

Effects of Integrating Movie-Based Learning Method for Enhancing Chinese University Students' Intercultural Sensitivity and Cultural Self-confidence

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Abstract

Objectives: To assess the impact of Movie-Based Learning (MBL) on enhancing intercultural sensitivity (IS) and cultural self-confidence (CSC) among media students at a Chinese university.

Methods: A quasi-experimental design was employed with two groups: an experimental group (EG) using MBL and a control group (CG) receiving traditional lectures. Measurements were taken using validated scales and semi-structured interviews to evaluate changes in IS and CSC.

Results: The EG showed significant improvements in IS and CSC compared to the CG, with quantitative data supported by qualitative feedback from students highlighting increased cultural understanding and confidence.

Conclusions: MBL effectively enhances intercultural competencies, suggesting its integration into curricula could better prepare students for global interactions. The method holds potential for broader application in educational settings focused on intercultural communication skills.

Keywords: Movie-Based Learning; Intercultural Sensitivity; Cultural Self-Confidence; Chinese University Students; Educational Methods.

تأثيرات دمج أسلوب التعلم القائم على الأفلام في تعزيز حساسية الطلاب الجامعيين الصينيين للثقافات المختلفة والثقة بالنفس الثقافية

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم تأثير التعلم القائم على الأفلام (MBL) على تعزيز الحساسية بين الثقافات المتعددة (IS)، والثقة الذاتية ثقافياً (CSC) بين طلاب الإعلام في إحدى الجامعات الصينية. **المنهجية:** قد تم استخدام تصميم شبه تجريبي مع مجموعتين: مجموعة تجريبية (EG) تستخدم MBL ومجموعة ضابطة (CG) تتلقى محاضرات تقليدية. تم إجراء القياسات باستخدام مقاييس معتمدة، ومقابلات شبه منظمة لتقييم التغييرات في IS و CSC. **النتائج:** أظهرت المجموعة التجريبية تحسناً كبيراً في IS و CSC مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة، مع بيانات كمية مدعومة بملاحظات نوعية من الطلاب تسلط الضوء على زيادة الفهم الثقافي والثقة. **الاستنتاجات:** يعزز التعلم القائم على الأفلام بشكل فعال الكفاءات بين الثقافات، مما يشير إلى أن دمجها في المناهج الدراسية يمكن أن يعد الطلاب بشكل أفضل للتفاعلات العالمية. تتمتع الطريقة بإمكانية تطبيق أوسع في البيئات التعليمية التي تركز على مهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات. **الكلمات الدالة:** التعلم القائم على الأفلام، الحساسية بين الثقافات، الثقة الثقافية بالنفس، طلاب الجامعات الصينية، الأساليب التعليمية.

Introduction

In an era characterized by rapid globalization and increasing cross-cultural interactions, the development of intercultural competencies has emerged as a critical educational objective. This is particularly evident among university students who are expected to participate in global dialogues and collaborations, necessitating the importance of possessing a heightened level of intercultural competencies. Among these competencies, intercultural sensitivity (IS) and cultural self-confidence (CSC) stand out as pivotal attributes for individuals navigating diverse cultural environments. IS is the ability to acknowledge, comprehend, and value cultural distinctions, whereas CSC pertains to an individual's assurance in their cultural identity and values amidst intercultural engagements. Both IS and CSC are essential for fostering harmonious interactions and mitigating cultural misunderstandings in a globalized world.

For Chinese tertiary-level students, they are witnessing a rapid evolution in the socio-cultural sphere brought about by intercultural communication. In these new environments, they are met with diverse cultural narratives and practices, challenging them to expand their intercultural sensitivity while striving to maintain a solid foundation of cultural self-confidence (Qiao, 2020). As such, students may encounter difficulties in reconciling their burgeoning global awareness with their traditional cultural values, leading to potential issues of cultural identity dissonance, increased acculturative stress, and a diminished connection to their cultural origins (Liang & Xie, 2021). These challenges underscore the importance of fostering an educational milieu that supports the development of both IS and CSC, ensuring that students can confidently engage in a globalized world while remaining deeply rooted in their cultural heritage.

Against this backdrop, Chinese government proposed the “Chinese Culture Going Global” strategy and “Conveying Chinese Stories Effectively” program, which encourage individuals to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and to fully respect the cultures of others in order to promote cross-cultural interaction and exchanges (Xia, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Accordingly, Chinese higher education institutions have undertaken educational reforms to integrate Chinese culture into existing pedagogies, learning resources, and teaching activities (Mu & Yu, 2021; Zhang, 2023; Shen et al., 2022), and have incentivized the employment of various information technologies to strengthen the outcomes (Dai et al., 2023; Wei, 2023). The widespread availability and adaptability of these technology tools render them an effective conduit for both accessing culturally enriched educational content and enabling the interactions necessary to develop intercultural competencies (Wei, 2023; Guan & Zhang, 2020; Tomé-Fernández et al., 2020). Consequently, this accessibility implies that cinematic resources, whether in full or as fragments, are more easily attainable (Liang, 2022).

The practice of using movies as a medium of instruction is not a novel concept (Chaya & Inpin, 2020), yet due to the intrinsic cultural attributes and the unique, authentic lens movies provide for students to immerse themselves in diverse cultural contexts, this approach has consistently garnered the attention of cultural researchers and scholars (DeHart, 2023; Supiarza et al., 2020). From the standpoint of modern university students, who seem to accumulate information predominantly in a visual way, then movie-based learning (MBL) method is certainly the appropriate way of learning (Popa et al., 2021). Nevertheless, even with the recognized promise of MBL within this context, there exists a notable gap in the literature concerning its impact on enhancing students' IS and CSC in China, with current research tends to concentrate on more general facets of dissemination of national culture and appreciation of foreign culture (Kong et al., 2022). Moreover, while existing studies have explored the utility of movies for educational purposes and cultural understanding, the specific impact of this learning method to improve intercultural competencies remains under investigated.

Given these considerations, the primary objective of this study is to explore the effectiveness of integrating the movie-based learning (MBL) instruction on enhancing the IS and CSC of Chinese university students, specifically those from the School of Media. This investigation aims to provide empirical evidence on how the innovative pedagogical approach of utilizing movies can impact students' ability to navigate and appreciate cultural differences, as well as bolster their confidence in their cultural identities in intercultural settings. Such research would not only fill a significant gap in the current academic discourse but also provide valuable insights into the design of innovative educational interventions that leverage the educational power of movies to prepare students for successful navigation in a multicultural world.

Literature Review

Intercultural Sensitivity

IS is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses an awareness that fosters effective communication and empathy in intercultural settings, enabling individuals to perceive and respect cultural diversity as a positive force (Akhtar et al., 2019). It is “the key and prerequisite for successful intercultural communication and the starting point for the enhancement of intercultural communication competence” (Huang, 2017, p. 92). Moore-Jones (2018) defines intercultural sensitivity as an individual’s response to intercultural differences, highlighting the affective aspect of intercultural competence. This aligns with Chen and Starosta (2000), who assert that the emotional process as intercultural sensitivity; the cognitive process as intercultural awareness; and the behavioral process as intercultural adroitness in gaining intercultural communication competence. In other words, sensitivity is a subordinate class concept of intercultural competence. Pourakbari and Chalak (2015) echo this classification and state that intercultural communication competence comprises intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural adroitness.

Bennett’s (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides a systematic framework for understanding intercultural sensitivity, outlining a progression from the denial of difference to the integration of multiple cultural perspectives (Morgan & Sandage, 2016). The model posits that as individuals become more interculturally sensitive, they move through stages of understanding and interacting with cultural differences in more sophisticated and empathetic ways (Hammer et al., 2003). Bennett divided the process into 6 stages: denial, defense, minimization, adaptation and integration, which are grouped into either ethnocentrism or ethnorelativism. As elucidated by Bodrič (2021), this model emphasizes the significance of acknowledging subtle cultural variances as a means to heighten intercultural sensitivity. To assess the subjects’ IS, Chen and Starosta (2002) developed the Intercultural Sensitivity Scales (ISS), which contains five constructs and has been verified with high reliability and validity by other scholars. This scale has been extensively used in different areas to assess the development of intercultural sensitivity (Pineda et al., 2023). Furthermore, the ISS has been instrumental in examining the relationship between IS and various factors such as emotional intelligence, linguistic proficiency, and pragmatic competence (Thandar Cho & Ulwiyah, 2020; Li, 2019; Khabir et al., 2022).

Within the educational context, fostering intercultural sensitivity has become a paramount objective, particularly for those in multicultural settings or those preparing to engage in global professional environments. For examples, through the investigation of a year-long study abroad program, Pedersen (2010) has demonstrated that intercultural sensitivity not only enhances students’ ability to understand and appreciate cultural diversity but also contributes to their overall academic and social development. Gholami Pasand et al.’s (2021) study explored how online communication among learners from varied cultural backgrounds could facilitate IS development in Iranian EFL learners, with findings indicating that engagement in discussions with intercultural speakers enhanced IS outcomes. Demetry and Vaz (2017) examined the evolution of students’ IS during a project-based educational abroad experience in Thailand, which included targeted interventions to promote intercultural learning, and found that students participating in cross-national teams exhibited more substantial gains. IS can also be employed to assess the international dimension of an undergraduate curriculum (Gordon & Mwavita, 2018). Research findings indicate a significant correlation between the curriculum’s inclusion of religion, the frequency of participation in cultural activities, and students’ overseas study travel experiences with their levels of intercultural sensitivity. Technology tools, including audio-visual clips (Khabir et al., 2022), virtual reality equipment (Li et al., 2020) and multi-modal digital tool (Yang, 2018), were employed to improve students’ IS and were shown to be effective.

In the context of China, Wang (2023) conducted a comprehensive review of studies related to IS and found that most research on IS primarily focuses on subjects related to English majors and at the higher education level, such as Zhao’s (2018) study, focusing on postgraduate students majoring in English, evaluates their IS and finds it to be at a moderate level, noting significant variations influenced by factors such as work experience and intercultural interactions. Similarly, Yang (2018) researched the impact of a multi-modal teaching program on the intercultural sensitivity of business English majors in southwest China, finding notable improvements in their interaction confidence and attentiveness. However, as China’s interactions with the world become increasingly frequent and close, intercultural scenarios are not limited to foreign

language majors (Wang, 2023). Therefore, the IS of students in other majors also merits attention. Moreover, Zhao (2018) found that studies on IS in China were predominantly empirical, focusing mainly on surveying the current status quo of IS, but research on methodologies for cultivating IS was notably scarce. Therefore, in response to these gaps, this study aims to enhance the IS of Chinese university students from the School of Media by integrating more advanced educational technologies and methods.

Cultural Self-confidence

CSC typically involves a cultural entity (such as a nation, ethnicity, political party, or individual) strongly identifying with and deliberately upholding their own cultural values (Wang, 2023). It is characterized by a sense of psychological superiority and resolute behavior rooted in cultural expression, manifesting as a profound belief in one's cultural heritage that serves as a source of strength and perspective, thereby enriching intercultural exchanges (Lin & Chen, 2019). Cheng and Yang (2016) argue that cultural confidence signifies a resolute belief in the intrinsic vitality of one's indigenous culture. This concept encompasses dimensions such as subjectivity, temporality, class specificity, inclusivity, ethnic identity, and practical directionality. Fundamentally, as a value orientation, cultural self-confidence is pivotal in addressing long-term national development, and the ascendance or decline of national honor (Lin & Chen, 2019). Zhang (2012) views cultural self-confidence as a marker for a nation or ethnic group, emphasizing its ability to uphold its identity while engaging with global shifts. He highlights the importance of fully recognizing one's cultural values and traditions, having a clear understanding of the current cultural state, and holding a strong belief in its future development.

Cultural self-confidence, as a concept with distinctive Chinese characteristics, has been minimally studied in non-Chinese contexts. Instead, more scholars tend to explore the concept of cultural identity (CI) (Meng, 2023; Yu, 2020). However, it is important to note that CI involves an individual's or group's sense of belonging to a specific culture, whereas CSC pertains to the belief in and advocacy for the superiority and validity of one's own cultural practices and values (Meng, 2023). Friedman (1994) analyzed that by comparing the awareness of CI formed by different countries in their interactions with the outside world, a weaker sense of CI in a country is more likely to lead to its decline. Huntington (2011) posited that different forms of civilization exist around the world and advocated for each country to establish its own "core culture." Therefore, in a globalized context, grasping the nuances of CI is crucial, as it affects a wide range of areas including human interactions, educational methods, and psychological well-being.

Research and exploration of CSC by Chinese scholars and educators are notably more comprehensive and profound. Chen et al. (2021) believe that enhancing CSC in university students has practical significance in boosting their sense of historical identity, strengthening their awareness of responsibility, and consolidating and developing cultural leadership. Zhang (2022) holds that enhancing CSC helps university students better shape their self-identity, view foreign cultures rationally, and play a role model function. Yu (2023) suggests that to enhance cultural self-confidence among university students, institutions should improve the cultural curriculum system, establish new media cultural education platforms, and organize a variety of campus cultural activities. Meng (2023) discussed the pathways for cultivating cultural self-confidence among university students from the perspectives of school management and education, while Guo (2018) advocates for enhancing university students' cultural self-confidence through social guidance, particularly by fully utilizing mass media to strengthen the promotion and dissemination of native culture. However, most existing studies were qualitative. While these studies provide theoretical support for enhancing students' cultural self-confidence, they still lack quantitative data and empirical analysis.

Movie-based Learning

MBL is broadly defined as the use of films or film segments as pedagogical tools within educational settings. It leverages the narrative power and visual impact of movies to achieve specific learning objectives across various disciplines, including science, social studies, and notably, intercultural understanding (Sekhri, 2022; Muthmainnah et al., 2022). MBL offers several distinct advantages that make it an effective educational tool across various academic disciplines and learning environments.

One of the primary advantages of MBL is that it significantly increases student engagement and motivation through compelling narratives and dynamic visual content (Cannon, 2018). This heightened engagement is particularly beneficial in maintaining interest over complex or traditionally dry topics (İpek, 2022). Yusoff et al. (2021) note that introducing movies into classroom settings allows students to bring their own background knowledge and experiences into discussions based on film content, thereby enhancing their engagement and deepening understanding and critical reflection. This sentiment was echoed by Fang et al. (2022) and Susanto et al. (2022), who emphasized that using movies as educational tools can create a motivational learning environment. This environment captures students' attention, stimulates their enthusiasm for learning, encourages active participation, and fosters thoughtful engagement with the content. Learners also show positive attitudes towards movie-based learning methods, finding them engaging and beneficial for enhancing learning outcomes (Sugesh & Calaivanane, 2023).

Moreover, movies often explore a variety of cultural and social issues, presenting them through a diverse range of cultural narratives, languages, traditions, and values, which can enhance learners' cultural understanding (Shahid, 2022; Supiarza et al., 2020). This exposure, meanwhile, helps broaden their perspectives and fosters a more inclusive worldview. By viewing movies from various countries and cultures, students are introduced to different ways of life and social norms, which can challenge their preconceived notions and biases (Lin, 2020). This immersive exposure to diverse cultural contexts enhances students' abilities to appreciate and value cultural differences, equipping them with the competencies necessary for effective cross-cultural communication (Yustika et al., 2022). This makes MBL an invaluable strategy for cultivating intercultural sensitivity—a learner's ability to recognize, understand, and appreciate cultural differences.

MBL not only promotes understanding of diverse cultural contexts but also enhances learners' cultural self-confidence. By interacting with cultural content in movies, students deepen their connection to their own cultural heritage and identities while also learning to appreciate the diversity depicted on screen (Chaya, 2023; Wardhany, 2022). MBL encourages learners to engage deeply with films that portray varied cultural realities, which can validate their own cultural experiences and provide clarity on their cultural positioning in a global context (Hou, 2019). This validation is crucial for boosting learners' confidence in their cultural background, making them more assured in intercultural interactions (Yu, 2022).

However, although MBL is celebrated for its ability to enhance student engagement and learning experiences, films are still widely regarded as sources of entertainment rather than viable educational tool (Haney et al., 2019). This perception can lead to resistance among educators and administrators who may be skeptical of the pedagogical value of movies. For instance, in many regions of China, educational institutions are steeped in conventional pedagogies that prioritize direct instruction and standardization over interactive and experiential learning methods (Li et al., 2023). Thus, the adoption of innovative methods like MBL encounters obstacles that are deeply embedded in the current educational culture and practices.

Additionally, there is a need for professional development and training for instructors to effectively utilize MBL. Teachers may require support in developing the skills to select, analyze, and facilitate discussions on film content in a way that maximizes learning outcomes (Díaz & Sánchez-Giner, 2022). Without adequate training and resources, teachers may struggle to integrate MBL effectively, which can limit its potential benefits.

Regardless these obstacles, the potential of MBL to enrich intercultural sensitivity and cultural self-confidence presents a valuable opportunity for educational innovation. Nonetheless, the actual efficacy of MBL in real-world classroom settings remains under-researched, particularly within the context of China (Zhang & Li, 2021). This lack of robust empirical data makes it challenging to validate the theoretical benefits, confront practical barriers, and formulate well-grounded strategies for its broader integration. Building on this foundational understanding of MBL's potential and existing research gaps, the study articulated following specific research questions that guide the investigation into its practical applications and impacts:

- RQ1. To what extent can the MBL method facilitate the development of IS in undergraduates?
- RQ2. To what extent can the MBL method facilitate the development of CSC in undergraduates?
- RQ3. How does the MBL method compare to regular instruction in enhancing students' IS and CSC?
- RQ4. What are students' perceptions of MBL in their learning process?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the impact of MBL on the development of IS and CSC among Chinese undergraduates. This design was chosen because it allows for the examination of cause-and-effect relationships within an educational setting where random assignment to conditions is feasible but strict control as seen in true experimental designs is lacking (Creswell, 2014). A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis was employed to provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the intervention's effectiveness (Poth, 2018).

Participants and Context of the Study

The participants in this study were two intact classes of second-year undergraduate students from the School of Media at a comprehensive university in China, enrolled during the first semester. All participants chose to enroll in an elective course titled "Introduction to Intercultural Communication". This course, which spans 12 weeks with two time slots per week, aims to develop students' critical thinking, enhance cultural awareness, and foster a multicultural perspective by studying and exploring cultural differences. The students were divided into two groups based on their selected time slots. Due to enrollment limits for elective courses, each class consisted of 50 students. Using a convenience sampling technique, these intact classes were directly employed in the study to approximate real educational settings and ensure ecological validity (Bryman, 2016). These two classes were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group, and their demographic information is provided in Table 1. The students in the experimental group (EG) were taught using MBL instruction, whereas the control group (CG) learned through the university-based regular instruction using a commercial textbook. After the intervention, through voluntary sampling, seven students from different majors (refer to Table 2) were recruited to participate the semi-structured interviews. This self-selection process can result in a more committed and cooperative sample, enhancing the quality of data collected and the depth of insights gained (Lühr et al., 2021). The sample size of the qualitative study was acceptable, as Young and Casey (2018) suggested that at least some aspect of all larger themes of the qualitative research are present at sample sizes ranging from 4-6. Prior to the start of the study, informed consent was secured from all participants and gatekeepers at the research location.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the EG and the CG

	EG	CG
Number of Students	50	50
Age	20-22	19-22
Year Level	Year 2	Year 2
Gender	Male: 53% Female: 47%	Male: 51% Female: 49%
Major	New Media: 24% Journalism: 16% Broadcasting and Hosting: 15% Digital Media Arts: 12% Photography: 10% Visual Communication Design: 8% Radio and Television Choreography: 6% Advertisement: 5% Communication Studies: 4%	Advertisement: 26% Digital Media Arts: 20% Radio and Television Choreography: 14% New Media: 10% Photography: 6% Communication Studies: 6% Broadcasting and Hosting: 6% Advertisement: 6% Journalism: 5% Others: 1%

Table 2. Demographic Information of Qualitative Participants

Student (S)	Gender	Major
1	Male	Photography
2	Male	Advertisement
3	Male	Broadcasting and Hosting
4	Female	Journalism
5	Female	Digital Media Arts
6	Female	New Medi
7	Female	Communication Studies

Intervention

The EG engaged with a carefully curated selection of films and related movie-based activities designed to enhance IS and CSC. These activities included guided discussions, reflective essays, and group presentations centered around the cultural themes presented in the films. Meanwhile, the CG received standard course instruction that did not incorporate movie-based content but covered similar intercultural communication concepts through conventional teaching methods.

In EG, to better achieve the course objectives, the instructor selected one domestic Chinese film and one foreign film for each thematic topic to enhance students' exposure to and understanding of diverse cultural contexts. This approach aimed to provide a balanced perspective by comparing and contrasting cultural elements from familiar and foreign settings, thereby deepening students' IS and CSC. Through this method, students were encouraged to critically analyze and reflect on the similarities and differences between their own cultural experiences and those depicted in the films.

The duration of the intervention covered the entire course length of 12 weeks. This time frame allowed for a comprehensive exploration of various intercultural themes, giving students ample opportunity to engage deeply with both the Chinese and foreign films selected for each topic. Therefore, sufficient time was provided to assess the effectiveness of MBL. Meanwhile, 12-week duration surpasses the minimum requirement (8 weeks) for the research to be considered as having general applicability (Chwo et al., 2016).

Research Instruments

To rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the MBL intervention on IS and CSC, this study employed two specifically designed questionnaires along with semi-structured interviews. These research instruments are critical for capturing quantitative data on the changes in students' competencies before and after the intervention, while the interviews provide qualitative insights into the students' personal experiences and perceptions, offering a more detailed understanding of the intervention's impact.

Questionnaire

In this study, the first questionnaire was employed to determine the effects of MBL instruction on enhancing students' IS. This instrument is the Chinese Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (CISS), which was constructed by Huang (2017) based on Chen and Starosta's (2002) ISS. It has been specifically tailored to reflect the context of China, ensuring that the scale is culturally relevant and accurately measures the IS among Chinese students. The questionnaire comprises 20 items and four constructs—open-mindedness (OM), empathy (EM), interaction confidence (IC), and respect for cultural differences (RCD)—each designed to capture different facets of IS among students.

The second questionnaire employed is the University Students' Cultural Self-Confidence Questionnaire (USCSCQ), adapted from the relevant research of Yu (2020) and Meng (2023). This questionnaire enables the examination of the effectiveness of MBL in enhancing students' CSC from five dimensions: cultural self-awareness (CS, 4 items), cultural pride (CP, 4 items), cultural development (CD, 3 items), and cultural competitiveness (CC, 3 items).

The validity of both questionnaires had been confirmed through factor analysis. Besides, before the formal experiment, the researchers conducted pilot studies to verify the reliability of the two questionnaires used. The Cronbach's alpha values obtained were 0.91 and 0.87, respectively, indicating that both instruments are in the satisfactory reliability range.

Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews served to gather more detailed information from the participants. These interviews were carried out with chosen participants from the EG, following the completion of the intervention, to further explore the students' perceptions and process of the MBL. An interview protocol and corresponding prompts were adapted from the study conducted by Wang (2023) and Meng (2020) to guide the semi-structured interviews. The face validity of the protocol was reviewed by two experts prior to the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative data collection for this study began with the administration of the IS and CSC questionnaires to both the EG and the CG in the first week to establish baseline data. Following this, the EG underwent a 12-week intervention using the MBL approach while the CG continued with standard curriculum practices. At the end of the intervention, both groups were again administered the IS and CSC questionnaires to measure any changes and assess the impact of the MBL instruction.

The collected data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26, with initial tests confirming the normal distribution of the data to ensure the appropriateness of the statistical tests employed. The analysis involved both between-group comparisons, to highlight differences between the EG and CG, and within-group comparisons, to examine changes over time within each group. Independent samples t-tests were used for the between-group comparisons, while paired samples t-tests were utilized for analyzing changes within the groups, thereby providing a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of the MBL intervention on enhancing intercultural sensitivity and cultural self-confidence.

Qualitative data for this study were collected exclusively through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis with the help of NVivo software. The process involved becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, collating these codes into potential themes, and then reviewing and refining these themes to ensure they accurately reflected the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This qualitative analysis aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative results by adding personal context and detail to the effects observed from the MBL intervention, thus enriching the overall discussion of the findings.

Research Findings

Findings from the Questionnaires

Between-group comparisons were conducted to evaluate the pre-test and post-test scores of the EG and CG across various dimensions of IS and CSC. The analysis of descriptive (Table 3 and Table 4) and inferential (Table 5 and Table 6) statistics provided the following insights:

Prior to the intervention, although the mean values exhibited slight variations among participants across different groups, there were no statistically significant differences between the EG and CG in overall IS and CSC ($p > .05$), as well as in their respective constructs. Specifically, no significant differences were found in OM, EM, IC, and RCD under IS, nor in CS, CP, CD, and CC under CSC ($p > .05$). This indicates that the two groups were comparable before the study commenced. Following the intervention, significant differences were observed between the EG and CG in all constructs and general IS and CSC ($p < .001$, except the p-value of the CD, $p < .05$).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of IS

	Construct	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	OM	EG	3.011	.3718
		CG	2.949	.258
	EM	EG	3.164	.3870
		CG	3.048	.481
	IC	EG	2.980	.487

	Construct	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Post-test	RCD	CG	3.030	.580
		EG	3.187	.399
	IS	CG	3.113	.396
		EG	3.124	.260
	OM	CG	3.067	.248
		EG	3.710	.235
	EM	CG	3.098	.282
		EG	3.676	.394
	IC	CG	3.173	.258
		EG	3.599	.234
	RCD	CG	3.114	.239
		EG	3.784	.255
	IS	CG	3.327	.243
		EG	3.642	.186
		CG	3.208	.175

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of CSC

	Construct	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	CS	EG	2.955	.519
		CG	2.910	.470
	CP	EG	3.110	.426
		CG	3.045	.380
	CD	EG	2.987	.617
		CG	3.140	.337
	CC	EG	2.887	.341
		CG	2.980	.492
Post-test	CSC	EG	3.045	.220
		CG	3.044	.218
	CS	EG	3.586	.187
		CG	3.025	.332
	CP	EG	3.72500	.300
		CG	3.310	.359
	CD	EG	3.333	.6529
		CG	3.120	.3735
	CC	EG	3.620	.5085
		CG	3.220	.4238
	CSC	EG	3.582	.2091
		CG	3.185	.1155

Table 5. IS's Inferential Statistics of Between-Group Comparisons

	Construct	F	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test (EG-CG)	OM	4.844	.972	.333
	EM	3.501	1.329	.187
	IC	.374	-.467	.641
	RCD	.072	.922	.359
	IS	.002	1.114	.268
Post-test (EG-CG)	OM	4.505	11.801	.000
	EM	11.186	7.558	.000
	IC	.196	10.239	.000
	RCD	.471	9.167	.000
	IS	.474	12.010	.000

Table 6. CSC's Inferential Statistics of Between-Group Comparisons

	Construct	F	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test (EG-CG)	CS	.001	.454	.651
	CP	.803	.805	.423
	CD	4.369	-1.542	.126
	CC	4.411	-1.102	.273
	CSC	.013	.032	.975
Post-test (EG-CG)	CS	13.402	10.398	.000
	CP	2.236	6.272	.000
	CD	4.736	2.005	.048
	CC	1.598	4.273	.000
	CSC	13.157	11.745	.000

These results indicate that the MBL intervention significantly improved students' IS and CSC compared to the regular instructional method used with the CG. The significant improvements in these dimensions highlight the effectiveness of MBL in fostering a better understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as enhancing students' confidence in their own cultural identities.

Further within-group comparisons, as illustrated in Table 7 and Table 8, demonstrated notable advancements in multiple dimensions of IS and CSC within the EG after the MBL intervention. Substantial improvements were evident in all measured aspects ($p < .001$, except for CD with a p-value of .012). These outcomes highlight the effectiveness of the MBL intervention in enhancing the various dimensions of IS and CSC among students in the EG.

Table 7. IS's Inferential Statistics of Within-group Comparisons

Group		Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
EG (Pre-test– Post-test)	OM	-.699	.316	-15.627	.000
	EM	-.512	.447	-8.107	.000
	IC	-.619	.521	-8.399	.000
	RCD	-.598	.485	-8.702	.000
	IS	-.518	.233	-15.739	.000
CG (Pre-test– Post-test)	OM	-.14889	.23715	-4.439	.000
	EM	-.12509	.52454	-1.686	.098
	IC	-.08440	.66893	-.892	.377
	RCD	-.21359	.43720	-3.455	.001
	IS	-.14040	.27476	-3.613	.001

Table 8. CSC's Inferential Statistics of Within-group Comparisons

Group		Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
EG (Pre-test– Post-test)	CS	-.63083	.46789	-9.534	.000
	CP	-.61500	.48763	-8.918	.000
	CD	-.34667	.94030	-2.607	.012
	CC	-.73333	.56344	-9.203	.000
	CSC	-.53660	.19712	-19.249	.000
CG (Pre-test– Post-test)	CS	-.115	.551	-1.475	.147
	CP	-.265	.550	-3.409	.001
	CD	.0200	.401	.353	.726
	CC	-.240	.670	-2.532	.015
	CSC	-.141	.202	-4.940	.000

Conversely, the CG exhibited mixed results. Significant enhancements were observed in OM ($p < .001$), RCD ($p = .001$), CP ($p = .001$), CC ($p = .015$), overall IS ($p = .001$), and overall CSC ($p < .001$). However, no significant changes were detected in EM ($p = .098$), IC ($p = .640$), CS ($p = .147$), and CD ($p = .726$). These findings suggest that while regular instruction was somewhat effective in enhancing certain aspects of IS and CSC, it did not achieve comprehensive improvements across all dimensions as effectively as the MBL approach.

Findings from the Semi-structured Interviews

Impact on Learning Experience

The incorporation of MBL in the course significantly enhanced students' overall learning experience. Participants consistently highlighted the transformative effect of MBL on their engagement with the course material and their understanding of complex cultural concepts. This method provided a dynamic alternative to traditional lecture-based learning, making the course material more accessible and enjoyable. The interactive nature of the MBL method, particularly through the use of culturally rich films, was frequently highlighted as a key factor in maintaining student interest and motivation. For instance, S2 noted that "MBL made the learning process more interactive. Watching diverse cultural movies was not only engaging but also broadened my perspective on various global cultures." S5 added, "The movies brought the course content to life, making it more interesting and relatable." S6 believed that "The films facilitated the understanding of cultural concepts by providing visual illustrations, making it more engaging and less overwhelming than solely reading from a textbook."

Students also noted that MBL fostered critical thinking. By presenting complex social issues and cultural dynamics, the films encouraged students to analyze and reflect on societal norms and practices. S1 shared, "The films encouraged me to think critically about cultural issues and understand different societal contexts. They helped me develop a broader perspective." Also, S7 mentioned, "These movies challenged me to consider the complexities of cultural interactions and the importance of understanding diverse viewpoints."

Moreover, students emphasized that MBL equipped them with practical skills valuable for future intercultural interactions and professional endeavors. They highlighted how the films improved their communication skills by illustrating effective ways to navigate cultural misunderstandings and demonstrating practical strategies that could be applied in real-life scenarios. As S4 stated that "the movies demonstrated practical language patterns and communication strategies that I can use in real-life intercultural interactions."

Perceptions of IS Development

Participants reported an increased ability to understand and appreciate cultural differences, which was facilitated by the practice of enhancing exposure to and understanding of different cultural contexts through the use of Chinese and foreign films presenting the same theme.

"The films helped me see the cultural context of our lessons more vividly, enhancing my sensitivity towards the intricacies of different cultures," S4 shared. Similarly, S2 added, "MBL has broadened my horizons. Seeing how different cultures handle common life events has made me more open to different ways of thinking and living." Consequently, students noted that MBL broadened their horizons and made them more open to different cultural perspectives. Specifically, the films exposed them to various ways of thinking and living, which, in turn, helped them appreciate the richness of cultural diversity. More importantly, "exposure to unfamiliar cultures can lead to a broader understanding and broke down cultural stereotypes," claimed by S6.

Furthermore, participants expressed that MBL increased their empathy towards individuals from different cultural backgrounds. By watching stories that depicted diverse cultural experiences, students were able to develop a deeper understanding and compassion for others. As S3 described, "The movies have definitely increased my empathy. There was a movie about a family struggling with cultural assimilation, and it made me understand the emotional challenges they faced, which I could empathize with."

In addition to fostering empathy, the films provided multiple real-life scenarios that demonstrated effective communication strategies and cultural etiquette, which helped students feel more prepared for potential cross-cultural interactions. S1 commented, "I feel more confident about the idea of interacting with people from different cultures in the future. For instance, after watching movies that depicted cultural interactions, I felt more prepared and less anxious about engaging in cross-cultural conversations." S5 agreed this sentiment and described, "I feel more confident engaging in future cultural exchanges. The movies provided great examples of how different cultures can learn from each other, which inspired me to do the same."

Lastly, MBL fostered a greater respect for cultural differences among students. The films highlighted the unique aspects of various cultures, helping students appreciate the value of diversity and the importance of respecting different traditions and customs. S1 explained that "Movies from various countries have taught me to respect cultural differences. Seeing the richness of different cultures in movies made me appreciate diversity more." S7 echoed, "I now have a deeper respect for cultural differences, because movies highlighted the unique aspects of diverse cultures."

Perceptions of CSC Development

Similar to the perceptions of IS development, participants consistently acknowledged the crucial role of MBL in encouraging them to reflect on their own cultural identities, fostering a deeper sense of pride and awareness in their heritage.

Students noted that MBL significantly increased their cultural self-awareness. The films often served as a mirror for students to reflect on their own cultural practices and values. S3 explained, "Watching Chinese historical drama films helped me to reflect on and appreciate my own cultural background, boosting my confidence in expressing my cultural identity during intercultural interactions." Similarly, S2 emphasized, "These films made me more aware of my cultural roots and helped me understand the significance of my own traditions."

Moreover, through the appreciation of domestic movies and the comparison and contrast between Chinese and foreign movies, students' cultural pride was boosted. By watching films that depicted positive aspects of different cultures, students began to appreciate and take pride in their own cultural heritage. S3 stated, "Watching Chinese historical dramas has made me more proud of my cultural background. Seeing the beauty of other cultures in these films made me value my own culture even more." S7 expressed with excitement that "the documentaries introducing me to cultures I knew little about further revealed the richness and diversity of our own culture, deepening my love for it."

Furthermore, students felt that films significantly enhanced their perception of cultural development by showcasing the positive aspects and progress of their own culture. The experience of analyzing domestic films, alongside comparing them with foreign films, provided students with a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage and its promising future. S5 remarked, "Watching both domestic and foreign films highlighted the strengths and advancements of our culture, making me optimistic about its future." S1 also stated, "These films have helped me see the positive trajectory of our cultural development. I now have a greater appreciation for the progress and potential of our own culture."

Lastly, students reported that films improved their view of cultural competitiveness by highlighting the strengths and international significance of their own culture. The approach helped them develop a stronger sense of cultural pride and confidence in their culture's ability to compete and thrive in a globalized world. S3 commented, "Classroom discussions on the content and themes of domestic films have made me more aware of our culture's strengths and its competitive edge on the global stage. I feel more confident about our culture's ability to influence and contribute to the world." This accorded with another participant's (S2) response, "I feel a greater sense of cultural competitiveness after appreciating these films. They highlighted the unique and valuable aspects of our culture, making me believe in its potential to stand out and succeed in diverse settings."

Suggestions for Improvement

While students generally had positive experiences with MBL, they also provided constructive feedback on how the approach could be improved in future courses. These suggestions focused on enhancing the effectiveness of MBL and

addressing areas where the method could be refined.

Students found the use of diverse and culturally rich films particularly effective. They appreciated how these films made the learning process more engaging and provided valuable insights into different cultures. However, some students suggested that the selection of films could be expanded to include a wider variety of genres and cultural perspectives. For instance, S6 remarked, "Including films from lesser-known cultures could provide even more depth to our understanding."

In addition to expanding the film selection, students suggested increasing the frequency and depth of class discussions, group projects, or presentations related to the films. They felt that more structured and in-depth learning activities would help them better analyze and understand the cultural themes presented in the movies. As suggested by S3 that these kinds of learning activities after each film would "allow us to explore different perspectives and enhance our learning experience."

The role of the instructor was also emphasized, with students noting that effective facilitation is crucial for the success of MBL. As S3 pointed out, "Instructors need to be well-prepared to guide discussions and link the films' content to the learning objectives effectively." This finding underscores the importance of professional development for educators, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to implement MBL effectively.

Finally, some students suggested providing additional resources and readings to complement the films. They believed that supplementary materials could offer more comprehensive insights into the cultural topics covered in the movies. S1 mentioned, "Having additional readings or resources to complement the films would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural topics." At the same time, S4 suggested, "Supplementary materials would give us more depth and context, enhancing our overall learning experience."

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant impact of integrating the MBL method on enhancing Chinese university students' IS and CSC. The quantitative data demonstrated substantial improvements in every dimension and the general of the EG's IS. These results are consistent with Bennett's (1986) DMIS, which posits that exposure to diverse cultural contexts fosters a progression towards greater IS. The significant gains in open-mindedness and empathy observed in this study are indicative of students moving from ethnocentric stages of denial and defense to more ethnorelative stages of acceptance and adaptation. As students engaged with various cultural narratives, they developed a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Gholami Pasand et al. (2021) and Khabir et al. (2022), who highlighted the effectiveness of immersive cultural experiences in enhancing IS.

Moreover, the qualitative data further elucidated these findings. Students reported increased ability to understand and appreciate cultural differences, facilitated by their exposure to diverse cultural contexts through films. This aligns with Chen and Starosta's (2000) assertion that intercultural sensitivity encompasses emotional responses to cultural differences. The emotional engagement elicited by the films enabled students to internalize these experiences, enhancing their intercultural competence. This process underscores the role of affective engagement in fostering deeper intercultural understanding, as highlighted by Moore-Jones (2018).

The study also revealed significant gains in the EG's CSC across all measured dimensions. These findings align with Lin and Chen's (2019) theoretical framework, which emphasizes the importance of cultural self-confidence in maintaining a strong cultural identity amidst globalization. The qualitative insights revealed that films, particularly those depicting Chinese cultural heritage, boosted students' pride and awareness of their cultural roots. This mirrors Lin (2020) and Liang's (2022) discussions on the importance of cultural self-recognition and pride in fostering cultural confidence.

Furthermore, students noted that MBL helped them appreciate the positive trajectory of their cultural development. By comparing Chinese and foreign films, students gained a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage and its promising future. This finding is in line with Yu's (2023) recommendation for integrating media to bolster cultural confidence and pride among university students. The ability of MBL to enhance students' perception of cultural competitiveness by highlighting the strengths and global relevance of their own culture further reinforces the utility of this approach in fostering cultural self-confidence (Hou, 2019).

The concept of cultural self-confidence, as discussed by Cheng and Yang (2016), encompasses the belief in the intrinsic vitality of one's indigenous culture. This study's findings that students felt more proud and competent in their cultural identity after engaging with culturally relevant films support this notion. The enhanced cultural self-confidence observed in students aligns with Meng's (2023) findings on the pathways for cultivating cultural self-confidence through educational interventions. Especially when movies, a dynamic and visually stimulating medium, were used, they could create a memorable and emotionally resonant learning experience (Fang et al., 2022).

On the other hand, while the CG exhibited some improvements in IS and CSC, these gains were not as comprehensive or significant as those observed in the EG. This disparity underscores the unique advantages of MBL. Regular instructional methods, which lacked the immersive and engaging qualities of MBL, did not provide the same level of engagement or cultural exposure. This is consistent with previous research by Supiarza et al. (2020) and Sekhri (2022), which advocate for the use of films to enrich educational experiences and enhance cultural understanding.

To be more specific, the CG showed significant improvements in OM and RCD. These gains can be attributed to the structured content within the traditional curriculum that introduces students to different cultures and their practices. Such exposure likely provides the necessary cognitive framework to develop a basic understanding of cultural diversity, fostering open-mindedness and respect. However, traditional methods tend to prioritize cognitive learning over experiential and affective engagement, which are critical for developing deeper levels of empathy and interaction confidence. Empathy, as noted by Zhou et al. (2023) and Christofi et al. (2022), involves an emotional connection that is often best facilitated through immersive and narrative experiences that allow students to vicariously experience the lives of others. Interaction confidence similarly requires repeated and meaningful interactions with diverse cultures, which traditional methods may not adequately provide. This shortfall highlights a key limitation of traditional instruction that MBL addresses more effectively.

For CSC, the CG showed notable improvements in CP and CC. These gains could be due to the emphasis on national achievements and strengths often embedded in traditional educational content, which can boost national pride and a sense of cultural superiority. However, the lack of significant changes in CS and CD indicates that traditional methods may not sufficiently challenge students to critically engage with their own culture in a global context. Traditional approaches may reinforce a static view of culture, failing to encourage students to see their culture as dynamic and evolving. MBL, on the other hand, by incorporating both domestic and international perspectives, provides a comparative framework that encourages students to reflect critically on their own culture's development and its interactions with other cultures. This approach aligns with the findings of Yang (2018), who suggested that exposure to diverse cultural narratives fosters a more dynamic understanding of cultural identity.

Conclusion

Against this background, the purpose of our study was to examine whether and how the MBL method can improve IS and CSC among Chinese university students. The outcomes clearly revealed significant improvements in both IS and CSC as a result of MBL. Quantitative analyses indicated considerable enhancements in IS (including OM, EM, IC, and RCD) and CSC (including CS, CP, CD, and CC) among the EG. Although the CG, which received traditional lectures, demonstrated slight improvements in some aspects, it did not exhibit comprehensive improvements across all variables. Qualitative data supported these quantitative results, with students expressing enhanced cultural comprehension and a greater understanding of diverse societies, which helped them become more empathetic and self-assured in their cultural identities. In particular, students described the vibrant and interactive experience of MBL as enabling more meaningful cultural understanding and the discovery of personal narratives, aligning with the observed quantitative gains.

The results of this study provide several important insights for educators and curriculum developers. The integration of MBL into curricula creates a dynamic and engaging alternative to conventional teaching methods and effectively fosters intercultural competence. It is recommended that educators should incorporate an array of culturally rooted films into their teaching paradigms to improve students' IS and CSC. Moreover, teacher training programs for professional development should focus on realizing the need for conducting discussions or activities based on content to fully optimize the advantage

that MBL provides. This integration can provide students with the skills necessary to navigate and appreciate cultural differences, preparing them to interact successfully in a globalized world.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing body of literature on IS and CSC by providing empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of MBL as a pedagogical tool. The significant improvements observed in the EG align with Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which posits that exposure to diverse cultural contexts fosters progression towards greater IS. The findings also support Lin and Chen's (2019) theoretical framework on cultural self-confidence, emphasizing the role of cultural pride and awareness in maintaining a strong cultural identity. The integration of MBL enhances these theoretical models by demonstrating the practical application of films in fostering intercultural competencies.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of intact classes and convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data could introduce response bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. Thus, future research should consider employing random sampling techniques and incorporating longitudinal designs to validate the findings and examine the long-term effects of MBL on IS and CSC, as well as on other dimensions. Furthermore, future studies should explore the impact of MBL on different student populations and educational contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Investigating the specific components of films that most effectively enhance IS and CSC would also be valuable. Such studies could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which MBL influences intercultural competencies and inform the development of more targeted educational interventions.

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant potential of MBL in enhancing the intercultural competencies of Chinese university students. By providing a rich and engaging learning experience, MBL not only fosters a deeper understanding of cultural diversity but also strengthens students' confidence in their cultural identities. Implementing MBL in higher education can play a crucial role in preparing students for successful navigation in a multicultural world, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of fostering global citizenship. The findings of this study highlight the importance of innovative pedagogical approaches in cultivating essential intercultural competencies in the context of global education. By recognizing and addressing these educational needs, institutions can better equip students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and culturally diverse global society.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Consideration

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants of the study.

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