

Beyond Linguistic Accuracy: A Culturally Embedded Framework for Assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability through Performance and Reflective Inquiry

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Article information	
Abstract	This study presents a preliminary assessment framework for Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability in foreign language education by integrating performance-based role-play assessment and Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI). Drawing on theories of cross-cultural communication, communicative competence, and applied linguistics, the framework conceptualizes Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability as consisting of three related dimensions: (1) linguistic accuracy, (2) strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and (3) culturally appropriate use of verbal and non-verbal communication. A mixed-methods design was employed to support the development and preliminary examination of the framework. The participants comprised 18 undergraduates enrolled on intermediate-level foreign language communication courses. Research instruments included role-play speaking tasks, cross-cultural communication scenarios, an analytic assessment rubric, and VSRI interview protocols. The framework and instruments were developed through documentary analysis and expert review conducted by five field-related specialists. Participants completed role-play speaking tasks based on cross-cultural communication scenarios, followed by VSRI interviews to explore learners' reflective interpretations and cross-cultural reasoning underlying their observable communicative behaviors. The performances and reflective data were evaluated using an analytic rubric by two trained assessors. Quantitative findings from rubric scoring and inter-rater agreement were integrated with qualitative thematic findings from VSRI data. The findings indicate that the framework may be useful for examining linguistic and cross-cultural speaking performance aspects. The instruments demonstrated acceptable content validity (IOC = 0.60–1.00), and the assessment results showed high inter-rater reliability ($r = 0.978$). Although the findings provide initial support for the framework, further research involving larger, more diverse learner groups is needed to examine its applicability across contexts.
Keywords	Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability, language assessment, Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews

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1. Introduction

Language education plays an important role in preparing learners to communicate effectively in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Among the macro-skills in foreign language learning, speaking is consistently regarded as one of the most essential competencies in academic, professional, and cross-cultural communication settings (Goh & Burns, 2012; Fongsataporn et al., 2024). However, previous studies have suggested that successful communication in cross-cultural contexts depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the ability to interpret cultural meanings, manage interpersonal relationships, negotiate meaning, and employ culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication strategies (Byram, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Accordingly, communication in cross-cultural contexts has increasingly been viewed as a socially and culturally situated process rather than merely the production of grammatically accurate language.

This perspective has contributed to the development of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability, a construct that conceptualizes speaking as a cross-cultural communicative process involving linguistic, strategic, and sociocultural dimensions of interaction. Utilizing the literature on communicative competence, interactional competence, cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural pragmatics (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon, 2002; Young, 2011), Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability in this study is conceptualized as comprising three interrelated dimensions. The first dimension is linguistic accuracy, which includes appropriate pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary use necessary for comprehensible communication (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The second dimension is strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, referring to the ability to negotiate meaning, maintain mutual understanding, and manage interpersonal relationships through contextually appropriate communication strategies during cross-cultural interaction (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Young, 2011). The third dimension is culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, which includes tone, gestures, politeness strategies, and discourse behaviors that are appropriate to sociocultural and interactional contexts (Carbaugh, 2016).

The derivation of these dimensions was informed by studies suggesting that cross-cultural communication involves linguistic, strategic, relational, and sociocultural dimensions of interaction (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013; Littlewood, 2014). Moreover, studies have reported that among learners, whose linguistic proficiency is satisfactory, some may experience challenges in cross-cultural communication due to pragmatic interpretation, interactional management, and culturally appropriate communication habits (Kecskes, 2014). Similarly, scholars have argued, based on language assessment research, that interactional and cross-cultural dimensions should be incorporated into speaking assessment. Alongside linguistic performance, to include interactional and cross-cultural dimensions of communication (McNamara & Roever, 2006; Young, 2011). Although conventional speaking assessments may successfully evaluate pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency, they may provide comparatively limited cognizance of cross-cultural interaction, relational communication,

pragmatic appropriateness, and culturally mediated meaning negotiation (Fulcher, 2015; Harwati & Sathian, 2024).

To address this issue, scholars propose broader approaches to speaking assessment incorporating cross-cultural awareness, interactional competence, and reflective inquiry into assessment practices (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Cambridge English, 2014; McNamara & Roever, 2006). Reflective methodologies such as Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI) have been employed to examine learners' interpretations, communicative decisions, and cultural reasoning in communication (Lyle, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2013). Such approaches may provide additional insights into learners' communicative intentions, cross-cultural understanding, and strategic decision-making processes that may not be fully observable during interaction. Integrating reflective inquiry with performance-based speaking assessment may therefore contribute to broader interpretations of cross-cultural speaking performance.

Accordingly, this study proposes a preliminary framework for assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability by integrating role-play speaking tasks, analytic rubric assessment, and Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI). The study aims to examine how the linguistic, strategic, and cross-cultural dimensions of spoken interaction can be assessed more integratively in cross-cultural communication contexts.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the components and assessment procedures of the framework for assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability?

RQ2: To what extent does the proposed framework demonstrate preliminary validity, reliability, and preliminary applicability in assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualization of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability

Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability refers to the integrated ability of language users to communicate appropriately and effectively across cultural contexts. Previous studies in cross-cultural communication and applied linguistics suggest that successful communication requires not only linguistic proficiency, but also the ability to negotiate meaning, manage interpersonal relationships, interpret sociocultural expectations, and employ culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors (Byram, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 2005; Kecskes, 2014). Accordingly, communication in cross-cultural contexts has increasingly been viewed as a socially and culturally situated interactional process rather than merely the production of grammatically accurate language.

Drawing on the literature on communicative competence, interactional competence, cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural pragmatics, this study synthesized Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability into three interrelated dimensions. The first dimension, linguistic accuracy, refers to the ability to use pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary appropriately to maintain comprehensible communication (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019; Goh & Burns, 2012). The second dimension, strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, refers to the ability to negotiate meaning, maintain rapport, mitigate interpersonal tension, and manage interactions through contextually appropriate communication strategies during cross-cultural communication (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Young, 2011; Kecskes, 2014). The third dimension,

culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, pertains to the ability to employ tone, gestures, politeness strategies, discourse behaviors, and culturally mediated communicative expressions appropriately according to sociocultural expectations and interactional contexts (Carbaugh, 2016).

Therefore, within the scope of communication, observable communicative performance and underlying cross-cultural awareness should be considered part of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. With this integrated element, learners can combine linguistic and interactional behaviors to achieve effective and appropriate communication (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013).

2.2 Limitations of Existing Speaking Assessment Models

The main focus of conventional speaking assessments includes linguistic accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility, key parameters of speaking performance (Fulcher, 2015), which offer meaningful data on language proficiency. However, scholars in language assessments have argued that these elements do not prioritize cross-cultural interaction, pragmatic appropriateness, relational communication, and culturally mediated meaning negotiation (McNamara & Roever, 2006; Kecskes, 2014). For this reason, although learners have appropriate linguistic capability, they remain encounter challenges in cross-cultural communication, where sensitivity to sociocultural expectations, implicit meanings, and interactional norms is essential.

Furthermore, Bachman and Palmer (2010) assert that language assessment should reflect real-life communication contexts. Likewise, research on interactional competence emphasizes the necessity of valuing speaking competence as collaboratively constructed through interaction, not as an isolated linguistic performance (Young, 2011). However, most speaking assessments rely on observable linguistic performance, which constrains their ability to focus on strategic, relational, and cross-cultural dimensions of communication.

Therefore, there is a need for assessment approaches that combine linguistic, interactional, and cross-cultural dimensions of spoken communication into real-world assessment practices.

2.3 Assessment of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability

The interactive speaking task is one of the most appropriate methods for evaluating communication in cross-cultural environments, as it enables learners to clarify meaning, navigate interpersonal interactions, and adapt communication techniques in real-life situations (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). For this reason, assessment tasks, such as role-plays, problem-solving discussions, and interaction-based communication tasks, motivate learners to use language to match culturally real-life contexts (Mushtaq et al., 2021).

Assessment in cross-cultural communicative settings entails evaluating linguistic forms and methods speakers use to manage relationships, interpret sociocultural expectations, and choose the most advantageous interactional technique for the communicative environment (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Thus, strategies that emphasize proficiency and grammatical structure are less important than those that capture linguistic, strategic, and cross-cultural dimensions.

2.4 Reflective Assessment through Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI)

In applied linguistics and communication studies, video-stimulated recall interviews (VSRI) have been adopted to observe learners' reflective interpretations, communicative reasoning, and strategic decision-making processes during communication (Lyle, 2003). During real-time speaking for learners' interactive purposes, cross-cultural awareness and strategic interactional reasoning are partly observed. However, reflective evidence obtained from the VSRI can offer additional interpretive viewpoints on those components. Consequently, a combination of reflective inquiry and observable communication behavior broadens interpretive views on cross-cultural speaking ability assessment. The VSRI technique enables learners to reflect on recorded communications and justify their reasons for their interactive practices, which differ from techniques counting on observable speaking performance alone.

Since observable performance speaking cannot convey learners' cross-cultural understanding, intended messages, or sociocultural interpretations, this technique is primarily relevant to cross-cultural communication settings. Learners may possess declarative knowledge of culturally appropriate communication, but may not consistently demonstrate it during spontaneous interaction. Reflective inquiry may therefore provide additional interpretive insights into learners' cross-cultural awareness, strategic adaptation, and culturally situated communication processes (Nguyen et al., 2013).

Recent discussions in language assessment have similarly emphasized the importance of integrating performance-based evidence with reflective and interpretive data in order to support more comprehensive interpretations of communicative competence.

2.5 Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature suggests that effective communication in cross-cultural contexts involves linguistic, strategic, interactional, and sociocultural dimensions. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of cross-cultural awareness, pragmatic appropriateness, and interactional competence in successful communication across cultures (Byram, 1997; Kecskes, 2014; Young, 2011). However, existing speaking assessment approaches may still provide limited integration of these dimensions within a single assessment framework.

In addition, although reflective methodologies such as VSRI have been employed in communication and applied linguistics research, limited studies have integrated reflective inquiry with performance-based speaking assessment to examine Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability in a multidimensional manner. Existing assessment models also tend to focus either on observable linguistic performance or self-report perceptions rather than integrating linguistic, strategic, and cross-cultural dimensions simultaneously.

Accordingly, this study proposes a preliminary assessment framework for Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability by integrating role-play speaking tasks, analytic rubric assessment, and Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI). The framework aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on cross-cultural communication assessment and reflective approaches in foreign-language speaking assessment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design to develop and conduct a preliminary examination of a framework for assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability in foreign language education. The study integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine both observable speaking performance and reflective communicative reasoning in cross-cultural speaking situations.

The quantitative component involved an analytic rubric-based assessment, content validity analysis, inter-rater reliability analysis, and stakeholder evaluation scores to assess speaking performance. The qualitative component consisted of video-stimulated recall interviews (VSRI) for reflective inquiry. These interviews served as a tool for revealing participants' interactional purposes, strategic decision-making processes, and awareness of speaking across cultures during communication.

Qualitative evidence from VSRI was employed to explain quantitative results acquired from rubric-based assessment, descriptive statistical analysis, and inter-rater reliability analysis. The integration of both forms of evidence was intended to provide broader interpretive perspectives on Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability, using observable speaking performance and reflective communicative reasoning in cross-cultural communication contexts. A rubric-based assessment was conducted after completion of both the speaking tasks and the reflective interview procedures in order to allow assessment decisions to incorporate both observable communicative performance and reflective communicative reasoning.

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on developing the assessment framework through documentary analysis, theoretical synthesis, and expert review. The second phase involved a preliminary pilot implementation of the framework to test its validity, reliability, and applicability in foreign-language speaking assessment contexts.

3.2 Framework Development

3.2.1 Development of the Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability Assessment Framework

The framework development process focused on identifying the components and assessment procedures of the Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability assessment through documentary synthesis and expert review. A review and synthesis of related literature on communicative competence, cross-cultural communication, interactional competence, cross-cultural pragmatics, speaking assessment, and reflective inquiry was conducted.

Documentary analysis results revealed that Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability was characterized and consisted of three interrelated dimensions: 1) linguistic accuracy, 2) strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and 3) culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication.

After the conceptual synthesis was completed, assessment procedures and instruments were developed based on the three dimensions. The framework components included scenario-based role-play speaking tasks, reflective inquiry through VSRI, analytic rubric assessment, assessor preparation procedures, and multi-stage evaluation processes.

3.2.2 Expert Review and Validation

Five experts in foreign language education, language assessment, and cross-cultural communication collaboratively reviewed the developed framework and assessment tools by

validating the correspondence among the framework dimensions, speaking tasks, reflective interview procedures, and rubric criteria.

The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was utilized to observe content validity. The IOC of all components was 0.80-1.00. These values demonstrated consistency between the tools and the assessment's objectives.

3.3 Participants

The participants were 18 undergraduates enrolled in intermediate-level foreign language communication courses at a university. Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the primary pilot, where the proposed framework was implemented.

Based on the institutional language placement employed in the foreign language communication program, participants were placed in intermediate proficiency levels, CEFR B1–B2. Learners' previous coursework, institutional speaking evaluations, and course placement records used by the university to assign students to intermediate-level courses were reviewed during the placement process. These placement procedures were a partial classification system before being applied to this research.

Qualified learners with intermediate interactive competence demonstrated the framework's application in foreign-language speaking assessment settings.

In addition, six individuals: three assessors and three learner representatives, took part in a stakeholder evaluation to assess the clarity, usage, usefulness, and appropriateness of the framework after the try-out.

3.4 Research Instruments

Different tools and procedures were used to analyze Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability from performance-based and reflective viewpoints.

3.4.1 Scenario-Based Role-Play Speaking Tasks

Scenario-based role-play speaking tasks were developed to elicit speaking performances in culturally situated communication contexts. The tasks were designed to encourage the participants to demonstrate linguistic accuracy, strategic communication management, and culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors during interactions.

All speaking performances were video-recorded for subsequent introspective inquiry and assessment.

3.4.2 Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI)

Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI) were conducted after the role-play speaking tasks to explore participants' reflective interpretations, communicative intentions, and culturally situated reasoning associated with their speaking performances.

During the VSRI procedures, selected video segments from the speaking performances were reviewed with participants. Semi-structured reflective questions were then used to examine participants' explanations regarding their communicative choices, interactional strategies, and cultural awareness during communication.

The VSRI procedures were implemented to provide additional interpretive evidence, communicative reasoning, and cross-cultural speaking awareness beyond observable speaking performance.

3.4.3 Analytic Rubric for Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability

An analytic rubric was developed based on the three dimensions of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. The rubric assessed: 1) linguistic accuracy, 2) strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and 3) culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication.

The rubric employed a six-point scale ranging from 0 to 6. Equal weighting was assigned across the three dimensions to represent multiple dimensions of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability within the assessment process.

The rubric evaluation incorporated evidence from both observable speaking performance and reflective responses gathered through VSRI procedures.

3.5 Assessor Preparation and Assessment Procedures

Two assessors, the researcher and an expert native-speaker instructor in foreign language teaching and cross-cultural communication, administered the assessment. In addition, for the role-play speaking tasks, the native-speaker instructor engaged as the communication partner to ensure interactional consistency throughout the assessment process.

Assessor preparation procedures were performed before the application to build mutual understanding of the framework, communication processes, and scoring criteria.

First, clarification on communication roles, interactional scope, language-use expectations, and the aim of the role-play setting was given to the native-speaker instructor. A special emphasis was placed on avoiding any unanticipated communicative prompts or actions that may affect participants' performance.

Second, assessors collaborated to review the assessment framework and analytic rubric for a mutual understanding of the three dimensions of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability.

Third, assessors held calibration discussions before the formal scoring process to review and ensure consistency in scoring. Meanwhile, the revision and discussion of pilot role-play performances were carried out to settle scoring interpretations, expected performance metrics, and boundary cases for individual assessment dimensions.

Fourth, pilot role-play sessions with non-participant learners were organized to observe the suitability of the communication procedures and assess the implementation processes. All pilot sessions were video-recorded for review and reflective discussion afterward.

Lastly, following the try-out, the researcher and the native-speaker instructor met to revise communication procedures, clarify the scope of assessment, and improve the consistency of assessment scenarios.

The aims of these preparation and calibration procedures were to ensure scoring consistency, minimize possible assessment bias, and improve the assessment process's reliability.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The assessment procedures combined scenario-based role-play speaking tasks, reflective inquiry through Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI), and analytic rubric-based evaluation.

First, each participant completed role-play speaking tasks in culturally situated communication settings. During the communication, while assessors observed the interactive situation, all performances were video-recorded.

Second, assessors reviewed the recordings to distinguish any parts where an explanation of participants' purpose, choices, or cultural interpretation was needed.

Third, Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI) were undertaken using selected video segments from the speaking assessment tasks. Participants provided reasons behind their interactive actions expressed during the communication.

Finally, rubric-based scoring was administered after speaking tasks and the VSRI, considering observable speaking performance and reflective interview evidence during the assessment process. This was intended to accommodate extensive interpretations of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability.

3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis was employed to investigate the framework's initial validity, reliability, and applicability. Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) and correlation analysis were adopted to analyze content validity and inter-rater reliability, respectively. Descriptive statistics, means, and standard deviations (S.D.) were used to report participant performance and stakeholder evaluation results.

Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data obtained from VSRI. The main focus of the analysis was patterns in communicative reasoning, strategic interaction management, cultural awareness, and reflective interpretations associated with participants' speaking performances.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings afforded extensive interpretive views on the applicability of the proposed framework for assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability.

4. Findings

4.1. Findings on the Development of the Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability Assessment Framework

The development of the assessment framework for Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability laid the foundation for three core structural components.

1) Assessment Purpose

The framework was designed to assess learners' Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability through a multidimensional approach, including the ability to speak with linguistic accuracy, communicate strategically to manage cross-cultural interactions, and adapt spoken language and non-verbal cues appropriately within multicultural contexts. Mindful of this purpose, the assessment will prioritize language proficiency and the appropriateness of cultural and strategic speaking performance.

2) Assessor Preparation and Role Standardization

A well-structured process ensures assessors understand the conceptual framework and their competency in evaluating Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability evaluation with reliability and cultural sensitivity. The process incorporates six stages:

Table 1*Assessor Preparation and Role Standardization*

Stage	Description	Purpose
1. Assessor Selection	Selection based on language expertise and cultural competence	To make sure assessors can authentically evaluate cross-cultural speaking ability
2. Training and Orientation	Structured orientation on framework objectives and assessment principles	To establish conceptual alignment and minimize bias
3. Trial Administration	Pilot simulations were conducted and recorded	To refine assessment procedures
4. Reflective Calibration	Joint review and refinement of assessor roles	To enhance consistency with the defined components
5. Protocol Adjustment	Implementation of refined procedures	To confirm clarity and replicability
6. Role Finalization	Agreement on standardized verbal and non-verbal assessor conduct	To ensure validity and cross-cultural authenticity

This systematic preparation ensured that assessors who served as evaluators and agents simultaneously maintained cross-cultural authenticity throughout the assessment processes.

3) Assessment Methods and Instruments

Three integrated tools were used to measure the essential dimensions of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. 3.1) Scenario-Based Speaking Tasks, designed to start communications in cultural contexts. Tasks were gradually more complex to imitate authentic communications. 3.2) Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI) – employed to enable participants to reflect on their linguistic choices, strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and use of spoken language and non-verbal cues across cultures. 3.3) Analytic Assessment Rubric – developed in direct alignment with the three core components of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability, with equal weighting assigned to each component to reflect their interdependent contributions to overall speaking performance.

These instruments collectively provide a comprehensive basis for evaluating Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability through both observable performance and reflective awareness.

3.1) Scenario-Based Speaking Tasks

Figure 1*Scenario-Based Speaking Tasks*

Example: Role-Play Task for Assessing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability Instructions 1. The examinee is referred to as <i>the candidate</i>, and the evaluator is referred to as <i>the examiner</i>. 2. The candidate receives a written role description and is given 3 minutes to prepare. 3. The candidate performs the role-play for 6-8 minutes, interacting with the examiner as part of the simulated scenario.
Simulated Scenario <u>Setting</u> Location: A Thai-owned restaurant at Suvarnabhumi International Airport / Time: 17:30 hrs. (peak service period) <u>Cultural Context</u> The candidate acts as an intern and provides service to an international customer from the United Kingdom. British cultural norms value politeness, indirect interaction, a preference for flexibility, not enforcement, and privacy. The situation is devised to observe the candidate's accurate use of spoken English while applying culturally appropriate techniques that align with British expectations.

Role Assignment

- **Candidate:** Intern acting as service staff
- **Examiner:** British customer aged approximately 60

Assessment Tasks and Expected Responses**Task 1: Culturally Appropriate Greeting and Seating**

- Objective: Evaluate linguistic accuracy and use of courteous manners that exhibit British hospitality norms.
- Expected sample performance:
“Good evening, sir. Welcome to our restaurant. May I show you to a table?”
 → Demonstrates polite greeting with respectful tone and controlled body language.

Task 2: Introducing the Signature Dish (Pad Thai)

- Objective: Demonstrate ability to describe cultural significance, ingredients, and adapt choices based on customer preferences.
- Expected sample performance:
“Pad Thai is one of Thailand’s most well-known dishes. It has a balance of sweet, sour, and savory flavors. If you prefer less spice, I can adjust it for you.”

Task 3: Explaining Ingredient and Allergy Information

- Objective: Exhibit awareness of cultural expectations concerning with health, safety, and dietary sensitivities.
- Expected sample performance:
“This dish contains peanuts. In case you have any allergies, I can ask the chef to remove them.”
 → Reflects strategic and sensitive interaction across cross-cultural settings.

Task 4: Handling Seating Conflict Applying Face-Saving Techniques

- Objective: Observe ability to deal with potential oppositions with manner while respecting the customer’s dignity.
- Expected sample performance:
“I apologize, sir. This table has already been reserved. May I offer you a quieter table by the window instead?”

Task 5: Offering an Alternative for an Unavailable Item

- Objective: Evaluate the ability to offer options and avoid explicitly rejecting the request.
- Expected sample performance:
“Unfortunately, that dish is not available this evening. However, many of our guests enjoy our stir-fried noodles, which are quite similar. Would you like to try it?”

Task 6: Refusing Alcohol in a Culturally Appropriate Manner

- Objective: Show indirect refusal and maintain service politeness simultaneously.
- Expected sample performance:
“I’m very sorry, sir, but due to airport regulations, we are unable to serve alcohol at this time. May I recommend our iced Thai tea as an alternative?”
 → Shows linguistic accuracy, respectful tone, and culturally sensitive refusal strategy.

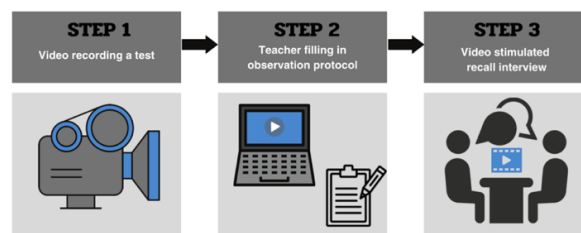
3.2) Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI)

After the role-play speaking assessment was completed, VSRI was adopted to collect data to examine the cognitive and culturally related reasoning influencing participants' spoken performance. Additionally, VSRI is known for its effectiveness in evaluating reflective awareness during communicative tasks (Nguyen et al., 2013; Lyle, 2003).

When processing VSRI, assessors reviewed the recorded performance and captured segments that contained outstanding cultural acts, such as tone adjustments, shifts in strategic choices, or the use of verbal and non-verbal cues, to present to participants, who would clarify their thoughts, purposes, and decision-making steps. This reflective approach elevated the assessment beyond surface-level speech, revealing the cognitive dimension of linguistic accuracy, the strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and culturally appropriate language use.

In addition, semi-structured questioning was utilized to promote proactive reflection while mitigating response bias. Participants were allowed to answer freely, so assessors recognized participants' awareness of cultural expectations and interactive tactics.

Figure 2
VSRI Procedure



Crucial evidence of candidates' thoughts was obtained from the VSRI process via interaction options. Illustrating the candidates' cognitive processes related to the three components of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability.

Sample Interview Questions (VSRI)

1. *In your opinion, was this interaction successful? Please explain, referring to your aim of the interaction, which aspects supported or compromised its success.*
2. *At minute 5:20, you responded with a specific gesture. What were your thoughts at that time? What was the reason for your action?*
3. *At minute 3:10, you switched your tone. What influenced the change? What was your intended message through this shift?*

3.3) Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability Rubric

An analytic rubric that corresponded to three dimensions—linguistic accuracy, strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and culturally appropriate use of verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures—was used to assess Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability.

As in previous studies, the weights of all dimensions were equally distributed, since they represented Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. The rubric was a six-point scale, ranging from 0 (no evidence of performance) to 6 (highly proficient performance).

The evaluation process took place upon completion of scenario-based speaking tasks and the VSRI. Assessment decisions were based on the integration of two complementary evidence sources: (1) observable speaking performance demonstrated during the role-play interaction, and (2) reflective explanations provided by participants regarding communicative behaviors, strategic choices, and culturally situated interpretations associated with the interaction.

Observable performance in the scenario-based speaking tasks demonstrated the real-time application of linguistic, strategic, and cross-cultural communication abilities. Reflective responses obtained through VSRI additionally provided interpretive evidence of participants' communicative intentions, cultural awareness, and interactional reasoning underlying their observable communicative behaviors.

This dual-source assessment approach was intended to support broader interpretations of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability by incorporating observable speaking performance and reflective communicative reasoning associated with cross-cultural interaction.

Figure 3

Rubric: Ability to Speak with Linguistic Accuracy

Score Level	Performance Descriptor (Academic Criteria)
6	Demonstrates consistently precise pronunciation with no detectable errors. Uses a wide range of vocabulary accurately and appropriately in context. All grammatical structures are fully accurate, with no errors observed.
5	Pronunciation is clear and accurate with only minimal errors that do not affect intelligibility. Vocabulary use is varied and mostly accurate. Grammatical structures are consistently correct, with only occasional minor inaccuracies.
4	Pronunciation is clear, with insignificant inaccuracies in some words. Varied vocabulary is used properly, with mostly correct usage. Most grammatical structures are accurate, with some minor errors that do not affect communication.
3	Pronunciation contains remarkable inaccuracies that sometimes compromise comprehensibility. Lexical resources are limited and include some inappropriate or incorrect applications. Grammatical errors occasionally occur and influence the clarity of meaning.
2	Pronunciation is frequently unclear, which constantly obstructs a listener's understanding. Lexical resources are limited, with constant inaccuracies. Grammatical errors are extensive and greatly compromise the effectiveness of interaction.
1	Pronunciation is continually inaccurate and restricts intelligibility. Inappropriate vocabulary is used, so the convey of meaning fails. Grammatical structures are incorrect, leading to ineffective communication.

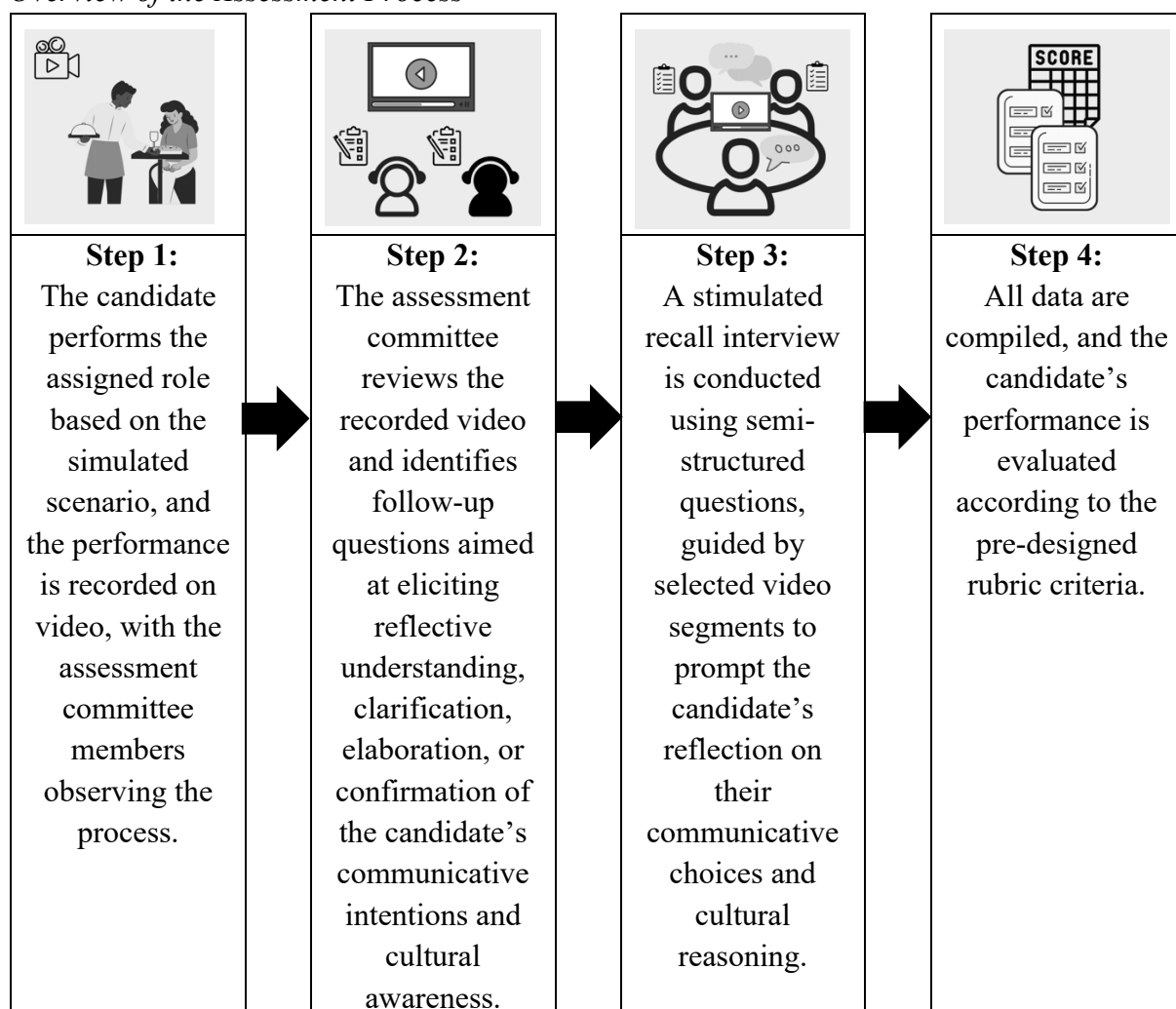
Figure 4*Rubric: Ability to Speak Strategically to Manage Cross-Cultural Relationships*

Score Level	Performance Descriptor (Academic Criteria)
6	Exhibit highly effective use of language strategies to gain a common understanding of overall communication. Consistently and appropriately utilizes interactive techniques in the cultural context and maintains positive interpersonal relationships smoothly.
5	Adapts appropriate interactive strategies to gain mutual understanding in almost all parts of the communication. Manages positive accord with seldom minor lapses that have no impact on overall communication or relationships.
4	Applies strategic language to accommodate comprehension at a satisfactory level, although some choices are inaccurate or inappropriate. Generally, restrains interpersonal relationships, with some clues of misunderstanding or small interactional tension.
3	Exhibits restricted application of communication techniques, resulting in partial mutual understanding. Explanations or repetitions are required for some misunderstandings, and communication flow is disrupted occasionally, affecting conversational flow.
2	Strategic use of language is frequently ineffective, causing misunderstandings. Communication breakdowns negatively affect communication flow and make an interlocutor uncomfortable with possible negative reaction.
1	Unable to use communicative strategies to achieve mutual understanding. Fails to maintain relational harmony, resulting in communication breakdown or potential conflict.

Figure 5*Rubric: Ability to Use Spoken Language and Non-Verbal Cues Across Cultures*

Score Level	Performance Descriptor (Academic Criteria)
6	Express highly appropriate use of tone, intonation, and cultural expressions. Constantly uses polite manner and indirect gestures that represent cultural sensitivity, along with positive and culturally appropriate non-verbal language that facilitates interpersonal harmony.
5	Use appropriate tone and intonation in most stages. Performs polite and generally indirect expressions, with only slight errors in cultural appropriateness. Non-verbal manner is mostly appropriate, with minimal inconsistencies that do not interrupt the overall course of communication.
4	Adapts acceptable cultural tone and language to a satisfactory degree, although some actions may be too direct or slightly inappropriate in context. Non-verbal gestures are generally positive, with some inconsistency in cultural sensitivities.
3	Demonstrates fragmentary awareness of culturally appropriate tone and expressions. Express gentle forms unsteadily, and many words are exceptionally

Score Level	Performance Descriptor (Academic Criteria)
	direct, which may affect the communication flow. Non-verbal acts present remarkable inconsistency with cultural expectations.
2	Tone and language are mostly inappropriate to cultural contexts. Expressions are too obvious or impolite, which obstructs the positive interaction atmosphere. Non-verbal actions often do not aligned with cultural norms, and create discomfort or faulty communication.
1	Inappropriate tone, language, and non-verbal behavior are used within the cultural settings. Communication conveys impoliteness and lacks respect, causing uncomfortable communication or resulting in negative responses from the interlocutor.

Figure 6*Overview of the Assessment Process*

4.2 Findings on the Preliminary Validity, Reliability, and Preliminary Applicability of the Framework

The expert review results highlighted the satisfaction with the proposed assessment framework. It was aligned with the construct of Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability and included

role-play assessment tasks, VSRI, and a rubric-based assessment process. Five experts, proficient in foreign language education, language assessment, and cross-cultural communication, applied the IOC to investigate the content validity. The findings indicated the IOC values ranged from 0.60 to 1.00 throughout the assessment components. These affirmed the alignment of the framework dimensions, assessment processes, and rubric criteria with the assessment objectives. In addition, the IOC values for each component: scenario-based role-play speaking tasks, VSRI, and the analytic rubric were 0.80–1.00, 1.00, and 0.60–1.00, respectively.

After the pilot implementation was completed, the assessors used correlation analysis to assess inter-rater reliability and found a high level of scoring consistency, with a coefficient of $r = 0.978$. Furthermore, before the actual implementation, calibration discussions and pilot scoring processes were done to ensure consistency in rubric interpretation around the three assessment dimensions.

In terms of participant performance, the learners obtained a mean score of 7.39 out of a possible 18, with a standard deviation of 2.85. The findings suggested variation in Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability among participants during the pilot implementation, particularly in strategic communication management and culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication.

Reflective evidence from Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI) provided supplementary interpretive support for assessment decisions regarding participants' communicative reasoning, cross-cultural awareness, and strategic management of communication during the interaction.

To obtain preliminary stakeholder perspectives regarding the framework, stakeholder evaluation was conducted involving three assessors and three learner representatives following the pilot implementation. Stakeholder perspectives regarding the framework were collected across four criteria: clarity of purpose, applicability within assessment contexts, usefulness for reflective speaking assessment, and appropriateness in representing Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. A five-point rating scale was used, with 1 representing the lowest level of agreement and 5 the highest.

The mean scores across the four evaluation criteria were 4.67, 4.50, 4.67, and 4.33, respectively. These findings suggested generally positive stakeholder perceptions of the frameworks of clarity, perceived applicability, and usefulness in foreign-language speaking assessment contexts.

Stakeholder feedback also suggested that integrating scenario-based speaking tasks and reflective inquiry through VSRI gave broader perspectives for examining Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. In particular, the assessment procedures appeared to support consideration of observable speaking performance and reflective communicative reasoning associated with cross-cultural speaking situations.

Although the findings provide preliminary support for the validity, reliability, and applicability of the proposed framework, the results should be interpreted within the scope of the pilot implementation and the limited participant group. Further research involving larger participant populations and broader educational settings is recommended to assess the framework's applicability across different foreign language learning contexts.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide preliminary support for the potential applicability of the proposed framework in examining speaking performance dimensions that may receive comparatively limited attention in conventional foreign language speaking assessments. In relation to RQ1, the findings suggested that Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability may be conceptualized as three interrelated dimensions: linguistic accuracy, strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication. Previous studies have similarly suggested that traditional speaking assessments often emphasize grammatical accuracy and lexical control, while providing comparatively less attention to relational management, culturally situated interaction, and communicative adaptation (Byram, 1997; Fulcher, 2015; McNamara & Roever, 2006).

The findings from the pilot implementation further suggested that speaking performance in cross-cultural communication contexts may involve more than linguistic production alone, including communicative reasoning, interactional adaptation, strategic negotiation of meaning, and awareness of interpersonal relationships during communication (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Young, 2011; Kecskes, 2014). This may suggest that successful cross-cultural speaking performance requires learners not only to produce linguistically accurate language, but also to manage interactional relationships and culturally appropriate communicative behaviors simultaneously.

The integration of scenario-based role-play speaking tasks and Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI) also provided multiple sources of evidence for examining Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability. While the role-play tasks provided observable evidence of speaking performance in interaction, the VSRI procedures offered additional interpretive perspectives on participants' communicative reasoning, reflective awareness, and culturally situated decision-making processes. These findings align with previous discussions emphasizing the importance of reflective inquiry and interactional perspectives in language assessment and communicative competence (Lyle, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2013; McNamara & Roever, 2006; Matyakhan et al., 2024). The reflective component of the framework may therefore contribute to broader interpretations of speaking performance by allowing assessors to consider communicative intentions and intercultural reasoning that may not always be fully observable during spontaneous interaction.

Regarding RQ2, the findings provided preliminary evidence of the validity, reliability, and applicability of the proposed framework in foreign-language speaking assessment contexts. The content validity findings and inter-rater reliability results suggested that the proposed framework may provide relatively consistent assessment procedures during the pilot implementation. In particular, the calibration discussions conducted prior to formal scoring appeared to support shared interpretation of rubric criteria across the three assessment dimensions. The integration of observable speaking performance with reflective evidence obtained through VSRI may also have contributed to broader interpretive perspectives during the assessment process. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, given the limited participant group size and the exploratory nature of the study.

The stakeholder evaluation findings also suggested generally positive perceptions of the framework's clarity, perceived applicability, and usefulness in foreign language speaking assessment contexts. These findings may indicate the value of incorporating reflective and culturally situated communication dimensions into speaking assessment practices, particularly

in contexts where communication involves interaction across cultural backgrounds. This perspective is consistent with previous discussions in language assessment research, which suggests that speaking assessment should extend beyond the evaluation of linguistic forms to include interactional, relational, and sociocultural dimensions of communication (McNamara & Roever, 2006; Young, 2011). Consequently, a combination of communicative and cultural viewpoints within the proposed framework may support extensive interpretations of interactive performance in cross-cultural interaction settings.

Instead of replacing the existing speaking assessment with Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability, the research results indicate that viewpoints on cross-cultural speaking probably introduce other dimensions for observing interactive performance in foreign language pedagogy. This perspective aligns with prior discussions in language assessment studies, which propose that speaking assessment should extend beyond linguistic accuracy and include interactional, pragmatic, and sociocultural aspects (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; McNamara & Roever, 2006). For this reason, the proposed framework supports an initial assessment perspective that integrates linguistic, strategic, and cultural dimensions of speaking performance within cross-cultural communication environments.

For this reason, the interpretation of the research results should be assessed within the extent of the try-out stage, and should not serve as evidence of large-scale framework validation. This aligns with recommendations in language assessment studies, which suggest that prior assessment frameworks should be interpreted cautiously before broader validation across different learner populations and assessment settings (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; McNamara & Roever, 2006). Thus, the proposed framework aims to provide an initial assessment perspective for investigating Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability in foreign language communication contexts.

Although the results provide initial support for the validity, reliability, and introductory applicability of the proposed framework, remaining limitations should be recognized. The study was conducted with a small cohort within an educational setting. This may obstruct potential implementation in wider contexts. Therefore, future research studies should include a larger sample size, a greater proficiency-level range, and multilingual communication environments. In addition, broader cultural communicative contexts are recommended for investigating the implementation of the framework in different foreign language learning settings.

6. Limitations

The focus of this research was on undergraduate learners within one educational environment. As a result, it may obstruct the application in the wider linguistic settings. In addition, the VSRI requires participants to demonstrate metacognitive awareness. As a result, differences in learners' reflective abilities may have influenced the depth and detail of the qualitative data collected during the assessment process. Furthermore, the study was conducted as a preliminary pilot implementation; therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the exploratory scope of the research.

7. Conclusion

This study conceptualized Cross-Cultural Speaking Ability as a multidimensional construct comprising linguistic accuracy, strategic management of cross-cultural relationships, and culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication. The proposed framework integrated scenario-based speaking tasks, Video-Stimulated Recall Interviews (VSRI), and rubric-based assessment procedures to examine both observable speaking performance and reflective communicative reasoning in cross-cultural communication contexts.

The findings from the preliminary pilot implementation suggested that the framework may offer a useful perspective for examining cross-cultural speaking performance in foreign language education. In particular, integrating observable speaking performance with reflective evidence obtained through VSRI appeared to support broader interpretations of communicative behavior and cross-cultural communication processes during interaction.

Because of the characteristics of the exploratory research and the size of the participant group, the interpretation of the results is carefully processed, although they facilitate initial support for validity, reliability, and the framework's initial applicability. Future studies with larger, more diverse groups of learners are recommended to further examine the framework's broader applicability across foreign language learning contexts.

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10. Declaration of AI Use

The authors used ChatGPT-4 (OpenAI) and Grammarly to polish the manuscript's academic language and enhance clarity. These instruments were adopted to edit and improve the grammatical structure of the pre-written text. The authors take full responsibility for the content, interpretation, and conclusions of this work.

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