

# International Teaching Assistants’ Development of Cultural competence: A Critical Literature Synthesis

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### Introduction

- **382,953** international graduate students enrolled in 2018 in United States (IIE,2019).
- **“The foreign TA problem”** (Baily, 1983): International teaching assistants (ITAs) are facing challenges in language, culture and pedagogy (Zhou, 2009) and many American students have negative perceptions of ITAs (Fitch & Morgan, 2003) .
- **Cultural competence** in education: the ongoing process in which the educators continuously strive to achieve the ability and availability to teach students with different cultural backgrounds effectively (Campinha-Bacote, 2010; Diller & Moule, 2005).

### Theoretical Framework (Campinha-Bacote, 2010)

**Cultural awareness:** Self-examination and in-depth exploration of one’s biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions that one holds about students who are different from them.  
**Cultural knowledge:** The process of seeking and obtaining a sound educational base about diverse cultural groups.  
**Cultural skill:** The ability to collect and interpret cultural data regarding beliefs, values, and behaviors for more effective instruction.  
**Cultural desire:** The motivation of “wanting to”, not “having to”, engage in the process of becoming more culturally competent  
**Cultural encounter:** The continuous process of interacting with students from different cultural background to validate, refine, or modify existing values, beliefs, and practices about a cultural group and to develop the other four components of cultural competence.

### Future research directions

1. Explore ways to use **cultural encounter as a core strategy** to impact other components of ITAs’ cultural competence.
2. Explore how ITAs’ **cultural competence can impact American students’ perceptions of ITAs.**
3. Explore **the interconnections among ITAs’ three major challenges**, especially how pedagogical competence can impact ITAs’ development of cultural linguistic competence.

No literature has addressed **the pivotal role of *cultural encounter*** in ITAs’ development of cultural competence.

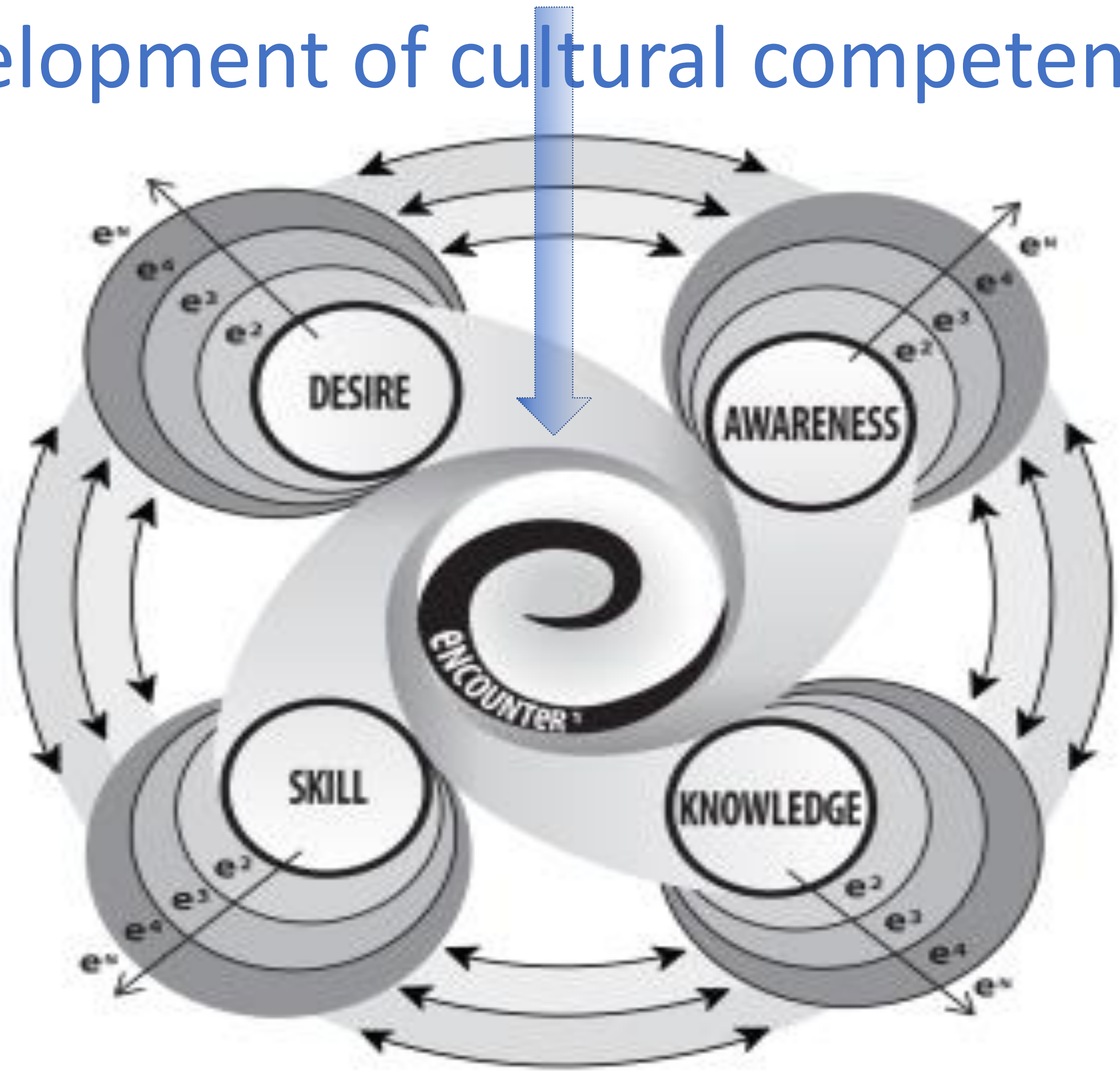


Figure 1. The Process of Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Healthcare Services (Campinha-Bacote,2007).

Previous research tackle ITAs’ challenges in language, culture, and pedagogy **separately**, instead of as a **whole**.

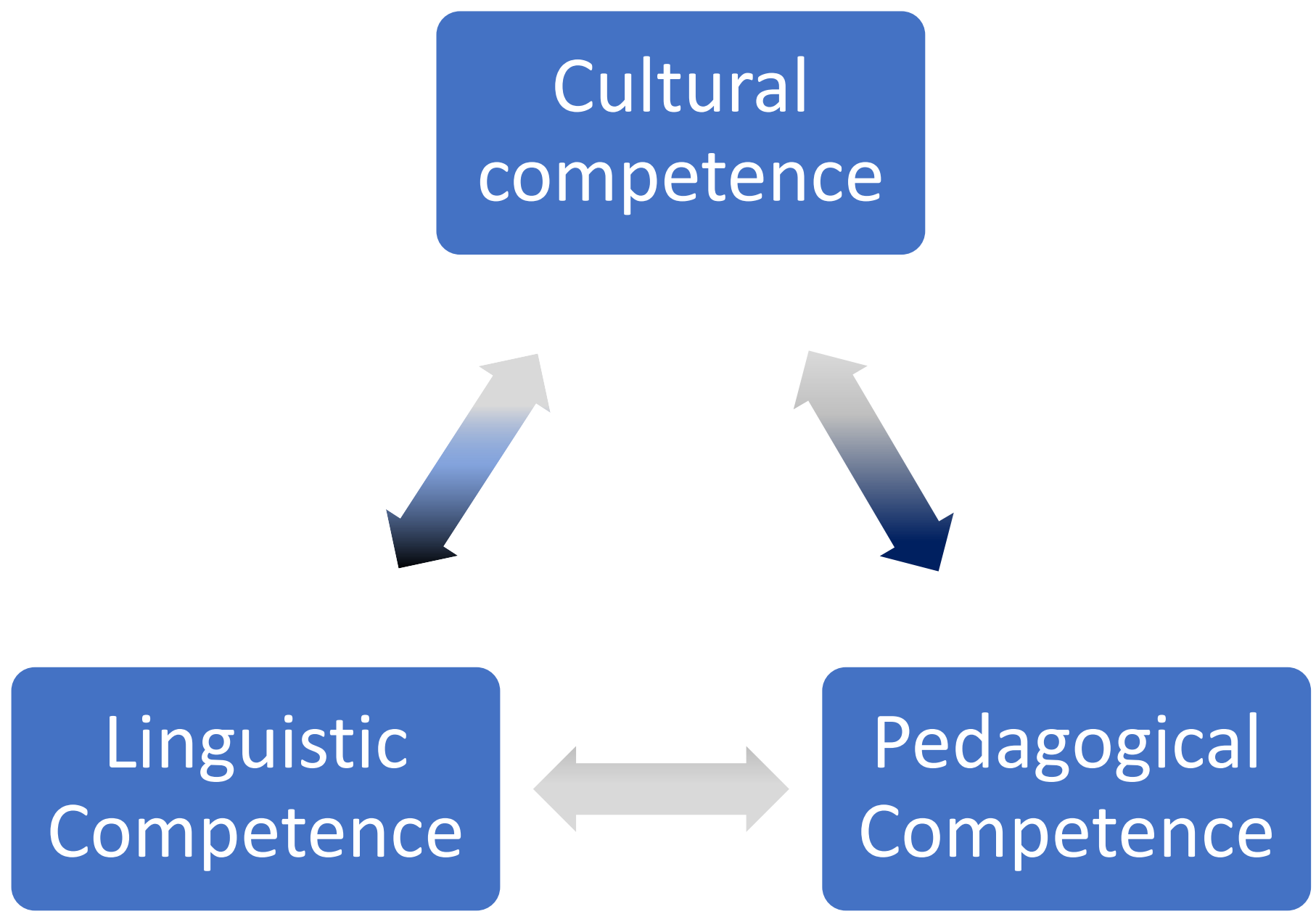
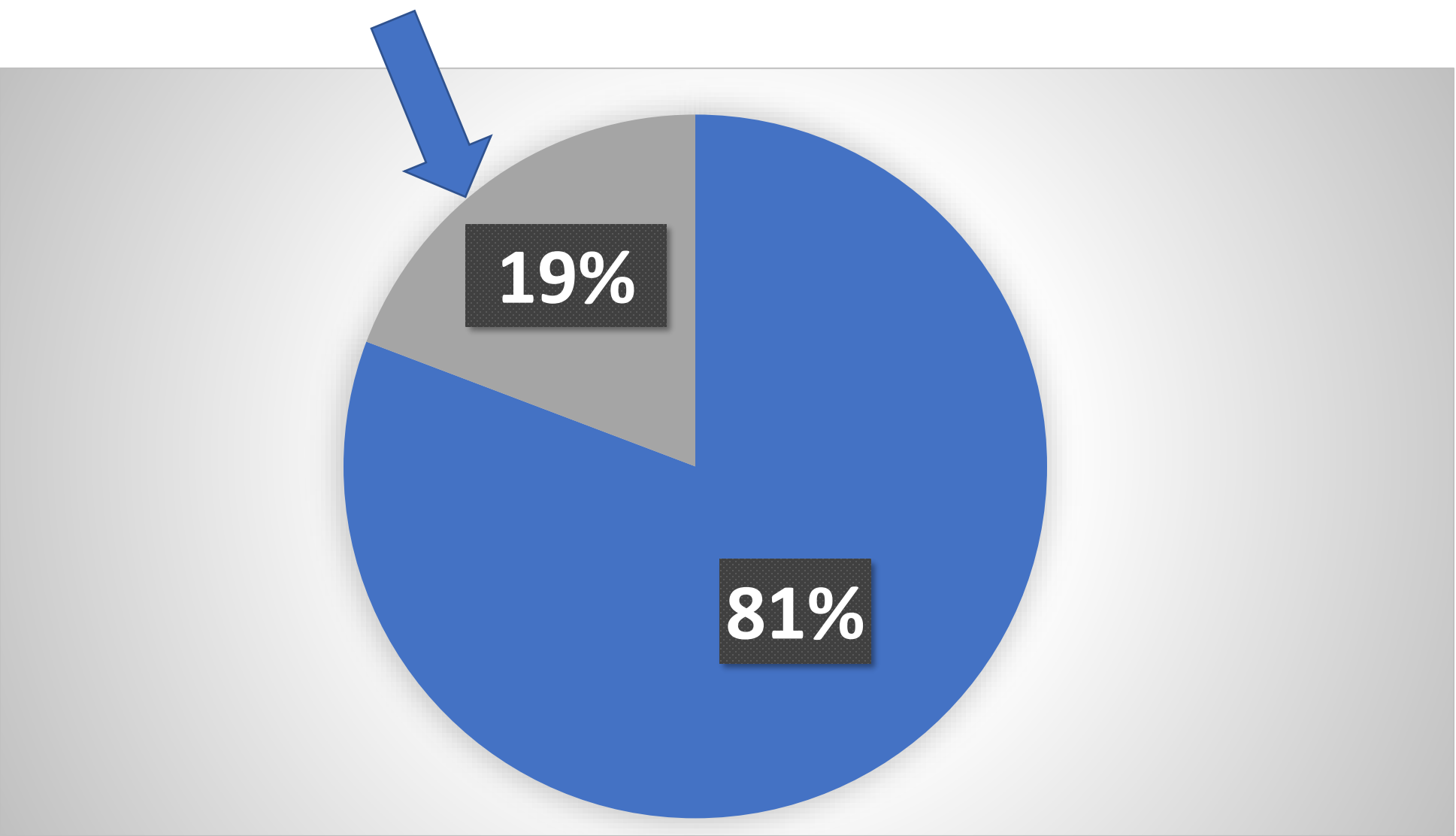


Figure 2. The potential interconnections of ITAs’ three major challenges

ITAs’ cultural competence can have a **compensating effect** on their language barrier.

**Data analysis**  
From a collection of **105** peer-reviewed manuscripts on ITA research, **25** were relevant to ITA cultural competence.



Only **36%** of the 25 manuscripts addressed cultural encounter.

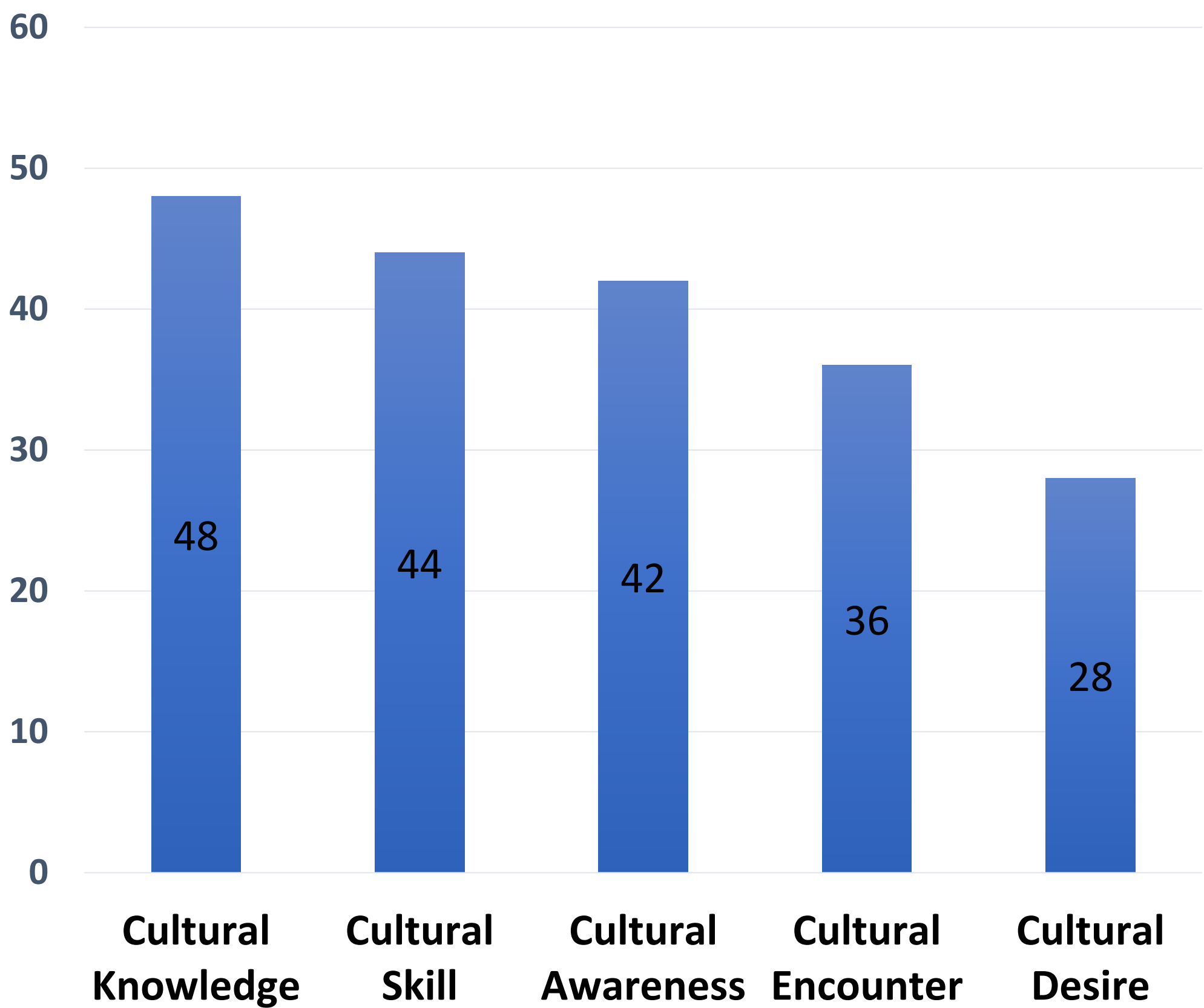


Figure 3. The frequency of each component addressed in literature.

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