanding.</p> <p>Can, in an intercultural encounter, recognise that what one normally takes for granted in a particular situation is not necessarily shared by others, and can react and express themselves appropriately.</p> <p>Can generally interpret cultural cues appropriately in the culture concerned.</p> <p>Can reflect on and explain particular ways of communicating in their own and other cultures, and the risks of misunderstanding they generate.</p>
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Plurilingual comprehension.

<b>B2</b>	<p>Can use their knowledge of contrasting genre conventions and textual patterns in <u>languages in their plurilingual repertoire</u> in order to support comprehension.</p>
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Building on plurilingual repertoire.

<b>B2</b>	<p>**Can recognise the extent to which it is appropriate to make flexible use of <u>different languages in their plurilingual repertoire</u> in a specific situation, in order to increase the efficiency of communication.</p> <p>**Can alternate efficiently between <u>languages in their plurilingual repertoire</u> in order to facilitate comprehension with and between third parties who lack a common language.</p> <p>**Can introduce into an utterance an expression from <u>another language in their plurilingual repertoire</u> that is particularly apt for the situation/concept being discussed, explaining it for the interlocutor when necessary.</p> <p>Can alternate between <u>languages in their plurilingual repertoire</u> in order to communicate specialised information and issues on a subject in their field of interest to different interlocutors.</p> <p>Can make use of <u>different languages in their plurilingual repertoire</u> during collaborative interaction, in order to clarify the nature of a task, the main steps, the decisions to be taken and the outcomes expected.</p> <p>Can make use of <u>different languages in their plurilingual repertoire</u> to encourage other people to use the language in which they feel more comfortable.</p>
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## APPENDIX 2

### **Elective course: Intercultural Communication**

#### **Course Syllabus**

**Aim of the course:** To develop students' awareness, understanding, and skills for effective and respectful communication across cultures, while enhancing their critical thinking, empathy, and English language proficiency through intercultural exploration and reflection.

**Course audience:** Upper-secondary students (grades 10-12) with a B2-level of English.

**Course duration:** 23 lessons, each 70 minutes long.

**Learning outcomes:** By the end of the course, the students will be able to

#### **Content:**

- reflect on and explain cultural assumptions, practices, and values within their own and other cultural groups,
- demonstrate an awareness of different aspects of intercultural awareness, such as stereotypes, biases, and the potential for intercultural misunderstanding,
- interpret and evaluate intercultural materials, including texts, events, and media,
- identify and respond appropriately to culturally determined behavioural norms in both verbal and nonverbal communication, adapting their interaction strategies to promote mutual understanding,

#### **Language:**

- use their knowledge of language structure and conventions across their linguistic repertoire to support comprehension and analysis of intercultural content,
- use spoken and written English to describe key features of intercultural communication, articulate personal views, and compare diverse cultural perspectives
- comprehend and analyse spoken and written English to find specific information and evaluate the relevance of different details
- explain and critically evaluate diverse viewpoints in both spoken and written interaction on intercultural topics
- produce coherent and well-structured texts on intercultural issues, using appropriate vocabulary and register

**Assessment:** Students are required to actively participate in and complete all the required assignments during the course, complete and present their final projects and hand in their portfolio.

Thematic block	Lesson topic	Description
<i>Introduction to Intercultural Communication</i>	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Introduction to the course and to the participants.	<p>Fostering connections between the teacher and the students through various culturally themed games and activities.</p> <p>Introduction to course objectives, goals, requirements and the assessment criteria. Students are required to form groups for the final project and start generating ideas for the project.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the main objectives, structure and expectations of the course</li> <li>• understand the assessment criteria and the requirements for the final project</li> <li>• use language for introducing themselves and expressing personal interests</li> <li>• comprehend and respond to course-related instructions, goals, and assessment criteria delivered in English</li> </ul>
	<b>Lesson 2:</b> What is intercultural communication? Why does it matter?	<p>Introducing the concept of culture, intercultural communication, and its relevance. Through interactive activities such as mind mapping, digital discussions and role-plays, students explore the visible and hidden dimensions of culture. Students are introduced to the cultural iceberg model.</p> <p>Main task: Brainstorming and completing a mind map, assigning components to the three different layers of the cultural iceberg.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define intercultural communication in their own words</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify key elements that influence intercultural interactions</li> <li>• understand and use key vocabulary related to intercultural communication (both orally and in writing)</li> <li>• improve their sensitivity in intercultural communication contexts</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural dimensions and models</i>	<b>Lesson 3:</b> Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions	<p>Students learn about Hofstede and his cultural dimension and how to use the country comparison tool.</p> <p>Main task: comparing Estonian culture with other cultures, using Hofstede's country comparison tool (<a href="https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool">https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool</a>).</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe Hofstede's six cultural dimensions</li> <li>• use the Hofstede's country comparison tool to compare different cultures with each other</li> <li>• interpret cultural dimension scores and identify key similarities and differences between countries</li> <li>• use content-specific vocabulary (individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, etc)</li> </ul>
	<b>Lesson 4:</b> Hall's High-Context vs Low-Context Cultures	<p>Students learn about Hall's theory of high- and low-context cultures through examples, discussions, and real-life scenarios.</p> <p>Main task: Context analysis role-play and comparison, where students have to act out the same scenario twice – in a high-context and a low-context way.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain the difference between high-context and low-context cultures</li> <li>• identify real-life examples of high- and low-context communication</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyse how communication styles vary across cultures</li> <li>• use key terminology of the topic</li> <li>• practise expressing cultural observations and interpretations (e.g. <i>This might be understood differently in...</i>, <i>In high-context cultures, people tend to...</i>)</li> <li>• develop linguistic fluency in speaking through role-plays and group discussions</li> </ul>
<p><i>Identity, bias and stereotypes</i></p>	<p><b>Lesson 5:</b> Understanding values and cultural identity.</p>	<p>Students explore how cultural values shape identity and influence communication. Focus is also on how components of race, ethnicity, gender, and social belonging inform cultural perspectives.</p> <p>Main task: Intercultural Classroom activity 6 “Abigail”, taken from EFIL (2018: 28-29). Students read a short story about Abigail, which involves a value-based dilemma. They work in groups to understand, examine and evaluate the characters in the story.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe how cultural values inform identity and influence communication</li> <li>• analyse value-based dilemmas and explain how different cultural perspectives may lead to different interpretations</li> <li>• reflect on their own values and assumptions</li> <li>• use vocabulary related to values, identity, and social categories</li> <li>• express and justify opinions using evaluative language</li> <li>• engage in respectful discussion and negotiation in group settings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 6:</b> Ingroups, outgroups, and bias</p>	<p>Students are introduced to the concepts of ingroups and outgroups, ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination, bias, and how these shape perceptions of “us” vs. “them”. Students learn to identify biased representations and reflect on how</p>

		<p>stereotypes and cultural generalisations can influence behaviour and communication.</p> <p>Main task: Media bias analysis and discussion. Students watch excerpts from advertisements, news clips, or social media posts and analyse (in groups) these for signs of bias and exclusion/inclusion strategies and present their finding, along with a discussion.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define and explain the concepts of ingroups, outgroups, ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination</li> <li>• identify biased or stereotypical representations in media</li> <li>• analyse how media contributes to the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes</li> <li>• use key vocabulary related to the topic</li> <li>• describe and critique media using appropriate academic or analytical language</li> <li>• develop listening and speaking skills through structured dialogue and presentation</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 7: Stereotypes and their impact.</b></p>	<p>Students learn what stereotypes are, how they are formed and how they affect intercultural communication and relationships.</p> <p>Main task: Intercultural Classroom Activity 22 “What is Stereotype &amp; Prejudice?”, taken from EFIL (2018: 95-100).</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the concept of stereotypes</li> <li>• analyse how stereotypes influence perceptions and intercultural reactions</li> <li>• reflect on personal experiences with stereotyping</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use key vocabulary related to stereotyping</li> <li>• express reactions and reflections using appropriate discourse</li> <li>• practice speaking and listening through structured discussion and peer interaction</li> </ul>
<i>Individual lesson</i>	<b>Lesson 8:</b> Working with a TED-talk	<p>The lesson is focused on a TED-talk called “Cross Cultural Communication” by Pellegrino Riccardi. The aim is to deepen students’ intercultural competence by making them aware of how their own cultural background shapes their communication habits.</p> <p>Students carry out pre-listening, during listening, and post-listening activities to practice listening comprehension, critical thinking and discussion skills.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain key factors that influence cross-cultural communication</li> <li>• recognise how cultural backgrounds shape communication styles, expectations and perceptions</li> <li>• reflect on their own cultural communication norms in comparison to others</li> <li>• improve listening comprehension of authentic spoken English</li> <li>• summarize key points from a spoken text</li> </ul> <p>use topic-specific vocabulary related to communication, cultural norms, misunderstanding, etc.</p>
<i>Verbal and nonverbal communication</i>	<b>Lesson 9:</b> Verbal communication across cultures.	<p>Students are introduced to key aspects of verbal communication, such as turn-taking, politeness strategies, translation challenges, linguistic relativity. Brief introduction to language, thought, and culture, including the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.</p>

		<p>Main task: analyse dialogues + mini role-plays. Students are given excerpts of dialogues involving intercultural communication, and in groups, they analyse the features mentioned in this lesson. They then adapt or perform short role-plays.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe key aspects of verbal communication</li> <li>• explain the basic idea of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis</li> <li>• analyse how cultural norms shape the way people use and interpret verbal language</li> <li>• use terminology related to verbal interaction</li> <li>• use culturally appropriate verbal expressions in short role-plays or dialogue adaptations</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 10:</b> Nonverbal communication.</p>	<p>Students explore various nonverbal communication aspects, such as gestures, eye contact, space, touch, and body language. The lesson focuses on how these signals can vary across cultures.</p> <p>Main task: culture-switch role-play. In pairs, students act out short intercultural scenarios twice: once using their own cultural norms and once adapting to another culture's norms.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyse and compare nonverbal communication norms using appropriate terminology</li> <li>• identify potential causes of nonverbal miscommunication in intercultural interactions and propose strategies to avoid them</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyse culturally diverse behaviours, interpret intentions and evaluate their meaning</li> <li>• use subject-specific vocabulary related to nonverbal communication</li> <li>• participate in role-plays and discussions using appropriate register, tone, and culturally sensitive language</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 11:</b> Miscommunication and repair strategies.</p>	<p>Students focus on how miscommunication can occur in intercultural contexts due to differences in language, expectations, communication styles, and cultural norms. They identify causes of misunderstandings and explore how people attempt to solve them. Emphasis is both on where communication breaks down and how to apply repair strategies.</p> <p>Main task: In groups, students co-create a guide for avoiding miscommunications. After watching and analysing selected video clips showing intercultural miscommunication, they organize practical tips or strategies to prevent or repair them. Their ideas are compiled into a visual guide (poster or infographic).</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise common causes of miscommunication in intercultural interactions</li> <li>• analyse real-life or fictional situations of miscommunication</li> <li>• identify and explain effective communication repair strategies</li> <li>• develop practical strategies to reduce chance of misunderstandings</li> <li>• use language to describe communication breakdowns</li> <li>• collaborate effectively in English to co-create a structured guide</li> </ul>

<i>Individual lesson</i>	<b>Lesson 12:</b> Communication types	<p>Students explore how communication styles differ across cultures and how these differences can lead to misunderstandings. Students will analyse their own cultural norms and compare them to those of other cultures. Connects to previous topics like nonverbal communication, Halls’ theory, and miscommunication repair strategies.</p> <p>Main task: Students work in pairs to work on the handout (Culturewise, p. 24). Afterwards, each pair shares what they discussed.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyse how communication style differences can lead to intercultural misunderstandings</li> <li>• compare communication norms of different cultures</li> <li>• propose strategies to navigate and adapt to different communication styles</li> <li>• use vocabulary related to communication styles</li> <li>• practice speaking skills through pair and group discussions</li> </ul>
<i>Intercultural communication in everyday life</i>	<b>Lesson 13:</b> Greetings	<p>Students observe the variations of greetings in different cultures. Students learn how these everyday interactions reflect deeper cultural values.</p> <p>Main task: Intercultural Classroom Activity 13 “Greetings Rituals”, taken from EFIL (2018: 52-54). Students are performing a role-play (guests &amp; hosts) where they are acting out greetings as individuals from different cultures.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and describe cultural differences in greetings</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain how social norms (hierarchy, personal space, gender) affects these activities</li> <li>• recognise the role of greetings in building intercultural relationships</li> <li>• use language related to greetings, politeness, body language, cultural norms</li> <li>• practice functional expressions for greetings in various levels of formality</li> <li>• role-play short dialogues using culturally appropriate forms</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 14:</b> Intercultural communication in travel and tourism</p>	<p>This lesson focuses on discussing behaviour expectations, greetings, tipping, dress, and other aspects, when visiting various cultures. Emphasis on cultural awareness and respectful behaviour, helping students understand the importance of adapting to local norms.</p> <p>Main task: creating a short written visual cultural etiquette guide for tourists. Students are divided into groups, and each group works on the culture they have chosen for their final project, for which they need to research key etiquette and behaviour expectations.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain how social behaviours such as greetings, dress, or tipping vary across cultures</li> <li>• reflect on how respectful behaviour supports positive intercultural experiences</li> <li>• understand the role of cultural awareness in responsible tourism</li> <li>• use vocabulary and expressions related to etiquette and behaviour</li> <li>• give polite advice using modal verbs and softening language (<i>You should avoid...</i>, <i>It's polite to...</i>)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• present researched information in a clear and informative way</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 15:</b> Intercultural communication at school and work</p>	<p>Students explore intercultural challenges and opportunities in professional and academic settings (working in intercultural companies, attending international schools/universities). Students reflect on how cultural norms, communication styles, expectations around time, hierarchy, feedback, etc, may differ across cultures. Connections to Hall’s theory are presented as well.</p> <p>Main task: Students work with a case study, where they analyse a business scenario involving cultural differences in management and communication styles (taken from Utley 2004: 28-29).</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and describe intercultural challenges in professional and academic settings</li> <li>• analyse the impact of cultural communication styles (high- and low-context) in workplace interactions</li> <li>• use vocabulary related to intercultural workplace communication</li> <li>• discuss pros and cons of different actions using comparative language</li> </ul>
<p><i>Adapting to new and unfamiliar cultural environments</i></p>	<p><b>Lesson 16:</b> Culture shock.</p>	<p>This lesson focuses on exploring the concept of culture shock. Students will learn about the stages of culture shock and understand this process as a part of intercultural adjustment. The lesson revisits the idea of the cultural iceberg: when encountering another culture, we may interpret observed behaviours through the lens of our own values and beliefs, our own ‘iceberg’, which can lead to culture shock (EFIL 2018).</p>

		<p>Main task: Recognising Culture Shock. Students work in pairs with a handout, compare answers, discuss (Culturewise, p. 35).</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define culture shock and explain its causes in intercultural interactions</li> <li>• identify and describe the typical stages of culture shock</li> <li>• analyse how personal cultural values and beliefs (iceberg model) can influence perceptions</li> <li>• use topic-specific vocabulary related to culture shock</li> <li>• engage in group discussions, using agreeing or disagreeing elements politely</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 17:</b> Cultural briefing</p>	<p>Students explore the concept of cultural briefing (preparing to interact with or visit another culture), through discussions, group work, and reflective tasks.</p> <p>Main task: Students work in their groups to create a cultural briefing for the culture they have chosen for their final project.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the concept of cultural briefing and its relevance in intercultural communication</li> <li>• identify and evaluate the key elements typically included in a cultural briefing</li> <li>• use vocabulary related to cultural briefing</li> <li>• express opinions, justify choices, and compare cultural practices using appropriate strategies</li> </ul>
<p><i>Introducing Estonia to foreigners</i></p>	<p><b>Lesson 18:</b> What do they need to know about us?</p>	<p>Students reflect on the most important aspects of Estonian culture, values, attitudes, and behaviours that foreigners should understand. This helps develop cultural self-awareness and prepares students to explain</p>

		<p>these topics to people from different backgrounds.</p> <p>Main task: Students receive a handout “What Do They Need to Know About Us?” (Culturewise, p. 19). They reflect and discuss in groups, creating a Top 5 list of the most important things foreigners should know about Estonians. Groups then present their lists to the class.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify key aspects of Estonian culture that are important for foreigners to know</li> <li>• develop cultural self-awareness</li> <li>• explain why certain cultural differences might lead to misunderstandings</li> <li>• use topic-related vocabulary</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 19:</b> How to introduce Estonia to foreigners?</p>	<p>In the previous lesson, students reflected on key aspects of Estonian culture that foreigners should know. Now, students will build on that knowledge by practicing how to communicate this information in real-life situations, acting as cultural ambassadors.</p> <p>Main task: Students work in groups and create a simple guide called “Estonia for Beginners” for foreigners visiting Estonia for the first time.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• select and explain key aspects of Estonian culture relevant to foreigners</li> <li>• translate cultural knowledge into practical and audience-friendly formats</li> <li>• apply intercultural communication principles to create accessible resources for non-Estonians</li> <li>• use polite and clear English to explain cultural concepts</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use phrases and sentence structures for giving advice, explaining customs and comparing cultures</li> </ul>
<i>Individual lesson</i>	<b>Lesson 20: Cyberhunt</b>	<p>The whole lesson is dedicated to completing a cyberhunt, which the teacher has prepared, that incorporates topics covered throughout the course. Students work in pairs; lesson takes place in a computer class.</p> <p>Main task: Finishing the cyberhunt successfully.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locate and critically evaluate online sources related to intercultural communication topics</li> <li>• synthesize information from multiple sources</li> <li>• collaborate effectively in pairs</li> </ul>
<i>Conclusion of the course</i>	<b>Lesson 21: Working on final projects.</b>	<p>Students are given dedicated time to work on their final group projects. The teacher is providing help whenever necessary.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work collaboratively to refine and finalise their final project</li> <li>• apply intercultural communication principles to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of their project</li> <li>• collaborate in English, giving and receiving feedback and ideas</li> </ul>
	<b>Lesson 22: Students are presenting their final projects.</b>	<p>Each group has 7 minutes for presenting their project and 7 minutes for answering questions and receiving peer and teacher feedback. Students get to showcase their understanding of intercultural communication while practicing their presentation and speaking skills.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• present research from an intercultural communication perspective</li> <li>• analyse and discuss key aspects of a chosen culture</li> <li>• engage in discussions and provide constructive feedback</li> <li>• present clear, structured, and culturally accurate information in English</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Lesson 23:</b> Conclusion to the course, feedback, etc.</p>	<p>This lesson serves as a wrap-up for the course, offering an opportunity for students to reflect on the topics covered and their personal learning experiences. Students provide feedback on the course.</p> <p>Main task: Reflective writing activity – students write a short reflection on what they have learned throughout the course, considering elements such as: most interesting topic, most challenging aspect, plans for applying the learned knowledge, favourite activity.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflect on their learning journey</li> <li>• provide constructive feedback about the course</li> <li>• discuss how they will apply intercultural communication knowledge in various contexts</li> <li>• articulate their thoughts and reflections clearly in written and spoken English</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 3

### Lesson plan 2

**Topic:** What is intercultural communication? Why does it matter?

**Number of students:** 16

**Lesson duration:** 70 minutes

**Lesson objectives:**

#### Content

- Students understand basic concepts of intercultural communication and can define it in their own words
- Students can identify key elements that influence intercultural interactions
- Students are aware of cultural differences and the complexity of cultural understanding

#### Language

- Students can understand and use key vocabulary related to intercultural communication (both orally and in writing)
- Students can express their ideas in spoken and written English through pair work, group work, and class discussions
- Students practice asking and answering questions

**Lesson materials:** Whiteboard + projector; presentation slides

(<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1JibuRiwjKxavQcR37gDjnuRkV9rVUY55p92Tlk4MrEk/edit?usp=sharing>); culture mind map handouts; cultural iceberg handouts; Padlet board

**Procedure:**

Lesson stage	Time	Activities and instructions	Comments
Warm-up	15 min	<b>Brainstorming:</b> Teacher explains how to create a mind map. Then, prompts students with questions like: “ <i>What is culture for you?</i> ”, “ <i>What does it involve?</i> ”, “ <i>What shapes culture?</i> ”. Students receive a handout of a mind map with gaps. In pairs, they fill in the missing gaps (1-6). The class then compares answers and discusses. Students continue to complete the remaining mind map branches in pairs.	The purpose of this activity is to activate prior knowledge and build curiosity. Brings attention to the topic of ‘culture’.

Lead-in	5 min	<b>Short discussion:</b> The teacher asks the class “ <i>What is communication? What makes communication across cultures difficult?</i> ” Students write their answers using a Padlet board.	Elicits existing ideas; helps to focus students on the topic. Brings attention to the topic of ‘communication’.
Content input	10 min	<b>Teacher presentation:</b> Teacher introduces the topic of intercultural communication by giving a short presentation, explaining key terms ( <i>culture, norms, values, assumptions, etc.</i> ).	Builds a basic overview of the topic, including essential vocabulary.
Activity	10 min	<b>Cultural iceberg:</b> Students receive a visual of a cultural iceberg. In pairs, they decide what aspects of culture are visible above the surface and what is hidden below. The class discusses their answers.	Visual metaphor introduces complexity of culture, activates prior knowledge, encourages communication in English in a low-pressure setting.
Role-play	20 min	<b>Role-play:</b> Students prepare 5–10 interview questions on “ <i>How intercultural am I?</i> ”. In pairs, one acts as interviewer, the other as an “intercultural expert”. Interviews are conducted using a marker as a microphone. After each 2-minute interview, the teacher facilitates feedback round reflecting on challenges and insights.	Develops speaking and improvisation skills, raises awareness of cultural differences, encourages sensitivity in communication.
Wrap-up reflections	5 min	<b>Exit ticket:</b> Firstly, short debrief of the lesson. Then, each student writes (on Padlet) one thing they learned today and one question they still have.	Reinforces key takeaways, encourages reflection, provides teacher with insight into students’ understanding and remaining questions.

## Materials for lesson 2

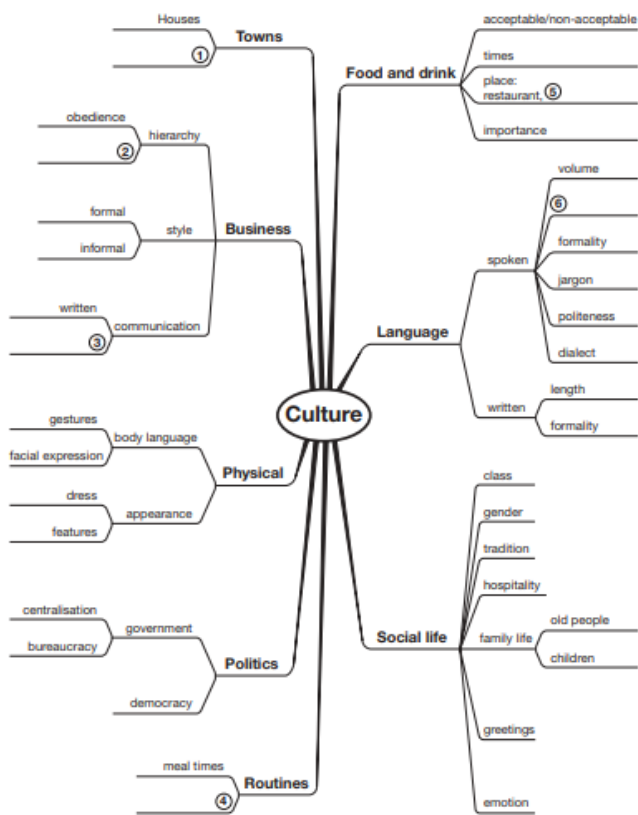
### Brainstorming activity handout:

# 1.1 Brainstorming: What is culture for you?

What is 'culture' for you? The word has many meanings and is open to many interpretations.

The aim of this mind map is to try to identify as many of the components of culture as possible. Follow the lines out from the central word 'culture'.

- 1 Complete the spaces numbered 1 to 6 with a suitable word or phrase.
- 2 Continue the lines outwards with suitable ideas.



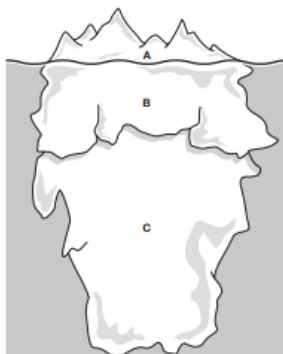
1 Why does culture matter?

## Cultural Iceberg activity:

### 1.3 The culture iceberg

When you observe people from a certain culture, some characteristics – such as dress and the way people greet each other – are easy to see. Others are not so easy.

Culture is sometimes compared to an iceberg, some of which is visible, but much of which is difficult to see, or invisible.



1 Look at the list of components of national culture, and place each one in one of the three categories:

- A things which you can recognise quite easily
- B things which take some time to recognise
- C things which you recognise only when you are very familiar with a culture.

Artefacts: art and architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Humour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balance between work and home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organisation of companies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>
Democracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical gestures	<input type="checkbox"/>
Directness of speech in business	<input type="checkbox"/>	Press and other media	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving habits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Punctuality in business	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotion shown in public	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social life: public and private	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family life	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social organisation and class	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender – roles of males and females	<input type="checkbox"/>	Treatment of outsiders/foreigners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Values and beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 2 Are any of these more important than others in understanding a particular national culture with which you are familiar?
- 3 Add any other elements which you think are important in defining a national culture you know.

1 Why does culture matter?

## APPENDIX 4

### Lesson plan 7

**Topic:** Stereotypes and their impact

**Number of students:** 16

**Lesson duration:** 70 minutes

**Lesson objectives:**

#### Content

- Students understand the concept of stereotypes.
- Students can analyse how stereotypes influence perceptions and intercultural reactions.
- Students can reflect on personal experiences with stereotyping.

#### Language

- Students can use key vocabulary related to stereotyping.
- Students can express reactions and reflections using appropriate discourse.
- Students can practice speaking and listening through structured discussion and peer interaction.

**Lesson materials:** Mentimeter; 4 different printed handouts;

**Procedure:**

Lesson stage	Time	Activities and instructions	Comments
Warm-up	7 min	Students anonymously write 2-3 stereotypes that they have heard and submit them on Mentimeter. Teacher then reads them aloud and asks: <i>“What do these have in common? How do we conjure these stereotypes?”</i>	Warming students up for the topic of the lesson, activates their thinking.
Content input	8 min	Teacher provides a brief introduction to stereotyping and prejudice, their common features and what they can lead to. Then starts the <b>activity</b> of <i>“What is Stereotype and Prejudice?”</i> from EFIL (2018: 95-100).	Offers a clear conceptual foundation and links to intercultural contexts.

Phase 1 of the activity	25 min	Students form pairs and each pair receives a handout with definitions of stereotypes. They think of examples for each part of the definition. Then, they research (online) real-life cases of discrimination and share examples not yet discussed in class.	Builds encounter with otherness and raises awareness of the real-world consequences of stereotyping.
Phase 2 of the activity	10 min	Students form groups and explore “If the World Were 100 People” handout. They need to estimate world statistics, reach consensus amongst the group, and complete a worksheet. One student from each group shares their answers. Afterwards, the teacher presents actual data and students discuss differences.	Highlights bias in perception and challenges assumptions; promotes group discussion and analysis.
Phase 3 of the activity	15 min	Teacher distributes the final handout for the groups. In groups, students fill in the tables. For Part 1 of the handout, there is a discussion together with the class (e.g., common stereotypes and their origins). For Part 2, a brief summary of the vocabulary with the whole class.	Encourages students to reflect on reactions, verbalise experiences, and understand stereotype formation.
Reflections	5 min	Whole-class reflection: What did I learn about stereotypes? How did my thinking change today?	Wraps up learning and deepens personal reflection with the learned information.

## Materials for lesson 7

### A handout with definitions of stereotypes:

#### Hand out 1 - "Definitions of Stereotypes"

Read some definitions of stereotypes. Work with a partner and think about at least three examples for each piece of information of the definitions.

1. A simplified and fixed image of all members of a culture or group (based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origins).
2. Generalizations about people that are based on limited, sometimes inaccurate, information (from such sources as television, cartoons or comic books, minimal contact with one or more members of the group, second-hand information)
3. Initial predictions about strangers based on incomplete information about their culture, race, religion, or ethnicity
4. A single statement or attitude about a group of people that does not recognize the complex, multidimensional nature of human beings
5. Broad categories about people that fail to differentiate among individuals, peoples, and societies.

### “If the World Were 100 People” handout:

#### Hand out 2 - “If the World Were 100 People”

1	57	50	21
6	70	59	52
30	1	80	70
48	8	6	1
14	1		

Directions: Place the following numbers in the appropriate blanks:

If the world were 100 people there would be:

\_\_\_ Asians

\_\_\_ Europeans

\_\_\_ North and South Americans

\_\_\_ Africans

\_\_\_ females

\_\_\_ males

\_\_\_ non-white

\_\_\_ white

\_\_\_ percent of the entire world's wealth would belong to only \_\_\_ people and all \_\_\_ would be citizens of the United States.

\_\_\_ would live in substandard housing.

\_\_\_ would be unable to read.

\_\_\_ would suffer from malnutrition.

\_\_\_ would be near death.

\_\_\_ would be near birth.

\_\_\_ would have a college education.

\_\_\_ would have a computer.

## “If the World Were 100 People” handout answers (for the teacher):

### Hand out 3 (for teachers) - “If the World Were 100 People”

If the world were 100 people there would be:

- 57 Asians
- 21 Europeans
- 14 North and South Americans
- 8 Africans
- 52 females
- 48 males
- 70 non-white, 30 white
- 59 percent of the entire world’s wealth would belong to only 6 people and all 6 would be citizens of the United States
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death
- 1 would be near birth
- 1 would have a college education
- 1 would have a computer

## Stereotypes handout:

### Hand out 4 - Stereotypes

Part 1 - Discuss these items and decide whether they are true or false.

1.  Stereotypes can be positive or negative.
2.  They are all unfair and misleading.
3.  They reduce individuals to an inflexible image.
4.  Human beings are unique and complex, so no one should be stereotyped.
5.  They dehumanize people because they place all members of a group in one simple category.
6.  Stereotypes can be true.
7.  You can know a lot about a people if you know their stereotypes.
8.  Stereotypes are not necessarily true, but there is a lot of reality in them.

Part 2 - Match the words about stereotypes with their definitions:

1. alienation	<input type="checkbox"/> a belief that one is better than others are
2. attitude of superiority	<input type="checkbox"/> fear or dislike of foreigners or strangers
3. discrimination	<input type="checkbox"/> a feeling of being separate or not belonging
4. ethnocentrism	<input type="checkbox"/> special treatment (good or bad) based on race, religion, physical appearance, age or social class
5. intolerance	<input type="checkbox"/> lack of kindness or understanding toward people who are different
6. prejudice	<input type="checkbox"/> belief that one's own group (country, race or culture) is better than other
7. racism	<input type="checkbox"/> characteristics, features
8. scapegoat	<input type="checkbox"/> A person or group who is given the blame for the mistakes or failures of others
9. traits	<input type="checkbox"/> Belief that an ethnic group is superior or inferior than other groups
10. xenophobia	<input type="checkbox"/> A negative, unfair opinion about a person or group of people based on limited information or experience

## APPENDIX 5

### Lesson plan 10

**Topic:** Exploring Body Language Across Cultures

**Number of students:** 16

**Lesson duration:** 70 minutes

**Lesson objectives:**

#### Content

- Students can analyse and compare nonverbal communication norms using appropriate terminology.
- Students can identify potential causes of nonverbal miscommunication in intercultural interactions and propose strategies to avoid it.
- Students can analyse culturally diverse behaviours, interpret intentions and evaluate their meaning.

#### Language

- Students can use subject-specific vocabulary related to nonverbal communication.
- Students can participate in role-plays and discussions using appropriate register, tone, and culturally sensitive language.

**Lesson materials:** YouTube videos; observation task handouts; Padlet board.

**Procedure:**

Lesson stage	Time	Activities and instructions	Comments
Warm-up	10 min	<b>Silent scenes:</b> The teacher plays short, muted video clips of interactions in different cultures. Students discuss in pairs what they think is happening and note down any visible behaviours.	This activity sparks curiosity and activates prior knowledge. It introduces nonverbal communication without explicitly defining it. Activates critical observation skills.
Lead-in	5 min	<b>Short discussion:</b> Teacher prompts students: <i>“What clues helped you interpret the interaction? Could it be</i>	Transitions from general observation

		<i>seen differently in another culture?”</i> Students share their thoughts with the class.	to reflective thinking.
Content input	5 min	<b>Teacher presentation:</b> Teacher briefly introduces the topic of nonverbal communication and concepts such as body language, eye contact, personal space, gestures, high-context and low-context cultures. Examples from the videos are revisited and connected to the new terminology.	Language and content are introduced in context.
Observation task	15 min	<b>Observation:</b> Students receive handouts (Culturewise p. 34) from the teacher with a list of different elements to observe in nonverbal interactions. They watch the same videos again and tick the elements they see in the clips. Then they share with the whole class.	Provides an opportunity to pay active attention to the body language. Enables to speculate what people try to convey with nonverbal communication.
Application task	15 min	<b>Culture-switch role-plays:</b> In pairs, students are given simple intercultural role-play prompts (e.g. “You’re meeting a business partner in South Korea” or “You’re attending a dinner in Spain”). Each pair acts out the situation <i>twice</i> : once using their own cultural norms and once adapting to the assigned culture.	This activity applies content knowledge actively. Nonverbal behaviour and appropriate verbal responses are practiced in context. Promotes language in use and awareness of interactional norms.
Reflections	5 min	<b>Whole class debrief:</b> In groups, students discuss “ <i>What felt different between the two role-plays?</i> ”, “ <i>How do cultural values shape what is seen as polite or rude?</i> ” and “ <i>Why might intentions be misinterpreted?</i> ”	Deepens understanding through reflections, helps internalise language for expressing observations, uncertainty, and interpretation.

Wrap-up	5 min	<b>Exit ticket:</b> Each students posts one insight and one unanswered question on Padlet.	Consolidates learning and creates curiosity. Allows the teacher to informally assess understanding and interest.
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## Materials for lesson 10

### Observation handout:

#### Intercultural Training Exercise Pack

##### Observing Body Language handout

Watch the video.

Closely observe how people dress, greet and interact with each other. While watching, please tick the boxes that match your observations and reflect on what the individuals concerned are trying to communicate.

##### Dress code

- Casual
- Uniformed
- Colourful
- Formal
- Eccentric
- Neutral

What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their dress code?

What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their gestures and personal space?

##### General impression of the interaction

- Formal
- Hierarchical
- Laid-back
- Informal
- Organized

##### Greetings

- Collective greeting
- Hugging
- No touching
- Neutral face
- No greeting
- Handshaking
- Smiling
- Individual greeting
- Kissing
- Touching
- Emotion

What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their greetings?

What are your overall impressions of the communication?

##### Gestures and personal space

- Stand close
- Keep their distance
- Avoid physical contact
- Good eye contact
- Avoid eye contact

### Culture-switch role-play prompts:

Situation	Key Cultural Behaviors
1. Meeting a business partner in South Korea	Bow slightly, exchange business cards with two hands, formal and respectful tone.
2. Invited to a family dinner in Spain	Engage in small talk, relaxed atmosphere, expect a late dinner time, stay longer.
3. Job interview in the USA	Be confident, promote your achievements, maintain eye contact, start with small talk.
4. Visiting a friend's home in Japan	Bring a small gift, remove shoes at the door, use polite phrases, avoid loud talking.
5. Business meeting with German partners	Be punctual, get straight to the point, respect hierarchy, value efficiency and clarity.
6. Negotiating with a Brazilian partner	Build personal rapport first, relaxed timing, use friendly body language, flexible negotiations.
7. Group discussion in the Netherlands	Express your opinion directly, promote open discussion, casual but respectful tone.
8. Greeting an acquaintance in France	Greet with cheek kisses (bises) in informal settings, handshake in formal situations.
9. Attending a wedding in India	Wear colorful traditional attire, greet with "Namaste," be ready for large family gatherings.
10. Lunch with colleagues in Italy	Enjoy long, social meals, lively conversations, show interest in food and personal topics.
11. Project collaboration with Swedish colleagues	Focus on consensus, respect personal space, informal hierarchy, avoid interrupting.
12. Visiting a market in Morocco	Bargain respectfully, be polite but assertive, accept tea offers, respect local customs.
13. Presentation to Chinese clients	Use formal introductions, avoid direct criticism, maintain polite gestures and tone.
14. Casual chat with an Australian friend	Use informal greetings like "G'day," enjoy humor, casual and relaxed communication.
15. Traditional tea ceremony in the UK	Engage in polite small talk, wait to be served, mind table manners, avoid loud talking.

## APPENDIX 6

### Lesson plan 13

**Topic:** Greetings

**Number of students:** 16

**Lesson duration:** 70 minutes

**Lesson objectives:**

#### Content

- Students can analyse and compare greeting customs from different cultures
- Students can identify cultural values reflected in greeting rituals (e.g. hierarchy, personal space, gender)
- Students can reflect on the role of nonverbal communication in greetings

#### Language

- Students can use vocabulary related to greetings
- Students can participate in discussions and role-plays

**Lesson materials:** YouTube videos

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t1NJibk234&ab\\_channel=Cut](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t1NJibk234&ab_channel=Cut) and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edSk19iZfFs&ab\\_channel=WorldFriends](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edSk19iZfFs&ab_channel=WorldFriends)); greeting cards; role-play instruction cards; Padlet board

**Procedure:**

Lesson stage	Time	Activities and instructions	Comments
Warm-up	5 min	Teacher asks students: <i>“How do we greet people in Estonia? Does it depend on age, gender, formality?”</i> Whole class discussion.	Activates prior knowledge and raises awareness of cultural diversity in greetings.
Lead-in	10 min	Teacher shows two videos introducing greetings from other cultures. Before watching, the teacher gives students a task: note down how many different greeting styles they see/hear in the videos. After watching, students share with their neighbours first and then with	Provides visual and real-life examples to introduce the topic. Also encourages observation skills.

		the whole class.	
Activity: greeting others	15 min	Students receive a greeting card that describes a way of greeting. Students then circulate the class and greet other students with the greeting on their card. Afterwards, discussion ensues regarding their feelings during the task: Who felt comfortable with their greeting? Who felt uncomfortable? Why did you feel this way? Did you change your greeting to make it more comfortable?	The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate the impact of diversity using greetings from around the world as a metaphor. The greetings provide as a metaphor for diversity.
Role-play task introduction	5 min	Teacher explains the rules of the activity “Greeting Rituals” (EFIL 2018: 52-54). Students are imagining that they have just arrived at the airport and are looking for their hosts. Everyone receives an instruction card with a greeting ceremony they must observe. While everyone behaves according to the ritual described on the card, they must find the person(s) associated with them (part of the same culture) They can’t use words. Then the teacher divides students into hosts and guests.	Prepares students for the interactive task and ensures clarity of instructions.
Role-play task	10 min	Students act out greeting rituals based on their instruction cards. They move around the room and try to find others from the same cultural group non-verbally.	Simulates real-life intercultural encounters; encourages observation.
Debrief & reflection	10 min	Class discussion: How did it feel to greet people differently? What did you notice? Discussion of non-verbal communication, personal space, hierarchy, gender norms	Links learning to theoretical understanding; encourages critical thinking.
Wrap-up	5 min	Students write down one thing they liked from this lesson and one question that they have regarding this lesson. Answers are written on Padlet board.	Consolidates learning, allows reflection, and gives feedback to the teacher.

## Materials for lesson 13

### Greeting cards:

#### Greetings cards

<p><b>Shake hands formally and firmly with everyone you meet. Look them straight in the eye.</b></p>	<p><b>Bow with your hands touching your sides.</b></p>
<p><b>Nod at the other person, looking at them in the face.</b></p>	<p><b>Step close, toe to toe, and say "Hello how are you? My name is..." (and start talking).</b></p>
<p><b>Press your cheek to the other persons cheek whilst holding both of their hands.</b></p>	<p><b>Touch your nose to the other person's nose while holding their shoulders.</b></p>

<p><b>Kiss three times – on alternate cheeks.</b></p>	<p><b>Kiss the air on either side of the persons face. Do not touch any part of their body.</b></p>
<p><b>Hug the other person warmly.</b></p>	<p><b>Touch the other person's forehead with your right hand and then touch your own.</b></p>
<p><b>Bow with both of your hands in prayer position, palms together.</b></p>	<p><b>Press the nose and upper lip against the cheeks or forehead of the other person and breath in, causing the other person's skin or hair to be suctioned against the nose and upper lip.</b></p>

## Role-play instruction cards:

Examples of greetings (names of countries can be removed):

<u>Thailand</u> : Greet with 'wai': Place palms together in a lotus bud at your chest, elbows down, and bow your head slightly
<u>Egypt</u> : Give a firm and long handshake and look straight in the other person's eyes while smiling
<u>The Philippines</u> : Give a limp handshake and look down
<u>Malaysia</u> : Touch the other person's hands with both your hands, then bring them back to your breast
<u>India</u> : Greet with 'namaste' : palms together as though praying and bend or nod
<u>France</u> : Kiss on both cheeks, two times
<u>New Zealand Maori</u> : Rub your nose to the other person's nose
<u>Turkey (with an elder)</u> : take the person's hand, kiss the top of it, and then bring that person's hand to your forehead
<u>Central African Republic</u> : Slap right hands, then grab each other's middle finger using a thumb and middle finger
<u>Grenada</u> : Tap clenched fists
<u>Belgium</u> : Kiss the other person on the right cheek
<u>Singapore</u> : Slide your palms together back towards your chest then end with the hand over heart

<u>Korea</u> : Wave and smile, but do not make any physical contact. Don't hold eyes for too long.
<u>Latin America</u> : Hug tight (called an 'abrazo') and gently pat on the back
<u>Japan</u> : Bow slightly from the waist, palms on thighs, heels together
<u>Middle East countries</u> : Greet with the 'salaam' : Say 'Salaamu alaykym' (= Peace be upon you) and sweep your right hand up to your heart
<u>Tibetan tribes</u> : Greet by Tashi Delek : stick out your tongue ;-P

## APPENDIX 7

### Lesson plan 17

**Topic:** Cultural briefing

**Number of students:** 16

**Lesson duration:** 70 minutes

**Lesson objectives:**

#### Content

- Students understand the concept of cultural briefing and its relevance in intercultural communication
- Students can identify and evaluate the key elements typically included in a cultural briefing

#### Language

- Students can use vocabulary related to cultural briefing
- Students can express opinions, justify choices, and compare cultural practices using appropriate strategies
- Students practice speaking and listening skills through pair, group, and class discussions

**Lesson materials:** two different handouts; poster paper; writing equipment

**Procedure:**

Lesson stage	Time	Activities and instructions	Comments
Warm-up	7 min	Teacher checks students' understanding of 'cultural briefing' by asking them to give examples of when cultural briefing is necessary (e.g. first business trip to another country). Teacher briefly explains what might be included in a cultural briefing (customs, etiquette, history).	This stage activates prior knowledge and engages students by connecting the concept of cultural briefing to their personal experience or knowledge.
Task 1	15 min	<b>Exploration of cultural briefing:</b> Teacher distributes handouts (Utley 2004: 19) and asks students to work in pairs. Firstly, teacher makes sure	Gives students more information about cultural briefing and encourages them to think critically.

		<p>everyone understands the words on the handouts.</p> <p>Out of the list of cultural elements, students choose the six most useful things they would want to know before visiting a new culture, of which they have very little knowledge about.</p> <p>Pairs share their thoughts with the class.</p>	
Task 2	5 min	<p>This time the target culture should be somewhat familiar to the students.</p> <p>Students work individually to select key items for a cultural briefing based on the culture. After they have completed the task, they compare results with the class.</p>	<p>Allows students to build on their previous knowledge while developing their ability to make cultural comparisons.</p>
Task 3: The Swedes	15 min	<p>Teacher asks the students what they know about Sweden (location, landscape, weather, people, culture).</p> <p>The students receive a handout about Sweden (Utley 2004: 21). They read the introduction and task 1, making sure they understand everything. In pairs, they prepare a list of six cultural elements they would include in a briefing for someone visiting Sweden. When finished, everyone shares again with the whole class.</p>	<p>This activity activates prior knowledge about Sweden while further introducing the concept of cultural briefing.</p>
Task 4	25 min	<p>Students work in groups to come up with a short cultural briefing of a culture they have chosen for their final project. Their ideas are written down in a poster form.</p> <p>When the time is up, everyone shares their ideas with the class.</p>	<p>This task allows students to apply what they have learned by creating their own cultural briefing.</p> <p>Collaborative work fosters communication and critical thinking skills.</p>
Wrap-up	3 min	<p>Teacher asks students to consider what they have learned about cultural briefings. Discuss with their neighbour.</p>	<p>Consolidates students' understanding of cultural briefings.</p>

## Materials for lesson 17

### Task 1 handout:

#### 1.4 Cultural briefing

Cultural briefing is the process of finding out about another culture, especially in preparation for a period of residence, a business trip or a holiday.

Some types of information can be learnt about beforehand, such as the organisation of the public transport system, and forms of address (Doctor, Mr, etc.), but it may be better to discover others through direct experience.

Look at the list below.

- 1 Choose a country whose culture you know little about, and from the list pick out the six things you would find it most useful to know before you visited the country on a business trip.
- 2 Choose a country whose culture you are familiar with, and do the same.
- 3 Prepare a short introduction (spoken or written) which would be useful for people about to make a business trip to that country.

Attitudes to alcohol	Political system
Attitudes to foreigners	Preparation for meetings
Dealing with emergencies	Public transport
Demography – population spread	Regions
Formality of dress in business	Religion and its importance
Geography	Respect for authority
History	Shop opening times
Hospitality	Silence – its acceptability in conversation and meetings
Housing standards	Thinking – analytical or intuitive?
Local products	Tipping in restaurants
Meal times	Titles – Mrs, Dr, etc., and their equivalents
Money – paying restaurant bills	
Physical distance between people when they speak	

1 Why does culture matter?

## “The Swedes” handout:

### 1.5 Cultural briefing: The Swedes

Look at the following information prepared for someone who is about to go on a business trip to Sweden, and who has little previous experience of the culture or the country.

1 Choose from the list below the six things you think they would find most useful, and the six least useful.

- 1 Sweden has almost nine million inhabitants with a low population density (about nine million people in about 450,000 square kilometres).
- 2 It is a kingdom with a constitutional monarch.
- 3 The prime minister and the cabinet are responsible to Parliament.
- 4 The ‘Swedish model’ or ‘middle way’ represents a mixture of caring socialism with individual capitalist entrepreneurialism.
- 5 Differences in income are less marked than in many other countries.
- 6 People tend to be shy, reserved and not very talkative.
- 7 Public and private sector services such as transport and restaurants tend to work efficiently.
- 8 Swedes tend to speak English well, and to be well travelled.
- 9 At school they learn to think logically and to behave in a restrained manner.
- 10 Teamwork is common and appreciated.
- 11 Gestures and physical contact are not generally approved of.
- 12 Swedes usually plan appointments well in advance.
- 13 Holidays are usually taken between late June and early August.
- 14 People feel attached to their local region.
- 15 Humour is less important than in some other cultures.
- 16 Sensitive subjects such as sex or religion are often avoided in conversation.



1 Why does culture matter?

2 If you know something about the Swedes, say whether you think the statements are valid or not.

## APPENDIX 8

### Sources for the materials used in lesson plans

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Madli Nemvalts**

**Creating a CLIL Course for Teaching Intercultural Communication to Estonian Gymnasium Students**

**LAK-õppe kursuse loomine kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni õpetamiseks Eesti gümnaasiumiõpilastele**

Magistritöö

2025

Lehekülgede arv: 105

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on luua Eesti gümnaasiumiõpilastele LAK-õppel (lõimitud aine- ja keeleõppel) põhinev ingliskeelne valikkursus, mis annab neile ülevaate kultuuridevahelisest kommunikatsioonist, arendades samal ajal nende interkultuuriaalset pädevust ja inglise keele oskust.

Töö koosneb sissejuhatuses, kahest sisupeatükist ning kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatus selgitab töö eesmärgi ja tausta ning annab lühikese ülevaate töö ülesehitusest. Esimene peatükk käsitleb kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni ja LAK-õppe metoodika teoreetilist raami, tutvustades nende meetodite seoseid ja olulisust haridussüsteemis. Peatükis selgitatakse kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni mõistet ja selle tähtsust globaliseerivas ühiskonnas, lisaks kirjeldatakse LAK-õppe metoodika põhimõtteid ning põhjendatakse, miks on LAK-õpe sobiv lahendus võõrkeele õpetamise ja kultuuridevahelise teadlikkuse tõstmise jaoks. Peatüki eesmärk on luua teoreetiline alus loodavale kursusele ja näidata, kuidas kultuuridevaheline kommunikatsioon ja LAK-õpe teineteist toetavad.

Teine peatükk kirjeldab kursuse loomise arengut, selle struktuuri, õpitulemusi ja ülevaadet tundide sisust, lisatud on ka ülevaade viiest 70-minutilise tunnist ja nende jaoks koostatud tunniplaanidest. Tuuakse välja, kuidas kursuse sisu on seotud teoreetilises osas käsitletud põhimõtetega. Magistritöö lõppeb kokkuvõttega, rõhutades uuesti LAK-õppe ja kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni põhiteemasid, tuues esile töö olulisemad punktid. Lõpetuseks kirjeldatakse ka töö kitsaskohti.

Käesoleva magistritöö peamise tulemusena valmis kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni valikkursuse ülesehitus koos viie tunni plaanide ja materjalidega, mis toetavad õpilaste kultuuridevahelise pädevuse ja inglise keele oskuse arendamist ning pakuvad praktilist lahendust LAK-õppe rakendamiseks Eesti gümnaasiumis.

Märksõnad: LAK-õpe (lõimitud aine- ja keeleõpe), kultuuridevaheline kommunikatsioon, inglise keel, valikkursus

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