

# Developing Culturally Immersive Module: EnglishQuest

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**Abstract:** *The integration of culture-related activities into lessons improves language training. The EnglishQuest module represents a different approach to learning English by incorporating local cultural immersion into activities. Hence, the study aims to develop a module that explores the local culture and provides learners with a rich and authentic experience that fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local culture as an English language learning tool. The ADDIE model, which comprises five stages including analyzing, designing, developing, implementing and evaluating stages, was adopted. The activities in this module focus on improving students' pronunciation, speaking, listening, comprehension, and writing. Ten (10) activity topics include the Sound of the English language, local endangered animals, local dishes, local wedding customs, local climate, local versus origin language translation, local costumes, local games, local dance, and local musical instruments. The module utilizes various instructional methods, including role-play, multimedia material, real-world situations, individual presentations, and group projects, to actively include students in critical thinking and intercultural communication. Preply, an English placement test assessment method, was utilized to examine Japanese students' English proficiency level before and after undergoing a program that employed the EnglishQuest Module. The Preply post-test results show that some students have improved their level compared to the pre-test results. The module has a measurable impact on students' language skills, validating its efficacy as a language training tool.*

**Keywords:** Teaching English, English Language Learning, Learning Tool, Proficiency, Cultural Context

## 1. Introduction

Integrating cultural elements into English language learning lessons is increasingly recognized as a vital component of effective language education. Language and culture are profoundly interwoven; apprehending the relationship can substantially improve the learning experience (Chang, Windeatt, & Stockwell, 2023). Learning English in a cultural context enhances language acquisition, intercultural competence, language skills, cultural awareness, intercultural communication skills, motivation, engagement, personalized and adaptive learning, as well as collaboration and social interaction, which is fundamental in today's globalized world (Maqsood et al., 2024; Nambiar, Hashim & Yasin, 2023; Tan & Lee, 2023; Yang & Zhang, 2024; Selvakumar & Sivakumar, 2023). This approach recognizes that language is not simply a system of words and grammar but reflects the speaker's beliefs, values, and practices (Li, 2013; Halliday, 1996; Suzuki & Dekeyser, 2017). It addresses

communication challenges as learners originate from diverse cultural backgrounds (Rustemova & Gumarova, 2019).

Communication challenges impact learners' comprehension and production, influencing their engagement in the learning process (Syaputri, Theresia & Yuniarti, 2021). By incorporating cultural knowledge into language lessons, teachers can assist learners in relating the language and its speakers, enhancing their overall learning experience (Gerfanova et al., 2022). The challenge for teachers is determining effective ways to integrate cultural knowledge into language teaching. There is no universally recognized method, and many teachers lack formal training in this area (Li, 2017). However, a framework is available to serve as a structured guide to assist teachers in systematically incorporating cultural elements into their lessons. The framework has six substantial dimensions, including the setting, teacher variables, learner variables, instructional methods, curricular materials, and measuring and assessing culture learning (Paige et al., 2003). Ultimately, the goal is to prepare relevant materials that meet learners' needs and achieve learning objectives.

Several models can be employed in developing educational modules. First, ADDIE model which was developed by Florida State University in 1970's for the United States of America's military training. The model consists five stages such as analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate as the framework to create the training module. Second, ASSURE model which was created by Heinich, Molenda, Russell and Smaldino (1999). The model involves six stages which are analyze learner characteristics, state performance objectives, select suitable method, media and material, utilize materials and media for instruction, involve learner participation and evaluate and revise the module content to ensure its effectiveness. Third, Merrill's model was established by Merrill (2002) to achieve efficient instruction. The model adopts five principles in developing teaching and learning module like solving real-world problems, activating current knowledge, demonstrating new knowledge, applying new knowledge and integrating new knowledge. Finally, Sidek's model which was designed by Sidek and Jamaludin (2005). The model has two stages with the first stage comprises nine steps in preparing the draft and followed by the second stage involves evaluating the draft. The study employed ADDIE model as it is a systematic and structured approach, learner-centered design and flexible and adaptable to develop high-quality module.

Thus, the study aims to develop a culturally immersive language learning module that explores the local culture and provides international learners with a rich and authentic language learning experience while fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local culture. The module seeks to improve learners' linguistic skills, including pronunciation, speaking, listening, comprehension, and writing. On the whole, the approach should be able to enhance language proficiency and cultural competence, facilitating learners to confront global challenges with self-assurance and awareness.

## 2. Methodology

The study employed the ADDIE model to develop the module in five (5) stages, including analyzing, designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating the module. The module was given the title "Culturally Immersive Module: EnglishQuest. Figure 1 displays the research flow chart adapted from the ADDIE model for developing the module.

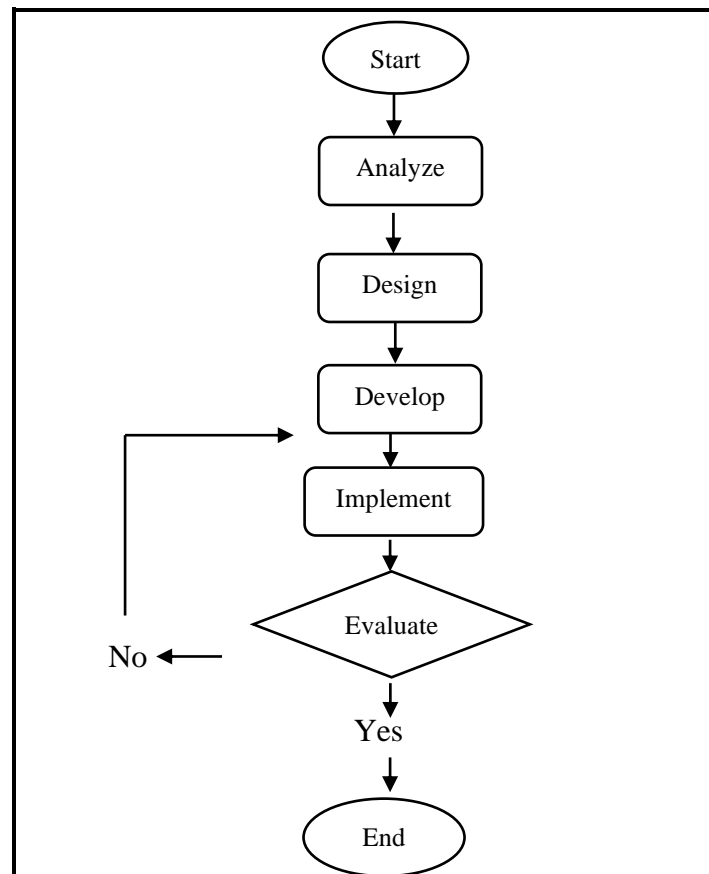


Figure 1: EnglishQuest module development flowchart adapted from the ADDIE model

## 2.1 Analyzing Stage

The objective, problems, outcomes, timeline, and budget were determined in the analyzing stage, as shown in Figure 2. The objective of developing the module is to incorporate culture-related activities in English language lessons as a learning tool. Generally, language-tourism courses in Malaysia are offered to international students learning the English language locally via the EduTourism Package. However, several problems were identified, indicating the need for the module. First, the courses lack culturally immersive activities. Most language-tourism courses are heavily language-based or have cultural trips as an added advantage. Out of 281 courses listed in the EduTourism Package, only seven (7) courses are embedded with some culturally immersive activities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2019). Second, the strong identity of the origin country, in this case, Japan, makes participants' pronunciation a common problem (Şimşek, 2025). Third, some participants stereotype Malaysia as a third-world country and have preconceived biases towards locals for speaking English with non-native accents (Gonja & Musaev, 2024; Tan et al., 2021). Fourth, the long-terminated closed-door policy has molded the Japanese national culture and resulted in public perception of the Japanese as a closed nation (Rookwood & Adeosun, 2021). Finally, some teaching tools used for the language-tourism courses may lack branding identity without ISBN and copyright. The EnglishQuest module aims to significantly enhance their learning experience while advocating Malaysia's melting pots of culture and linguistic variation by integrating teaching strategies to promote cultural understanding and linguistic competence among participants. The outcomes intended by the end of the implementation are to facilitate English language learning and outcomes. The timeline was six (6) months and involved three (3) experts with more than 15 years of teaching experience. The project was financially supported by an English course

between a Malaysian private higher education provider in Terengganu, Malaysia, and a Japanese university.

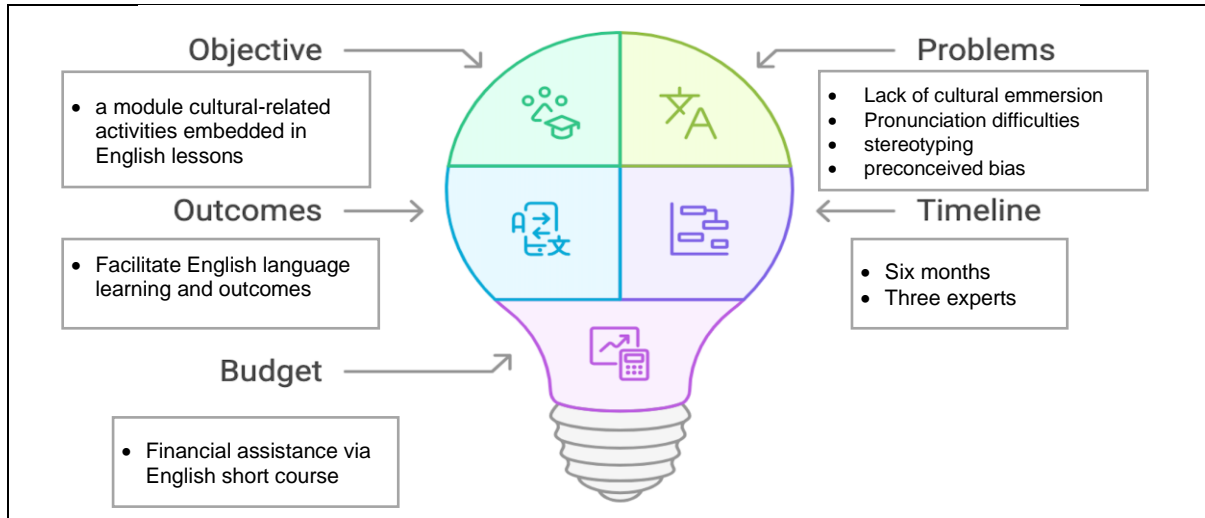


Figure 2: Analyzing stage adapted from the ADDIE model

## 2.2 Designing Stage

In the designing stage, ten (10) activity topics were selected, which include the Sound of the English language, local endangered animals, local dishes, local wedding customs, local climate, local versus origin language translation, local clothing, and local games (refer Table 1). The local cultural context in the module focuses primarily on Malay culture, customs, and traditions. The module was designed for a three-week English short course. Total learning hours are 124 hours including indoor and outdoor classes. The module utilizes various instructional techniques, including role-plays, multimedia materials, real-world situations, and group projects, to actively involve students in critical thinking and intercultural communication.

Table 1: Activity topics and instructional methods in the EnglishQuest module

Unit	Topic	Instructional Method	Activity
1	Sound of the English language	Multimedia material	Listening, watching and imitating English language sounds
2	Local endangered animals	Real world situation Group project	Visiting elephant sanctuary and
3	Local dishes	Real world situation Group project	Cooking food from cultural recipe exchange
4	Local wedding customs	Real world situation Role-play	Preparing for Malay wedding “bersanding” event
5	Local climate	Real world situation Group project Individual presentation	Reporting details about local and origin climates
6	Local versus origin language translation	Multimedia material	Translating local and origin language to English language
7	Local costumes	Real world situation Individual presentation	Batek runaway and creative adaptation
8	Local games	Real world situation Individual presentation	Playing traditional games in ‘Clash of the Titan’.
9	Local dance	Real world situation Individual presentation	Observing traditional dance performance and learning the dance.
10	Local musical instrument	Real world situation Individual presentation	Observing Gamelan performance and learning to play gamelan musical instruments

## 2.3 Developing Stage

The experts developed the module according to the design plan by creating materials based on cultural-related situations, content, and intended learning processes to achieve the learning objectives set for the topics. The graphics accompanying the materials were also drafted. Proofreading and editing were finished at the end of the sixth month.

## 2.4 Implementing Stage

The module was utilized to teach 14 Japanese students learning English from non-native English teachers. The total learning hours for the course are 124, and the total hours for cultural immersive activities are 80, with 22 hours for indoor and 58 hours for outdoor classes. The participants were accompanied by six (6) buddies and ten (10) ambassadors who were local tertiary students.

## 2.5 Evaluating Stage

Pre-tests were administered before the course started and post-tests were given immediately after the course ended using Preply, a free proficiency online test. The purpose was to determine the participants' proficiency level before learning using the module and to observe any improvements made after the course. The Preply evaluation method is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Seven (7) grades are utilized to describe proficiency levels as depicted in Figure 3. The highest grade is C2 indicating a proficient level and the lowest is A0 for beginner level. Those in the beginner level are further categorized into three (3) types: beginner, elementary, and pre-intermediate.

Meanwhile, those in the intermediate level are classified into two (2) categories: intermediate and upper intermediate. Those in the advanced category are grouped into two (2) categories, such as advanced and proficient. Descriptions for all categories are elucidated in Figure 3. Based on the proficiency test results, the module was amended to improve the content, particularly the materials and activities, so could be tested for the next batch of participants.

<b>A0</b> <b>Beginner</b> You are starting to learn your first few words.	<b>A1</b> <b>Elementary</b> You can understand and use basic expressions and phrases.	<b>A2</b> <b>Pre-Intermediate</b> You can communicate in a simple way and perform routine tasks.
<b>B1</b> <b>Intermediate</b> You can understand and use sentences on familiar or personally interesting topics encountered in work, school or travel.	<b>B2</b> <b>Upper-Intermediate</b> You can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity with native speakers.	<b>C1</b> <b>Advanced</b> You can use the language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.
<b>C2</b> <b>Proficient</b> You can understand with ease everything heard or read and can express yourself very fluently and precisely in more complex situations.		

Figure 3: Proficiency grades based on CEFR

### 3. Results and Discussions

The module was tested on 14 participants from a Japanese university who were learning a three-week English short course from local English language teaching staff at a local tertiary institution. The participants took a pre and post-test using Preply to determine improvement in proficiency levels after utilizing the module for English learning. Nine (9) female participants were labeled F1 to F9, and five (5) male participants were labeled M1 to M5, as shown in Table 2. The table tabulates the results of participants' proficiency levels before and after undertaking the course using the EnglishQuest module. The results show that six (6) participants demonstrated improvements in proficiency level. Those include F1 from A2 (pre-intermediate level) to B2 (upper-intermediate level), F2, F3 and M5 from A2 (pre-intermediate level) to B1 (intermediate level), F9 from B1 (intermediate level) and M1 from B1 (intermediate level) to C1 (advanced level). The results indicate that almost half of the participants have improved their proficiency levels after learning English using the EnglishQuest module. Thus, incorporating and experiencing local culture as part of English learning materials and activities assists in improving international students' English language acquisition. However, the module should be further revised so that more participants can benefit from its application.

**Table 2: Results of pre and post-tests using Preply**

Student	Pre-Test Level	Post-Test Level
F1	A2	B2*
F2	A2	B1*
F3	A2	B1*
F4	A2	A2
F5	B1	B1
F6	B2	B2
F7	B1	B1
F8	B1	B1
F9	B1	B2*
M1	B1	C1*
M2	A2	A2
M3	A2	A2
M4	B1	B1
M5	A2	B1*

*\*Improved proficiency level*

Nevertheless, the results also reveal that eight (8) participants maintained their level of proficiency despite learning the English language via immersive cultural materials using the EnglishQuest module. Those include F4, M2 and M3 retained the proficiency level at A2 (pre-intermediate level), F5, F7, F8 and M4 at B1 (intermediate level) and F6 at B2 (upper-intermediate level). The results imply that the immersive method is not universally effective to improve all learners' proficiency. It may assist some learners while others might require additional support or alternate techniques.

### 4. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

In conclusion, the EnglishQuest culturally immersive module indicates its ability to improve English language acquisition by integrating local cultural elements into lessons, particularly for international students. Innovative gaming inclusion and cultural context in the materials



contribute to enhancing linguistic competency and providing enriched engagement. The module demonstrates that a culturally immersive curriculum promotes an interactive and student-centered approach to stimulate meaningful language learning experiences, aligning with the recent body of research (Castillo, 2025; Kim, Lee & Park, 2025a; Sanchez & William, 2025; Shamsidin, 2024); Thongchai, 2024). Ultimately, the module provides an alternative to teaching and learning approaches to improving English language proficiency.

The EnglishQuest module development has implications for students and teachers alike. First, it reinforces that English language learning is not simply about grammar and vocabulary acquisition, but also about immersing in real-life cultural settings in which English is utilized (Odilova, 2025; Munday & Polley, 2025). Its potential suggests a paradigm change promoting experiential learning beyond the traditional classroom teaching process that enhances learner engagement and motivation (Patel, Jain & Kumar, 2025). Developing culturally immersive tools like EnglishQuest could inspire educators to implement more context-rich methods of English teaching. It may support more financial provisions for developing such modules that include cultural elements in English language learning.

EnglishQuest primarily includes Malay culture, customs, and traditions as the cultural context for the content. Hence, it is recommended that future versions adopt other local cultures such as Chinese, Indian, and the aborigines to promote diverse cultural scenarios and experiential learning. It connects learners with numerous cultures while enriching their intercultural experience and global outlook (Kim, Lee & Park, 2025b). It is also highly suggested that future research trace learners' progress for a certain extended duration using longitudinal research after the short course completed to observe the extent of skills retaining and application in everyday life (Baker & Wong, 2025).

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