

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE  
AMONG CHINESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AT A CHINESE UNIVERSITY

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my loving husband Peter, and my little angel Virginia.

献给我的父母家人。

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

College English Test .....	CET
Communicative Language Teaching .....	CLT
Community of Practice .....	CoP
Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity .....	DMIS
English as a Foreign Language .....	EFL
English as a Second Language.....	ESL
Foreign Language .....	FL
Intercultural Competence.....	IC
Test for English Majors .....	TEM
World Englishes.....	WEs
World Language.....	WL

## **ABSTRACT**

### **BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG CHINESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AT A CHINESE UNIVERSITY**

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George Mason University, 2013

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The foreign/world language (FL/WL) profession has become more concerned with intercultural dimensions of language teaching and learning. Various models and theories have been suggested from both inside and outside the language education field to help teachers understand the intercultural dimensions in teaching and improve their practices regarding intercultural competence (IC) in their language classes. The development of IC in FL/WL classrooms has recently just begun to gain attention from Chinese college teachers of English as an educational innovation. However, empirical research on this topic has been minimal. The literature is also scarce on discussing how IC is viewed similarly or differently in different cultures, and particularly as they might be viewed similarly or differently in eastern and western cultures. This study therefore aims to investigate aspects of IC in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes in China and its development in instructional approaches and practices, provide empirical research

based in Chinese university classrooms on the perceptions and practices of Chinese teachers of English regarding IC, examine IC in EFL classrooms from the Eastern perspective, and explore new “territory” in identifying and defining aspects of IC.

The research collects both quantitative and qualitative data to provide particular lenses to different dimensions of intercultural competence and to bring out detailed contextual analysis. The research site is a large public university located in a large city in eastern China. There are 96 Chinese teachers teaching English in this university. A survey on teachers’ perceptions of intercultural competence was distributed to these teachers. A sample of 11 teachers was selected for class observations and one-on-one interviews.

The findings of this study suggested that IC development in the Chinese EFL classroom carries with it a sense of Chineseness and an emphasis on transmitting a Chinese consciousness. The participating teachers’ perceived IC involves various aspects, including not only the behavioral, cognitive, and attitudinal dimensions of IC, but also the moral aim of developing the learner to be a whole person under the influence of Confucianism. Despite the various aspects the participating teachers discussed in terms of the conceptualization of IC, their most commonly IC practices still aimed to promote the acquisition of a body of knowledge regarding cultural facts, practices and perspectives. Though most of the teachers recognized the importance of IC, the intercultural dimensions of teaching have not yet become a regular focus in their EFL classes. Traditional teacher-centered teaching approach still dominated the participating teachers’ cultural teaching practices. Data also suggested that Chinese philosophy, institutional

context, and personal background contributed to the construction of the Chinese teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in EFL teaching. The barriers for the teachers to implement their beliefs appeared as teachers' lack of cultural knowledge, the test oriented system, curriculum requirements, and students' limited language proficiency.

On the basis of this work, implications and suggestions are made for teacher educators, policy makers, developers of curriculum and instructional materials, and the Chinese teachers of English. Professional development programs that particularly focus on IC development are needed. Teachers need curriculum and instructional materials that support them in terms of cultural content and instructional pedagogies. It would also be beneficial for teachers and curriculum developers both home and abroad to form Communities of practice (CoPs) and hold discussions on IC development in the FL/WL classrooms.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant world language that links people with different backgrounds (Crystal, 1997; McArthur, 1998, 2003; Pennycook, 1994; Tam, 2004). Language offers people access to understand the intangible values, beliefs, perspectives, and thoughts that frame different cultures (Seelye, 1993). While globalization has made the geographical gaps between and among the world's regions and countries smaller, many challenges and differences still remain that call for increased understanding of intangible values, beliefs, perspectives, and thoughts. With recent increasing social and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and China, it has become especially critical for English language teachers in China and teacher educators in both countries to not only facilitate the study of language, but also be able to scaffold the development of intercultural competence (IC) in their classrooms.

In 2010, the Central Government of the People's Republic of China listed in its *National Plan for Midlong Term Education Reforms and Development (2010-2020)* an educational policy for universities to engage in "broad and multiple collaborations for enhancing internationalization" (The Central Government of the People's Republic of China Website, 2010). This was the first time that the term *internationalization* gained its appearance in China's national educational policy. As part of this policy, increasing numbers of exchanges are being strongly encouraged and supported. During the 2010-

2011 academic year, a total of 157,558 students from China came to study at academic institutions in the U.S. This number accounted for 21.8% of all international students in the U.S. and also made China the top sending country (Institute of International Education, 2011). At the same time, with the estimated number of English learners in China amounting to more than 300 million (Liu, 2010), the need for qualified teachers of English has become increasingly significant. As a result, a large number of teachers from the U.S. have traveled to China to teach English. Nonetheless, the majority of English teachers in China are native Chinese. The movements of Chinese students and American teachers just represent a small portion of the exchanges that are occurring between the U.S. and China, but they have already created an urgent need for increased intercultural understanding from both sides. As teachers are a determining force in student performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), how Chinese teachers of English view and practice intercultural development in their classrooms will have an impact on their students' performance in future intercultural encounters. As college students are most likely to face real life intercultural encounters soon after they graduate and step into the society, how their teachers view and practice intercultural development in their foreign language classrooms might have the most immediate influence on their intercultural performances. Therefore, this research aims to gain an insight into the beliefs and practices regarding intercultural (IC) development among Chinese teachers of English in a Chinese university.

In this chapter, the purposes of this study are elaborated, research questions presented and significance of the study illustrated. To set the stage for the research that



follows, I need to first explain the concept of *teacher* in China. All primary and secondary teachers and post-secondary professors in China are called *laoshi*, meaning *teacher*. In higher education in China, although there are four academic titles for the faculty members, namely, assistant lecturer, lecturer, associate professor, and professor, *teacher* is a respectful title for all of them. Therefore, I will follow the Chinese custom and use *teacher* throughout the study to refer to the university level faculty members in this study.

### **Purposes of the Study**

There are multiple purposes for conducting this study: practical, intellectual, and personal. I will first present the practical purposes by situating the study in the larger context of EFL teaching in China and identifying the practical needs for this study. In the section on intellectual purposes, I will outline intercultural competence study in the foreign/world language field and the current research concerns. The personal purposes will center on what motivated me to conduct this study.

### **Practical Purposes**

Having been an English learner and teacher for over twenty years in China, I have gone through periods when language educational focuses have shifted from linguistic competence to communicative competence. When I started learning English in middle school in late 1980s, grammar-translation was the dominant teaching method: we were memorizing vocabulary and grammatical rules, translating texts word for word, and doing grammar drills. Very little attention was placed on pronunciation or any communicative aspects of the language. When I became an English major in the 1990s,

greater emphasis began to be placed on culture in the English courses. Culture teaching at that time in China was mainly focusing on foreign or, more specifically, western customs and civilization by presenting readings that touched upon the lives of people in English-speaking countries. Cultural knowledge consisted primarily of knowing the historically important individuals and great events of civilization. So the incorporation of culture was actually more a question of learning about another culture than about attempting to develop cultural competence, or even intercultural competence.

Teaching for communicative competence began to take hold after I started teaching English at tertiary level in China at the end of the 1990s, focusing on developing students' skills to conduct meaningful communication in the target language. Role-plays, presentations and paired-learning became popular in classroom activities. The older body of cultural knowledge as facts gradually experienced a transition to a set of social norms of which one must be cognizant in order to function in authentic communication. I've come to learn that this set of changes and progression from teaching language through grammar-translation and dialogue memorization to more interactive and communicative approaches paralleled changes in foreign/world language teaching and learning in the U.S., as well.

Over time, the foreign/world language (FL/WL) profession has gradually changed focus and become less focused on the concept of culture as the "four Fs" of fun, foods, facts, and fashion, and has taken a deeper notion of culture that is more concerned with intercultural dimensions of language teaching and learning (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003; Fox, & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Matsuda, 2002; Sercu, 2006; Tam,

2004). In addition to this change for going deeper for culture, culture is no longer seen as something external to the activity of language teaching and learning itself. Kramsch (1993) stated that “culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is always in the background, right from day 1” (p. 1).

The development of intercultural competence in foreign/world language classrooms has recently just begun to gain attention from Chinese college teachers of English as an educational innovation (Wang & Liu, 2008). In 2004, for the first time in history, China’s national College English Curriculum Requirements (For Trial Implementation) (China Ministry of Education, 2004) required that cultural enhancement, aiming to help students to achieve effective intercultural communication, should be included in EFL education in order to meet the new communication demands of contemporary globalization. This research aims to provide an insight into how IC is actualized in EFL classes in Chinese universities.

English learning is mandatory for all undergraduate students especially in the first two years of their higher education. According to the Statistics of China Ministry of Education (2010), there are a total of over 22 million undergraduate students enrolled in the regular higher education institutes in China. The majority of these students are studying in the 1,684 public universities in China and the majority of their English teachers are native Chinese. The research site for this study is a large-scale public university located in Shanghai, the largest city by population in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Founded in 1951, this university belongs to the first group of universities

after the PRC was established in 1949. Traditionally a key university directly under the Ministry of Education, this university has also been selected as a *Project 211* university. China's *Project 211* ("21" standing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and "1" standing for 100 universities) is a government initiated project aiming to promote the development of one hundred Chinese universities to be the leading institutes in China's higher education (China Education and Research Network, 2001). This university currently has over 30,000 students and over 2,800 faculty and staff, among which approximately 100 are full-time Chinese teachers of English.

The practical goals of studying the Chinese teachers of English in this research site are to investigate some of the features of intercultural teaching in EFL classes in China, with the aim of pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of it, and to make suggestions for EFL teacher preparation and development in China.

### **Intellectual Purposes**

Many researchers have emphasized the role of IC in FL/WL education. Alptekin (2002) questioned the validity of the pedagogic model based on the native speaker-based notion of communicative competence and advocated the realization of intercultural communicative competence as the aim of world language teaching. Matsuda (2002) further pointed out that the cultural perspective embedded in English did not refer to any particular country or region, but the importance of "intercultural understanding" (p. 436). Tam (2004) argued that teaching English should not be considered as merely language teaching, but "more importantly also as the teaching of global cultures, which will form the basis of intellectual education for the twenty-first century" (p. 21).

However, a growing body of literature has revealed that IC teaching is not yet common practice among FL/WL teachers. In France, a study by Aleksandroxicz-Pedich, Draghicescu, Issaiass, and Sabec (2003) revealed that IC was taught in “an implicit way” in the world language classroom. At that time, FL/WL teachers failed to demonstrate the need for intercultural understanding. In Belgium, Sercu (2005a) confirmed in her study the hypothesis that teachers might not yet have employed approaches that favor the teaching of communicative competence for approaches towards the acquisition of IC. Various models and theories have been suggested from both inside and outside the WL field to help teachers understand intercultural dimensions in language teaching and improve their practices regarding intercultural competence in their language classes (e.g., Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Kramsch, 1993, 1999, 2011). Given this background and call for IC, what is the current situation in China?

Are Chinese teachers of English in China aware of the development of IC in their teaching practice? What role does culture play in English language classrooms in China? How do they perceive the concept of IC in EFL teaching? Do they incorporate this concept in their classroom practices? If they do, then how? Is the concept of IC in the WL domain developed mostly in the western context, also applicable to the Chinese context? Unfortunately, no published article up until 2010 has been found that conducted empirical research to answer these questions. The literature is also scarce on discussing how IC is viewed similarly or differently in different cultures, and particularly as they might be viewed similarly or differently in eastern and western cultures. In the past five decades, scholars have discussed IC primarily from Western perspectives (Deardorff,

2009; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Details regarding these two perspectives will be examined in Chapter 2. While seeing from others' perspectives is by itself a key factor of IC, it is fundamental for IC researchers to explore IC from different cultural perspectives.

This research, therefore, has sought to enrich the IC literature by adding additional Chinese perspectives, and specifically as they emerged from classrooms in China where students were taught English by Chinese teachers. It has inquired about how Chinese teachers of English in China, and especially in a Chinese university, interpreted the concept of IC, how they specified their IC objectives, how they tried to achieve these objectives, how their IC perceptions and practices compared to those in the US context, how past education and life experiences shaped the identities of the Chinese teachers of English and how their identities might affect their IC beliefs and practices in their classrooms. This study has also sought to articulate common themes that emerged from different perspectives (e.g. Chinese and Western), as well as questions that arose in order to sharpen the perceptions about the complex concept of IC. Therefore, in terms of general intellectual purposes, this project has intended to “understand complex phenomena”, “examine the past”, and “generate new ideas” (Greene, 2007, pp. 96-97), particularly as these phases pertained to Eastern perspectives.

### **Personal Purposes**

I was born and brought up in China. I received a B.A. in English and International Business in China, and completed an M.A. program in Applied Linguistics in China and another M.A. program in European Studies in the Netherlands. I came to the U.S. in 2007 as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant to teach Chinese to American

college students and become familiar with various pedagogical approaches, including the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Littlewood, 1981), the dialogic approach (Osterling & Fox, 2004), and student-centered, standards-driven, contextualized language instruction (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). I have also had the opportunity to travel extensively in many European countries and the U.S. while staying in these countries. Therefore, I felt I was linguistically, culturally, and practically ready when I returned to China to resume teaching English in a Chinese university in 2008. The general positive feedback from my students in different English classes I taught also confirmed my thought on my readiness to teach. However, I still kept wondering why the students' English performance did not turn out as I expected especially in real life communication, like the axiom said "just because we teach it, doesn't mean that our students learn it." To understand the "why", I started my journey towards being a researcher.

In the fall of 2009, I entered the doctoral program in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University in the U.S. The very first course I took, World Perspectives in Teacher Education, caused me to begin challenging and questioning some of my past beliefs and practices in English teaching in China. The discussion of Y. Kachru's (2005) article on World Englishes called me to rethink some important aspects of the English teaching context in China. Unlike the context of teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the U.S. or other English-speaking countries, teaching English in China is teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The difference is that the EFL context does not require learners to use and apply

the language on a daily basis in English speaking schools and environments, as it does, for example, in the U.S.

Reflecting on my past experiences with this new perspective in mind, I thought of one of my students in China who complained to me “why we have to reproduce some American plays in our English festival every time? Why can’t we translate some Chinese plays to English and perform them?” While it is true that authentic materials, such as American plays, expose students to cultural messages and values associated with English-speaking societies to some extent, how teachers integrate authentic materials in their teaching has a huge impact on the depth of intercultural learning experienced by students. Though my colleagues and I tried hard to include authentic cultural materials in the students’ English learning process, it is clear to me now that we nonetheless focused primarily on the development of linguistic competence and largely ignored approaches we might use to help students understand the cultural dimensions present in language learning. When choosing cultural materials, we seemed to naturally turn to those from the inner circle countries (B. Kachru, 1985), such as the U.S. and U.K., and took them as authentic, without considering the potential rejection from students due to many factors, such as even an identity crisis. The student’s thought of staging a Chinese play in English might suggest she simply did not understand the cultural dimension of this activity. It might also be taken as a way of negotiating her Chinese identity in the English learning process. As Fant (2001) pointed out, language learners more or less unconsciously want to protect their own identities, which they sense are endangered in intercultural interaction. I found that I wanted to bring this essential dimension to



language learning into my educational practice, and I wanted to investigate the most effective ways to accomplish this.

According to Dooly and Villanueva (2006), teachers need to develop their intercultural awareness in order to help students be aware of cultures (their own and those of others), and to facilitate students in using such awareness to interpret and understand cultures. What had been missing in my past English teaching experience was exactly the intercultural awareness in teachers that was beyond developing mere communicative competence in students. This reflection started my journey of exploring the intercultural dimension in language teaching and teacher education.

### **Research Questions**

With the need for greater research in the area of intercultural competence, and most particularly as it applies in world language classrooms in China, this study investigates aspects of intercultural competence in EFL classes in China and its application in instructional approaches and practices, provides empirical research based in Chinese university classrooms on the perceptions and practices of Chinese teachers of English regarding intercultural competence, examines intercultural competence in EFL classrooms from the Eastern perspective, and explores new “territory” in identifying and defining aspects of IC and measuring them. Based on these purposes, the overarching research questions guiding this study are the following:

1. How do Chinese teachers of English in China perceive intercultural competence in their English language teaching?

2. How do Chinese teachers of English apply dimensions of intercultural competence in their teaching of English?
3. How do the intercultural competence beliefs of the Chinese teachers of English and other factors inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?

The first question is designed to understand how Chinese teachers of English define IC in their teaching and how important each IC dimension is to Chinese teachers of English. The second question seeks to understand these teachers' IC objectives and activities in EFL classrooms, to identify the IC dimensions in their EFL teaching, and to delineate possible IC teaching patterns, or lack thereof. The third question seeks to understand what might be the prompts or constraints for the teachers in implementing their IC beliefs in the classrooms and to further elaborate the dimensions of IC in the Chinese context.

### **Significance of the Problem**

The findings from this study hold significance for Chinese teachers of English by helping them identify aspects of intercultural competence in their teaching practice and comprehend whether or not a gap exists between what they believe and what they practice in their classrooms, which contributes toward the development of their knowledge base of IC development in their Chinese classrooms. The study also benefits FL/WL teachers beyond China by providing them with different entry points for an examination of the assumptions they may hold regarding their role as a teacher and a window into Eastern/Chinese thinking about IC. This study also affords FL/WL teachers

and teacher educators an opportunity to reflect on current world practices and understandings about intercultural competence, and helps them to also reflect on their own practices by learning about the practices and perspectives of others.

The findings from this study also direct attention to FL/WL teacher education and professional development regarding IC development. The in-depth understanding of FL/WL teachers' perspectives in their own contexts assists education policy makers and leaders in implementing and designing appropriate teacher professional development programs. In addition, as more and more EFL teachers from the US and other countries around the world are coming to teach in China, this study provides English as a Foreign Language teacher educators both in China and around world with some valuable information about teachers' existing beliefs about intercultural competence, IC teaching practices, and teachers' readiness to develop learners' intercultural competence in their world language classrooms. Last but not least, this study contributes to the broad literature in the FL/WL education, and specifically on intercultural competence, by providing both the perceptions of IC from the Eastern perspective and empirical findings on the IC development from the EFL classrooms in China.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have presented the justification and rationale for investigating the beliefs and practices of Chinese teachers of English in China regarding intercultural competence, an essential component and goal of foreign/world language teaching and learning. I have highlighted the need for IC development in English teaching in China, particularly in response to the current broad context of globalization and

internationalization. I also introduced the importance for enriching the IC literature with the perspectives from Chinese teachers of English in China. There is, to date, little to no research conducted and published that addresses this important area of world language education. In the following chapter I present the theoretical framework grounding of this study, along with the conceptual framework used to illustrate the dimensions of IC and the English teaching in the Chinese university context.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature addressing the concept and practice of intercultural competence (IC) in FL/WL education. It consists of four sections. First, dimensions of IC in the broader literature are presented which provide the conceptualization of IC used in this study. Next, IC perspectives, theories and models in language education are reviewed. In the third section, I introduce relevant research findings found in western contexts regarding teachers' beliefs about and practices of intercultural teaching, and then present intercultural teaching in the Chinese EFL context at both theoretical and practical levels. The fourth section discusses IC research on teachers' beliefs and practices, highlighting the need for study of Chinese teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in the Chinese EFL context.

### **Dimensions and Conceptualization of Intercultural Competence**

Studies conducted within the last three to four decades have just begun to flesh out the components of IC and how to better understand, measure, and apply it within the social sciences and other domains. Coming from various disciplines such as communication, psychology, education, and business, various kinds of terminology have been interchangeably used with this term; for instance, *intercultural sensitivity* (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), *intercultural communication competence* (Chen, 1992), *global competence* (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006), *intercultural*

*maturity* (King & Magolda, 2005), *interculturality* (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006), *international mindedness* (Duckworth, Levy & Levy, 2005), and *intercultural communicative competence* (Byram, 1997). Across multiple sources, literature in the field suggests that IC might be characterized according to three dimensions: 1) the behavioral dimension, or culturally appropriate behavior in intercultural encounters; 2) the cognitive dimension, or the ability to perceive and understand cultural knowledge and view points; and 3) the affective dimension, or positive attitudes towards different cultures (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Cui & Van den Berg, 1991; Sercu, 2004; Spitzberg, 1991). Such distinctions between doing and thinking, knowledge and awareness, attitudes and sensitivity in interculturally competent ways may seem simple and clear when reading about them, whereas when one begins to determine specific characteristics associated with each or when attempting to rate individuals according to a scale, multiple variables emerge regarding the complexity of IC. It is also in the interrelatedness of these three dimensions that offers a prelude to the current themes of IC in the field of FL/WL education. Kramsch (2011) has recently argued for adding a symbolic dimension to the concept of IC. An elaboration on each of these four dimensions both in general and in the WL domain provides a foundation for the working definition of intercultural competence used in this study.

### **The Behavioral Dimension**

Early research focused either on efforts to characterize aspects of intercultural effectiveness or attempts to identify behaviors associated with effective intercultural communication (Cleveland, Mangone, & Adams, 1960; Gardner, 1962; Ruben, 1976;

Ruben & Kealey, 1979). Fifty years ago, Cleveland et al. (1960) identified four characteristics that suggested an intercultural aptitude in Americans for working overseas. The ideal candidates were “resourceful and buoyant;” had “environmental mobility” in their background, possessed “intellectual curiosity,” and had a talent for “building institutions” (Cleveland et al., 1960, p. 2). Although these predictors of success are still valid today, they are also extremely vague.

During that same period, Gardner (1962) outlined five characteristics of the “universal communicator” as someone who possessed: “1) an unusual degree of integration or stability; 2) a central organization of the extrovert type; 3) a value system which includes the values of all people; 4) socialized on the basis of cultural universals; and 5) a marked telepathic or intuition sensitivity” (Gardner, 1962, p. 382). Gardner’s approach was viewed as biased as it made the flawed assumption that a common universality existed of values and cultural aspects of humanity.

Later, Ruben’s (1976) introduced seven dimensions of IC which considered integrating a variety of approaches in an attempt to more accurately gauge competence. The seven dimensions were: 1) display of respect and the ability to express respect and positive regard for another person, 2) interaction posture – the ability to respond to others in a descriptive, non-evaluating, and nonjudgmental way, 3) orientation to knowledge – the extent to which people recognize their view of knowledge to be individual to them, 4) empathy – the capacity to put oneself in another’s shoes, 5) self-oriented role behavior – the ability to be flexible in one’s role, 6) interaction management – where effective management equals taking turns and assessing the other’s needs in the communication,

and 7) tolerance for ambiguity. Ruben's approach was limited in that it was still restricted to behaviors associated with an interculturally competent person. These behaviors were described, and yet not easily measurable.

Culture has always been inextricably linked with language, and in the 1990s, the development of IC has become a more explicit objective. In an era where performance indicators were increasingly called for, new refinements in thinking began to emerge. In particular, IC became more of a visible aspect of world language teaching and learning. A prominent researcher in the field of foreign/world languages, Byram (1997) listed intercultural competence as an ability within his broader model of intercultural communicative competence. He suggested that IC required not only the development of language proficiency as stated in communicative competence, but also emphasized an equally important ability of intercultural exploration, understanding, interpretation, and mediation. Byram believed that learners with IC were able to act as mediators between the target and their home culture: they understood the target language and the behaviors of its people and could explain them to people from both their home culture and the target culture. Corbett's research (2003) also considered the behavioral dimension of IC by taking it as building on and complementing the communicative approach in that "(1) culture becomes a regular focus of the information exchanged, and (2) learners have the opportunity to reflect upon how the information is exchanged, and the cultural factors impinging upon the exchange" (p. 32).



## The Cognitive Dimension

In addition to the behavioral dimension of IC, researchers in various disciplines also proposed several cognitive models of intercultural adaptation (e.g. Perry, 1970; Bennett, 1993). Perry (1970) suggested that students went through seven stages of intellectual development. Students began as *dualistic thinkers* who sought after absolute authorities. They became *confused thinkers* when they were overwhelmed with the multiplicity of perspectives available. Many of them grew to be *structural thinkers* who were able to perceive different patterns of thought in the variety of alternatives open to them. Some ended up being *committed thinkers* who were able to identify with a particular way of thinking as part of their identity.

Drawing in part on Perry, Bennett (1993) proposed the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS) describing a number of stages people go through when they encounter cultural difference and how they respond cognitively at each stage to the difference. Bennett's DMIS was composed of seven developmental stages, denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration, which were distributed along a continuum extending from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism*. *Ethnocentrism* is a term used to describe people who believe that their own culture offers a more adequate understanding of reality than do other cultures. *Ethnorelativism*, on the other end of the continuum, assumes that one culture can only be understood relative to another and that behaviors are context-bound and can only be understood within the cultural context. Each stage of the DMIS is intended to be indicative of a particular worldview structure, with certain kinds of cognition, affect, and behavior vis-à-vis cultural difference typically

associated with each stage. Changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills are taken as manifestations of changes in the underlying worldview.

In the teacher education field, recent research by Duckworth et al. (2005) focused on thinking interculturally in their investigation of the *international mindedness* of international school teachers. They used Bennett's (1993) DMIS to describe *intercultural sensitivity* as the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences. Dooly & Villanueva (2006) also attempted to draw a distinction between *intercultural awareness* and *intercultural communicative competence*, arguing that such awareness could help learners interpret and understand others more than merely "communicate" with others. In research specific to the field of WL education, Crozet, Liddicoat, and Lo Bianco (1999) took intercultural language teaching as the most "complete and versatile tool available to understand and to experience how language and culture shape one's and others' worldviews, which is the essence of intercultural communicative competence" (p.11).

### **The Affective Dimension**

Knowledge, skill and experience do not necessarily foster the development of positive attitudes or the affective dimension of IC. Intercultural competence implies not only knowledge but also the willingness to display intercultural sensitivity and behave accordingly. Hammer et al. (1978) honed in on the affective component, which they defined as *a third culture perspective*. They argued that this third culture was different from home/first culture and target/second culture. This perspective consisted of open-mindedness, empathy, sensitivity to difference, non-judgementalness, objective

observation, relational skills, and ethnorelative attitudes. From this perspective, they perceived a neutral space from which it was possible to understand intercultural interactions. Byram (1999) believed that developing cognitive skills was not enough to lead to attitude change. For Byram, attitude change was the major concern. He used *tertiary socialization* to describe the process of learning a new language and culture as a “meeting with otherness which challenges and ‘denaturalizes’ the learners’ own culture” (Byram & Fleming, 1998, p.6). Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet (1992) further claimed that, though the primary focus of teaching based on the intercultural approach was on the target cultures, it should also include comparisons between the learner’s own country and target country and thereby help learners to develop a reflective attitude to the culture and civilization of their own countries.

### **The Symbolic Dimension**

The symbolic dimension of intercultural competence departs from the ideological and mental view of culture as an active process of meaning making. Culture in this view is understood through investigating people’s beliefs, values, and reasoning systems.

An advocate for the study on the symbolic dimension of IC, Kramsch (1993) developed her third place theory to reconceptualize foreign language teaching and learning from an intercultural stance. Her *third place* emphasized the displacement on the one hand and non-fixity and possibilities on the other. She subverted a foreign language learning paradigm which took the native-speaker as the target of the learning outcome, and initiated the foreign language learner into a new place where he/she could relativize and mediate between languages and cultures. She termed this intercultural mode of

existence *thirdness*. One of the possibilities of creating such a third place was to establish a “sphere of interculturality” (Kramersch, 1998, p. 205), conducive to reflecting on both one’s inherited and host cultures so that new meanings were created.

In her plenary speech for the International Conference on the Development and Assessment of Intercultural Competence, Kramersch (2011) discussed the challenges for teachers in developing their students’ intercultural competence, or more specifically, the challenges in helping their students find/establish/adopt the third place as a symbolic process of meaning making. She stated that, while communicative competence development focused on the negotiation of intended meanings in authentic contexts of language use, intercultural competence dealt with the circulation of values and identities across cultures. This represented a key change in focus and moved thinking about the ability to communicate competently to building and developing ever increasing levels of intercultural competence through language (communication through words) and interaction (communication through words, actions, and perceptions). In this notion of IC, she defined “culture” as discourse and “the interculturally competent individual” as a symbolic self that was constituted by a symbolic system. Her symbolic system included: “symbolic representation,” focusing on what words say and what they reveal about the mind; “symbolic action,” focusing on what words do and what they reveal about human intentions; and “symbolic power,” focusing on what words index and what they reveal about social identities, individual and collective memories, emotions and aspirations (p. 357). She then called for further research on the symbolic dimension of intercultural competence that was “discourse-based, historically grounded, aesthetically sensitive, and

that takes into account the actual, the imagined and the virtual worlds in which we live” (p. 354).

The symbolic dimension of IC is, in fact, not a brand-new concept in language education. The idea of a third culture perspective was adopted in Kordes’ (1991) study of 112 learners of French in Germany. Kordes cast the interculturally competent person in the role of a mediator who could decode sociocultural barriers to cross-cultural cooperation. He further pointed out the inappropriateness of defining intercultural learning as a cognitive process in view of his observations that” foreign language learning is accompanied by numerous critical experiences which affect pupils’ identity problems” such as reduction in self-esteem or fear of losing one’s integrity (pp. 288-9).

In her chapter for the book *Intercultural Competence* edited by Byram, Zarate (2006) has also called for “introducing the symbolic dimension into didactic description so as to take account of the complexity of identity-based functions” (p. 114) as a part of future work for promoting intercultural competence in language teaching. In the same edited volume, Parmenter (2006) further argued that the promotion of intercultural competence should not be just part of a utilitarian aim for language teaching, but also an explicit contribution to the personal development of the individual and to the individual’s acquisition of desirable attitudes towards otherness. In her effort to relativize the concepts which were taken for granted in the European context, she compared the European and East Asian approaches of teaching and learning. In particular, she focused on notions of *identity* or *multiple identities* which had been taken for granted in the debates for intercultural competence in the European thinking. She pointed out that the

concepts of *self* and *the individual* were firm, if nonetheless a developing identity in the European perspective, in contrast to the concepts of *no-self* and *fluid identities* in East Asia under the influence of Buddhism. She also found, in East Asia, the relationship of teacher and learner was more important than content. It was the teacher's responsibility to support the moral and humanistic development of the students. In the European context, the moral dimension of education for intercultural competence was increasingly recognized, but the moral responsibility of the language teacher was not always acknowledged. Parmenter's finding was echoed by Jokikokko (2005) who argued that intercultural competence should include "an ethical orientation in which certain morally right ways of being, thinking and acting are emphasized" (p. 79). This area of research, brought up in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has not been furthered in the intercultural competence domain.

### **Conceptualization of IC in This Study**

The present study on intercultural competence will highlight both the behavioral and communicative dimensions, as well as the dimensions of attitudes and mindsets; it includes the behavioral components by exploring whether English teachers in China are able to act upon their intercultural mindsets and attitudes. It also considers the symbolic dimension, especially because of its Chinese context and its focus on Chinese perspectives on IC in English teaching. Although education systems need to respond to internationalization, it's worth examining what might be potential incentive or resistance from the national viewpoints in different countries.

In this study, the concept of IC goes beyond simply goals to accomplish, skills to conquer, mindsets to establish, and identities to build, and is viewed as a process following the arguments of Taylor (1994), Deardorff (2004) and the tertiary socialization theory of Byram (2008). According to Taylor (1994), becoming interculturally competent was more of a continuing process rather than an end target. His five-step process progressed from pre-entry into another culture through culture shock, cognitive orientation and the development of behavioral learning strategies, along a continuum to an evolving cultural identity. Like Taylor, Deardorff (2004) stressed that the development of IC was an ongoing process. Deardorff's model reflected both internal and external outcomes. The internal outcome emphasized the shift in frame of reference necessary in order for an individual to begin to move beyond ethnocentrism toward being able to see from the point of view of a different culture. The external outcome would then reflect observable and interculturally competent behaviors.

Drawing on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) socialization theory, Byram (2008) analogized foreign language education to a tertiary socialization process. Unlike the descriptive concepts of primary and secondary socialization, Byram (2008) explicitly stated that the concept of tertiary socialization was "prescriptive, suggesting purposes and objectives for education" (p. 113), which should aim at breaking the national paradigm, enhancing both the teacher's and the student's awareness of the relativity in the practices of teaching and learning. He pointed to the significance of the world language teacher's role in helping the student to understand the new reality through unpacking new concepts, new values and beliefs. The result of this re-socialization would be integration of what a

student regards as the positive aspects of the culture related to the foreign language into his or her inherited cultural frame to achieve a new harmony and consistency after temporary disruptions of continuity. This is a key point supporting the research proposed in this study.

Viewing IC as a socialization process, this study examines the intercultural behaviors, skills, mindsets and identities among Chinese teachers in their teaching of English in China. It also investigates the interactive relationship of these factors as they relate to the teachers: how their intercultural identities emerge from their intercultural behaviors, skills, and mindsets; and how their intercultural identities influence their choices of IC objectives, content, and strategies in the classrooms. Such dynamic view of IC forms the research framework for this study.

### **IC Perspectives, Theories, and Models Related to FL/WL Teaching**

Various instruments have been developed to measure IC according to the behavioral dimensions, such as the Intercultural Behavioral Assessment Indices (Ruben, 1976), the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000). Though these instruments have been successfully used in many empirical studies (i.e. Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009; van der Zee, Zaal, & Piekstra, 2003), they represent the measurement of IC in its earlier concept or incorporate definitions that treat IC as a more static entity. Thus, these instruments, while focusing on earlier and perhaps more static IC characteristics, fall short of revealing aspects of a dynamic IC development process, which is the focus of this study.



Researchers have also presented a range of theories and models seeking to explain the types of skills, abilities, and attitudes individuals need to possess in order to function in culturally diverse settings and the processes in developing IC. Because of the complexity of studying a process such as “intercultural competence,” I have incorporated more than one theory/model in this study, to develop the research instruments and to analyze the data. Deardorff’s (2004) model of intercultural competence, Byram’s (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, B. Kachru’s (1985, 1992) and Y. Kachru’s (2005) World Englishes perspectives, and Feng’s (2009) theory of synergetic culture, will be used collectively as the framework for gathering, coding, and analyzing the data according to behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic dimensions. I explain each of these in the following sections.

#### **Deardorff’s (2004) Model of Intercultural Competence**

Deardorff (2004) has conducted comprehensive study which includes the development of a definition of intercultural competence using the Delphi method. According to her definition of intercultural competence, which incorporates the knowledge and opinions of multiple experts in the field, the key components of intercultural competence start with Requisite Attitudes as a critical initial point. Subsequently, other components such as Knowledge & Comprehension, Skills, and Desired Internal Outcome: Informed frame of reference/filter shift are built upon the preceding components. In summary, intercultural competence in Deardorff’s model indicates the realization of one’s knowledge and skills into action on the basis of cognitive and attitudinal change. The issue may concern, however, a person who can

behave appropriately in an interculturally competent way, but who shows little change in fundamental attitudes or perceptions toward different cultures. In this regard, Deardorff noted that not only will having the components of the previous levels in intercultural competence enhance the behavioral and communicative outcomes, but also Requisite Attitudes are an essential dimension as a starting point for intercultural competence.

Deardorff's IC definition is included in this research for two reasons. First, it involves behavioral, cognitive, and attitudinal dimensions in measuring IC as a student outcome. Second, for each dimension, it has identified specific components of IC based on experts' agreement. In addition, as her definition is now nearly a decade old, it thus warrants additional consideration in a contemporary context that represents an expanded global application. I have adapted and integrated the IC components identified in Deardorff's (2004) study in Section B of the survey on teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence (Appendix III) to explore how Chinese teachers of English might perceive each of these components and identify some trends in Chinese teachers' perceptions in comparison to those of the western experts.

### **Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence Model.**

While Deardorff's (2004) model sketches out the concept of IC, in general, Byram's intercultural communicative model focuses more specifically in the field of WL education. Byram's (1997) five-factor model consists of *attitude, knowledge, the skills of interpreting and relating, the skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness*. In this framework, attitude (*savoir-être*), as an affect construct, has both emotional and cognitive dimensions. It emphasizes postnatal nurture of open-mindedness

instead of natural-born psychological disposition or static humor. The construct of knowledge (*savoir*) includes both the declarative knowledge (know-that) about factual information of the culture concerned and the procedural knowledge (know-how) about the sociocultural aspects of the culture(s). Similarly, the skills include not only the practical skills, such as social skills to conduct daily communication and routine activities to be accepted by the host culture, but also intercultural skills of interpreting and discovering, which are essential to dissolve intercultural conflicts especially when they are seemingly irreconcilable.

Such a model has been made accessible to teachers of English as a foreign language in the form of guidance on its application in the classroom by Sercu (2005b). Sercu (2005b) advocates that FL/WL teachers need to revise professionalism by refreshing their knowledge, attitudes, competencies and skills. For example, Sercu's research indicates that teachers need adequate sociocultural knowledge of the target language community of the language they are teaching; they must understand that cultural models differ; they are familiar with the levels of communication (e.g. notions, speech acts, non-verbal communication); they define the objectives of FL education in terms of IC acquisition and are willing to actually work towards achieving the objectives, they create learning environments that promote IC acquisition; they help learners relate their own culture to foreign cultures, to compare cultures and to empathize with points of view from other cultures; they assess learning materials from an intercultural perspective.

Based on Byram's model and her own interpretation, Sercu (2005b) conducted a study on foreign language teachers' perceptions and teaching practices in seven European

countries, namely Belgium, Bulgaria, Poland, Mexico, Greece, Spain and Sweden. This study extends Sercu's work, which was based in the western arena, to a Chinese or Eastern context. Sercu's survey questions used in the seven European countries were adapted with the goal of applying them to a Chinese context as shown in Section A, C, D and E in the survey on teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence (Appendix III).

### **Kachru's World Englishes Perspective**

The rapid spread of English as a language of communication across the globe has stimulated an interesting but, at the same time, controversial debate about the varieties of English or World Englishes (WEs). Including a WEs' perspective in language teaching does not simply suggest excluding a "standard" or a "correct" form. Instead, language teaching should focus on "the communicative needs of the community in using the additional language within its social and cultural context" (Y. Kachru, 2005, p.161). That means teachers should understand that WEs "display variation in form, function, literary creativity, and acculturation in the new contexts" (Y. Kachru, 2005, p. 156) and include the sociocultural perspectives and backgrounds of their students into their teaching of WEs.

For example, some scholars are using *Chinglish*, *Chinese English* or *China English* to refer to English used in China. *Chinglish* is used mostly in a pejorative sense to refer to grammatically incorrect use of English. *Chinese English*, or *China English* as some scholars have come to prefer, is used to express China-specific things, with standard English as its norm but Chinese characteristics in lexicon, syntax and discourse (Jiang, 2003). *Chinese/China English* can be taken as the institutionalized variety since

the target language norms are taken as the internal norms. Therefore, including a WEs perspective in language teaching and learning could be the process of exploring and understanding English varieties such as *Chinese English* or *China English*. By exploring and understanding these varieties, the students are actually encouraged to communicate between their home culture and the TL culture. Kachru's WEs perspective is therefore also included as part of the theoretical framework for this study as one conceptual tool for the investigation of the symbolic dimension of IC.

### **Feng's (2009) Theory of Synergetic Culture.**

Inspired by Bhabha's Third Space theory, which emphasizes that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity, Feng (2009) puts forward the concept of synergetic culture. He defines *synergetic culture* as interactive space in which culture is built into the very condition of communication in the performative present of interpretation to capture the intricacies of intercultural space, where mediated ways of behaving and modes of thinking can be identified and individual identities are negotiated and partially transformed.

Feng (2009) extends Kramsch's (1993) concept of third space by framing it as an interactive space between newness and mediation. He points out that what the third space theorists miss is "the processes of internalization of social realities through primary socialization...and modification of them through later socialization" (p. 87). Following the arguments of the theorists in tertiary socialization, Feng (2009) maintains that exposure to otherness through learning a foreign language may enable individuals to extend their perspectives to see the world and reconcile their identities in three

dimensions: cognitive, moral and behavioral. He also acknowledges that some aspects of cultural beliefs and values are never, nor necessarily, completely relinquished for another, for not all the new values and beliefs can be comfortably integrated into the inherited system. In fact, all these concepts of “thirdness” involve a level of intellectual and emotional maturity that allows a decentering from one’s culture and implies a critical stance. Therefore, this study argues that intercultural competences are not only the outcomes of students’ intercultural learning, but also the prerequisites for their intercultural identity construction.

### **Hofstede’s (2001) Cultural Dimensions**

The concept of IC started appearing in the literature of communication across different cultures over the past few decades. Edward Hall was one of the first researchers to suggest that communication occurs in markedly different ways in different cultures in his work, *Beyond Culture* (1977). He drew a distinction between low-context communication, in which the message is verbally explicit, and high-context communication, in which much of the message is implicitly coded in physical or social context. The United States is characterized as a low-context culture, where most of the meaning exchanged in communication occurs explicitly. Communication is direct; people say what they mean and mean what they say. Communication in non-western countries such as China, by contrast, features significant hidden, nonverbal, contextual factors. People do not necessarily say what they mean and mean what they say; furthermore, much of what is meant may not be said at all. Hall has been criticized for displaying a bias favoring high-context over low context cultures (Cardon, 2008).

Hofstede (2001) developed a set of five dimensions to help explain the differences between cultures. His dimensions include power distance, which measures the acceptance of structural inequality within a culture; uncertainty avoidance, which measures a culture's openness to change and new ideas; individualism and collectivism, which measures the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that exists within a culture; masculinity and femininity, which measures the degree to which gender roles overlap within a culture; and long versus short term orientation, which measures the presence of traditionally eastern values such as patience and perseverance. The fifth dimension, long versus short term orientation, was added in 1991 based on Confucian dynamism, which included Eastern cultures in his study of cultural dimensions. Hofstede's distinctions are useful tools in helping to understand the many complexities of difference between particular cultures. However, these dimensions have been interpreted by some to suggest that most individuals in a given country reflect the cultural dimensions assigned to that country. Countries are simply too complex to be easily categorized by relatively linear dimensions.

Despite the criticisms, the Hall and Hofstede research indicate that many concepts the western world accepts as universal do not apply in other cultures. To understand and communicate effectively across cultures requires a local rather than global focus. Hall and Hofstede broadly compare communication in one culture with that in another. Thus their perspectives are useful in conducting a systemic study of a particular culture or organization, such as a study of English teaching in China, as they provide a lens to examine dimensions of culturality.

## IC Development in FL/WL Classrooms

### **In the World.**

The importance of IC development has been widely recognized and documented in FL/WL education in Europe, Australia and North America since late 1980s (Byram and Zarate, 1994; Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Liddicoat, 2004; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999; Sercu, 2006). In Europe, the Council of Europe addressed the aim of language learning from a cultural point of view in the 1990s (Byram and Zarate, 1994), replacing the native-speaker model with the new model of the intercultural speaker. The acquisition of intercultural competence was further addressed in the Council of Europe's (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* based on Byram's (1997) model. In 2002, the British Quality Assurance for Higher Education required an intercultural dimension in language education (Garrido & Alvarez, 2006). In the United States, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) promoted the "five Cs" national standards for foreign language education, including communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (ACTFL, 2012). Teachers were encouraged to adjust their current communicative competence oriented teaching practices in order to help students to acquire intercultural competence.

Despite the fact that many countries' national curricula for language teaching have been following the intercultural shift in theory, several researchers (e.g., Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Sercu, 2006) argue that teaching for intercultural competence has not yet yielded desired outcomes as specified in the



theoretical literature. Sercu (2000) showed that the presence of intercultural themes in courses and textbooks did very little in itself to promote intercultural competence.

Roberts (1998) found that being confronted with variation or being involved in intercultural contacts does not necessarily and automatically lead to a more balanced view or insight in factors that govern intercultural contexts.

Sercu (2006) reported that the majority of European foreign language teachers who participated in her study fell into two categories in terms of cultural teaching practices. Teachers in the first category focus “primarily and almost exclusively” on teaching communicative competence (p. 67). For those in the second category, though their primary focus is to promote the acquisition of communicative competence, they also teach knowledge about the target language country and its cultures. The researcher points out that their teacher-centered activities and techniques employed indicate that while their cultural teaching practices broaden students’ cultural knowledge, they do not automatically engage students in seeking cultural information from various sources and reflecting critically on it.

In her study with EFL teachers in Finland, Larzen-Ostermark (2008) identifies cultural teaching practices in three categories: (1) Pedagogy of information. Teachers in this category mainly treat cultural teaching as transmission of cultural knowledge to students though their instructional activities were shifting from teacher-centered to more student-centered. Their underlying philosophy was still that “students need to ‘be informed’” (p. 539). (2) Pedagogy of preparation. The few teachers who fit into this category engaged students in cultural learning through the stories of teacher’s

intercultural experience and conducting intercultural dialogues, with a focus on the differences between home and the target cultures. Their teaching helped to prepare students for their appropriate behaviors while communicating with people from English speaking countries, mostly Britain and the United States of America. (3) Pedagogy of encounter, which reflects a true intercultural perspective in language teaching. The very few teachers who belonged to this category were found to be novice female teachers who had extensive personal overseas experience. They tended to engage their students in experiencing both “authentic encounters such as visits by native speakers or virtual contacts,” and “simulated encounters such as role-plays or mental constructs” (p. 540). Their teaching reflected a “reciprocal” and “dialog” perspective which included both the home and the target culture (p. 540). The researcher points out that most of the teachers in the study belong to the first category which suggests that few of them conduct instructional activities beyond the transmission of cultural knowledge.

Several broad reasons are discussed in the literature on why an effective approach to intercultural teaching has not yet been actively addressed in language teaching programs. First, non-native speaking teachers of a language may lack the confidence to teach about the culture and society which are not their own (Borg, 2006; Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune, 1996; Norton, 1997). This issue is particularly pertinent to English language teaching, where an increasingly large majority of teachers worldwide are non-native speakers of the language (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2007). This is the case in China and with many of the teachers in this study. Secondly, many teachers also find it difficult to teach culture in the same principled way that they teach, for example, grammar and

vocabulary (e.g. Allen, 2000; Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). Thirdly, there are suggestions that teachers see learning culture as unimportant or irrelevant to the learning of languages (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). Fourth, particularly in the EFL context where teachers' and learners' may have negative attitudes towards 'English-speaking' societies, such as the US and the UK, teachers may tend to reduce the motivation to explore the sociocultural milieu which is linked these English speaking societies (e.g. Clachar, 1997; G. Hu, 2002). Last, in FL/WL classrooms, the classroom situation itself may constitute an obstacle to intercultural teaching and learning since students are likely to be surrounded by other students with whom they identify and therefore perhaps may be more reluctant to step out of their identity comfort zone (Fant, 2001).

### **In the Chinese Context.**

Ever since China opened its doors to the outside world in the 1980s, the importance of learning English has been recognized as a key to the country's development (X. Hu, 2005; Lam, 2002) and the English learning craze at all academic levels started. In 2001, China made English learning compulsory in elementary schools beginning at Grade Three. In practice, rural areas may not meet that goal, whereas big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, have already begun to introduce English at Grade One.

English teaching in China at the tertiary level, which is the focus of this study, is divided into two separate sections: English education for English majors and that for non-English majors, with each division following its own curriculum. All English major

students are required to achieve English proficiency in the first two years and they will then move on to higher level English-mediated courses on literature, linguistics and culture. The national *Curriculum Requirements for English Major in Higher Education* (China Ministry of Education, 2000) set the teaching goals in 10 areas: *pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, use of tools* (e.g. dictionary), and *cultural knowledge*. It explains *cultural knowledge* as: 1) general understanding of Chinese culture; 2) solid Chinese language speaking and writing skills; 3) knowledge of geography, history, cultural tradition, social customs, and current development of the English-speaking countries, such as the U.S. and U.K.; 4) ability of innovation and creativity. In the following guidelines to teaching, it emphasizes the fostering of intercultural competence and explains it as “fostering students’ awareness of and tolerance to cultural differences, and developing students’ flexibility in handling cultural differences” (China Ministry of Education, 2000, Part IV).

All non-English major college students are required to take English as a compulsory course in their first two years in college. China’s national *College English Curriculum Requirements* (for non-English major students) (China Ministry of Education, 2004) outlines the goals for College English course as to (a) develop students’ comprehensive ability to use the language in order for them to conduct effective communication in English, (b) enhance their self-learning ability, and (c) foster their comprehensive cultural competence. It states that College English is more than a language course that provides basic language knowledge, it is also an avenue for students to broaden their views and get to know about different cultures in the world; it requires

cultural enhancement which aims to help students to achieve effective intercultural communication in order to meet the need for China's economic development and international communication. However, in terms of specific language teaching objectives, the curriculum tends to focus more explicitly on the linguistic and communicative competence dimensions in the form of the five skills in English, namely, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating skills. It does not provide a detailed curriculum structure or articulate the objectives for cultural teaching.

There has long existed a tradition of distinguishing *ti* (体) from *yong* (用) in language and cultural learning in China. *Ti* refers to the essence or substance of a culture, whereas *yong* refers to its utility. From the late 19th century up to now, the predominant principle of education in general and language education in particular has been “Chinese learning as *ti*; western learning as *yong*” (中学为体，西学为用). Thus Chinese and Western cultures have been taken as totally different sets, without a common denominator; hence the boundaries between them cannot be crossed or permeated. Beginning in the 1980s, cultural issues have engaged the attention of English language teachers and researchers in China. A considerable body of literature emerged concerning the comparison between Chinese and English linguistic and cultural characteristics, including pragmatic conventions, behavioral patterns and value orientations, although mostly at a general level (e.g. W. Z. Hu, 1988, 1994, 1999). Teachers and researchers also started to realize the important role of culture in English language learning and began to address the need to integrate cultural teaching in EFL classes (Han, 2002; Pan, 2001; Xiao, 2007). Among the studies on the role of culture in language teaching,

Lessard-Clouston (1996) focused on 16 Chinese teachers' views on culture in both EFL learning and teaching. Findings revealed that teachers supported the role of culture in their EFL learning, but they suggested the need for a greater understanding of how to focus on culture in their own EFL classes.

In addition, there has been an increasing awareness of teaching both home and target culture(s) (Pan, 2001; Si, 1998; Zhao, 2004). The reason to teach home culture is varied. For some scholars (e.g., Su, 1996; Xiao, 2007), it is more to facilitate the learning of the target language and its culture(s) as they believe increased understanding of the home culture has a positive effect on learning the target culture. For others (e.g., K. Q. Xu, 2004), it is to protect traditional Chinese culture from being lost in the process of learning a foreign language. From the intercultural communication perspective, L. S. Xu (2000) states that the acquisition of both home and target culture allows the interlocutors in intercultural communication to voice their cultural identity and at the same time achieve maximum mutual understanding. In these views cultural teaching is considered to help students to learn cultural knowledge. Cultural teaching strategies proposed under such views mostly revolve around teaching cultural knowledge (Zhong & Zhao, 2000).

Further, Chinese EFL scholars have begun to identify the goal of foreign language learning as a means of achieving successful intercultural communication and realized that teaching cultural knowledge alone is no longer sufficient for students to attain effective intercultural communication. The goal of cultural teaching has been expanded to include promoting the acquisition of cultural knowledge, awareness, and understanding (Cao, 1998; Chen, 2000; Han, 2002; Pu, 1997; Zhang & Zhang, 2002). Some scholars suggest

that intercultural communicative competence should be the ultimate goal of cultural teaching in foreign language education and some teaching pedagogies have been proposed for this purpose (Chen, 2001; Hu & Gao, 1997; Wang, 1999).

Though a large body of literature has discussed intercultural competence from a theoretical and pedagogical perspective in China, the teaching and learning of intercultural competence have not been sufficiently researched through empirical studies (e.g., Li & Wang, 2007). There have been many studies on various intercultural learning experiences of Chinese students attending British, North American, and New Zealand universities (e.g. Holmes, 2005; Gu, 2009; Gu & Maley, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Wang & Falconer, 2005). These studies mainly aimed to explore Chinese students' intercultural experiences and their social and academic challenges in adapting to a new country and educational system, in order to improve the intercultural learning experiences of Chinese students in western institutions. They also provide useful information for the universities to offer appropriate support and programs to assist Chinese students in terms of academic and intercultural adaptation.

Despite the fact that the importance and contents of cultural teaching have been gaining increasing attention from EFL scholars, classroom language teaching in China is still lagging behind theoretical expectation. Linguistic input dominates most classrooms and for those who do incorporate cultural content in their teaching, it is largely dependent on their personal preference as what and how culture is taught (Xiao, 2007). A gap also exists between students' linguistic and cultural knowledge and competence. Zhang (2003) investigates 204 English major students and 33 EFL teachers in a Chinese

university. Her findings suggest that the students believed that their teachers, textbooks, and teachers' teaching practices do not meet their needs in terms of cultural learning and that the teachers also feel they have not integrated enough cultural teaching in their English classes.

In addition to the barriers to intercultural teaching discussed in the world context, researchers have also found that specific barriers exist for intercultural teaching in the English classrooms in China (e.g. G. Hu, 2002; Simpson, 2008). First, China is an English as a foreign language (EFL) learning context. Unlike English as a second language (ESL), the EFL context does not require learners to use and apply the language on a daily basis. In other words, students are not in an English speaking academic context where they must compete academically with their native English-speaking peers. Although a deep knowledge of English is the goal, English is nonetheless not the language of principal instruction. Therefore, it is difficult for the English teachers to set up their language classroom to represent various authentic intercultural contexts.

Second, western teaching philosophy founded upon Western ideals of autonomy and egalitarianism, self-reliance and individualism may not work with many Asian cultural norms for teacher-student relationships. For example, G. Hu (2002) argued that communicative language teaching (CLT) failed to make the expected impact on English language teaching in China due to the conflicts between CLT and the Chinese culture of learning in terms of the perceptions of the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students and qualities valued in teachers and students.



Third, standardized English tests, such as the College English Test (CET) and the Test for English Majors (TEM), are still used as gatekeepers to success for college students in China. The stakes associated with both CET and TEM are extremely high. In most Chinese colleges and universities, the CET-4 Certificate is one of the graduation requirements for non-English major students to obtain their academic degree, so is the TEM-4 Certificate for English majors. Both CET and TEM are criterion-referenced tests. CET is a large-scale national standardized test aiming at measuring the English proficiency of Chinese undergraduate students who do not major in English in accordance with the *College English Curriculum Requirements (for non-English major students)* (China Ministry of Education, 2004). For Chinese students majoring in English in Chinese colleges and universities, TEM is based on the criterion stipulated in the national *Curriculum Requirements for English Major in Higher Education* (China Ministry of Education, 2000). As discussed previously, both curricula focus more on the linguistic and communicative competence and are limited in the requirement for intercultural competence. Accordingly, both CET and TEM adopt large numbers of multiple choice questions to test students' listening and reading skills and command of vocabulary and grammar. The cultural dimension has minimal presence in these tests and appears mostly in questions on factual cultural knowledge.

The fact that intercultural teaching has been either missing or remained at the stage of teaching knowledge about English speaking countries and not deep cultural knowledge makes intercultural competence a significant goal of EFL education in China.

It is also an important element in the professional development of language teachers of English.

### **Research on Teacher's IC Beliefs and Practices**

Teacher cognition is considered to be a critical impetus of teacher improvement and an intrinsic factor of teacher behavior. Teacher cognition refers to the “unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p.81) and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom. It further refers to teachers’ beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, knowledge, and principles relating to teaching, as well as judgments and reflections on the teaching practice. In the field of language teaching, Simon Borg (2003, 2006, 2009) is among the leading scholars whose work has constructed the general framework for studying language teacher cognition. Research of language teacher cognition mainly involves how teacher cognition is related to their past experience, education background, knowledge, perception and environmental factors. And the most frequently used methods in data collection in these studies have been self-report, oral commentary, observation, and reflective writing (Borg, 2003).

Sercu (2005b) conducted a study that focused specifically on FL teachers’ perceptions regarding the teaching of IC in foreign language education and on how teaching practices relate to the expected “foreign language and intercultural competence teacher” (p. 2). Their findings revealed two clearly distinct teacher profiles when mapping teachers’ beliefs regarding the integration of IC in FL education: “the favorably disposed foreign language teacher” and “the unfavorably disposed foreign language

teacher.” Their data also revealed that no clear relationship exists between teachers’ beliefs with respect to integration and the way in which they actually shape their teaching practice. Their FL findings further suggest that teachers are moving toward becoming IC teachers, but their profile fails to meet all the expectations regarding knowledge, skills and attitudes desirable in FL & IC teachers.

Aleksandrowicz-Pędich and her partners (2003) carried out research with the recognition of the key importance of teachers’ views about FL (English and French) education with respect to IC in a broad European context. The results revealed that few teachers had studied IC in a systematic way. Although most of the teachers realized the important role of IC in both education and everyday living, they still lacked a clear understanding of how to integrate the IC into FL teaching. A report on intercultural language learning (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino & Kohler, 2003), issued by the Department of Education in Australia, presented the similar results that there is no clear and coherent framework for conceptualizing culture and cultural learning in language programs due to teachers’ obscure perception of IC education. Furthermore, there is a lack of resources of IC education, a framework to design curriculum for IC learning, or an overall assessing framework of IC.

Research into Chinese teachers’ perception of IC is still inadequate. Xu’s (2000) research has indicated that in Chinese universities, most of the FL teachers have only vague perceptions of IC, of the relationship between IC and FL teaching, and of the content and methods of IC education. Little hard data presently exist on what Chinese teachers of English think about IC in their English teaching. This study has therefore

served to increase the understanding of how Chinese EFL teachers view IC and how their beliefs might influence their teaching practice.

The body of research on teachers' conceptions suggests that these conceptions shape teachers' instructional behavior to a considerable degree and a direct relationship has been found to exist between these and the way teachers teach (Prosser & Trigwell 1999; Williams & Burden 1997). Thus, insights on teachers' conceptions are crucial for understanding the ways in which teachers integrate intercultural competence development in foreign language education and the reasons underlying their actual practices.

Many factors may cause a lack of connection between beliefs articulated outside of class and actual practice, such as the complexities of classroom life, clashes between theories provided in teacher education courses and teachers' long held theories, and the fuzziness of language in describing one's belief (Fang, 1996). Therefore, observing teachers' IC teaching practices does not serve as a validation of teachers' IC beliefs, but rather one possible avenue to consider what are the possible constraints for teachers to apply their beliefs and how teachers apply their beliefs within the constraints.

The early studies of teachers' thoughts and practice generally pointed to the considerable effect that previous learning experiences had on one's development as a teacher. For instance, Dhawan (1997) conducted a case study of university level teaching assistants' beliefs and found that past experiences had a strong influence on participants' current instructional beliefs and practices. More recent research tried to relate teachers' conceptualization of culture and their beliefs about culture learning, to their approach to

the teaching of culture. For example, Klein (2004) investigated high school foreign language teachers' conceptualizations of culture and culture learning, and related them to teachers' instructional practice. She found that whether, when, and how culture entered the foreign language classroom was the result of deliberate choices which were rooted in deep-seated, often implicit and unconscious educational beliefs regarding the nature of the subject matter, the nature of culture, the role of culture in language learning, and their global educational mission. However, here "culture" was seen mostly as a body of knowledge to talk about, and accordingly, teach about, rather than towards cultural understanding and intercultural competence. It is also a purpose of this study to understand how the Chinese teachers' life and education experiences might be serving to shape their perceptions and practices regarding intercultural competence in their English classes.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I presented the behavioral, cognitive, and symbolic dimensions of intercultural competence and explained the concept of intercultural competence as a socialization process in which the intercultural behaviors, skills, mindsets and identities interacted with each other. I discussed how various theories and models related to intercultural competence could be used to inform and guide the implementation of this study. I also illustrated the current status of intercultural development in foreign language both in the western context and in the Chinese context to reveal the potential barriers of implementing intercultural teaching in the EFL classes in China. I then highlighted the relation between the teachers' life and education experiences and their

beliefs and practices regarding IC. In the next chapter, I will explain the research methods used to execute this research study.

## **CHAPTER THREE METHOD**

Chapters One and Two provided the rationale and justification for the study, as well as a review of the literature addressing the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept of intercultural competence (IC) addressed in this study. Additional detail included particular information about the post-positivist view of IC as discrete, quantifiable and generalizable knowledge, skills, and attitudes (e.g. Bennett, 1993; Deardorff, 2004; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003) involving a socio-constructivist view of IC as situated practices in which individuals and groups construct knowledge and identities (e.g. Byram, 2008; Kramsch, 1993; Zarate, 2006).

Chapter Three provides detailed information about the mixed method research design, research context, participants, and data collection, including data sources. It also provides a detailed description of the development of the survey instrument, which is of particular note as this survey was carefully developed by adapting two instruments and incorporating linguistic and cultural approaches appropriate for China. Explanations about the data collection procedures data analysis processes, and validity follow.

The research design for this mixed method study was based on Maxwell's (2005) interactive model, in which the research purposes, conceptual framework, methods and validity were generated from, and informed by, the research questions, as

demonstrated in the Research Design Matrix (Appendix II). The research questions that inform this study are:

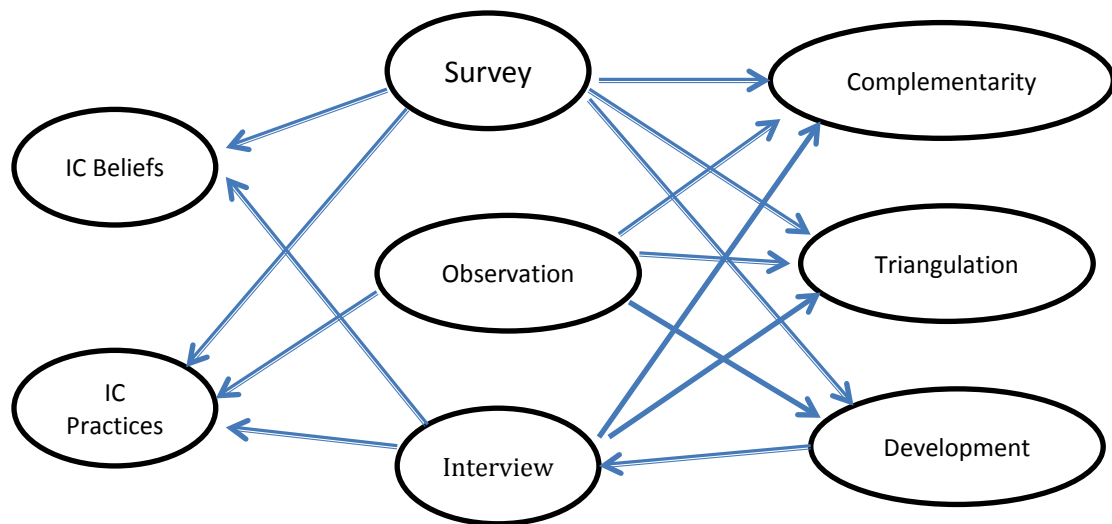
1. How do Chinese teachers of English in China perceive intercultural competence in their English language teaching?
2. How do Chinese teachers of English apply dimensions of intercultural competence in their teaching of English?
3. How do the intercultural competence beliefs of the Chinese teachers of English and other factors inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?

Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions provided particular lenses to different dimensions of intercultural competence and served to generate dialogue across worldviews (Maxwell, 2004). Through descriptive and inferential statistics, the quantitative data were analyzed to: 1) offer general trends in teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence and their self-reported teaching practices regarding intercultural competence; 2) explore possible influences of demographic factors on teachers' beliefs and practices; and 3) identify possible puzzling issues that may call for further inquiry. Qualitative data were collected to provide the opportunity to conduct detailed contextual analysis to: 1) explore in greater depth and detail teachers beliefs regarding IC, as identified in the descriptive quantitative data; 2) understand whether, when and how the teachers tried to develop students' IC in specific contexts; and 3) delineate how the teachers developed their beliefs and practices through their experiences.



## Research Design

This study seeks broader, deeper and more comprehensive understandings of different facets of the complex phenomenon of beliefs and practices pertaining to IC as they appear in the EFL college level classrooms in China. A mixed method design in this study serves the purposes of “triangulation”, “complementarity”, and “development” (Greene, 2007, pp. 100-103), as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** *Illustration of Purposes of Mixed Methods as Applied to the Tian Study*

According to Greene (2007), *triangulation* seeks convergence of results from different methods to measure the same phenomenon and thus increase the validity of inquiry inferences. Data for different facets of IC are triangulated in this study to increase the validity of inquiry inferences. For example, I used both quantitative data

(survey on self-reported IC practices) and qualitative data (class observation) to explore teachers' IC practices including IC topics, activities and assessment. Teachers' IC beliefs generated from survey questions were also triangulated with interview questions related to IC beliefs both for a validity check and for potential gaps or surprises.

The purpose of *complementarity* is to seek more comprehensive understandings by using methods that explore different dimensions of the same complex phenomenon. The research methods in this study were complementary in that investigation of teachers' beliefs mainly came from quantitative data (Likert-style survey questions), while qualitative analysis of class observations and follow-up interviews offered insights on teachers' perceptions about IC and actual IC practices in context.

The idea of *development* uses the results of one method to inform the development of another. The results of the survey (quantitative method) in this study informed the further development of the follow-up interview questions beyond the initial areas addressed in the interview guide. For example, in the survey, teachers rated the importance of dimensions of IC as indicated in the related literature. The follow-up interview questions focused on the dimensions that they found most or least important to deepen the understanding of their perceptions of IC. In addition, the teachers' IC practices observed during their classes also served as reference points for further developing interview questions.

## Research Context

### **University Context.**

The research site was a university in a large city in eastern China where I worked for 12 years as an English teacher. Though the choice of research site seemed convenient, I anticipated that it would help me understand some general trends and perspectives currently held by Chinese teachers of English in China because this university is one of the one hundred universities selected by China's *Project 211* ("21" stands for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and "1" stands for 100 top universities).

China's *Project 211* is a government initiated project that began in 2001 to promote the development of 100 Chinese universities in terms of their "education quality, scientific research, management and institutional efficiency" (China Education and Research Network, 2001). As a result of this project, these 100 universities will "set up national standards in overall quality" and play a "key and exemplary role" in China's higher education (China Education and Research Network, 2001). Therefore, though I cannot claim that the research sample is representative of the population of all Chinese universities, it is a typical full-time large-scale public university in a large city in China directly under the supervision of China's Ministry of Education. Founded in 1951 and located in the metropolitan area of Shanghai, this university has more than 2,800 faculty and staff and over 30,000 enrolled students, with a wide range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs across disciplines, such as engineering, economics, management, literature and art, laws, science, and education. Of this faculty, 96 are teachers of English in its College of Foreign Languages.

The rationale for selecting this particular university site for my study was carefully thought through and planned. It is important to explain that in China, in order to achieve a viable study, using a site for data collection where the researcher has an established personal connection is considered a necessary element, rather than being considered a limitation, as it might be in other areas of the world. It is common in China that many people would not consent to participate in a research study unless the researcher is connected to them directly, or through a friend/colleague. Therefore, studying the group of university teachers in my previous work site helps to establish a researcher relationship and, as a result, increases the potential response rate.

### **English Teaching Context.**

As elaborated in Chapter Two, English teaching in China at the tertiary level was divided into two sections: English education for English majors and that for non-English majors. Among the 96 teachers of English at the research site, about 20% of them were in the major section and about 80% in the non-major section in terms of the administrative structure of the college. However, such division was rather tentative as more than half of the teachers taught in both sections. In addition, this study mainly looked at English language courses in both sections that aimed to improve students' English proficiency, rather than English-mediated courses in content areas. Therefore, teachers in these two sections were not differentiated in this study.

### **Participants**

This research study involved all Chinese teachers of English on file ( $N = 96$ ) in the research site. The majority of the teachers were Han Chinese, female, aged from 25

to 60, and held academic degrees, including Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D.s. The demographic information represented in this university reflects a general representation of English teachers in most Chinese universities of comparable size. Chinese higher education underwent an expansion, most particularly from 1999 to 2004, which resulted in an increase of student enrollment from 6 million to over 20 million (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Consequently, a great number of new English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers were recruited during this period, as English was a required course for almost all the first- and second-year undergraduate students and a popular elective course for students at other levels. Most of these newly-recruited EFL teachers were recent English-major graduates in their 20s who held either Bachelor's or Master's degrees. This group of teachers, now generally in their 30s, has become the mainstream current EFL teachers in Chinese universities. The mandatory retirement age in China is age 55 for female faculty and age 60 for male faculty.

The participants in this study were approached in two interconnected phases during the data collection process. In the first phase, a survey (Appendix III) on teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence was distributed in paper copy to all the Chinese teachers teaching English in the research site (N=96). In the second phase, a sample of 7-11 teachers was selected for class observations and one-on-one interviews based on their time availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate. To ensure that the participants maximally represented their respective groups, varying factors like age, gender, educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, overseas experiences, and years in teaching were taken into consideration.

As shown in Appendix I, among the 11 interview participants, seven were female and four male; two were in their 20s, three in their 30s, four in their 40s, and two above the age of 50; two held a Ph.D., eight a master's degree, and one a bachelor's degree. Additionally, five had over one-year of overseas experience in an English speaking environment, three were abroad for less than one year, and three had never been overseas; their years of teaching ranged from two to 35 years. A professor retired from the research site volunteered to participate after hearing about the research study. As this professor was both a Chinese teacher of English before retirement and a mentor to many teachers in the research site, he was also invited to participate in an interview.

## **Data Collection**

### **Data Sources and Instruments**

Data were collected from five principle data sources: survey, class observations, interviews, teachers' curriculum materials, and field memos. The data collection instruments included a Likert-style survey (Appendix III) and an interview guide (Appendix IV). The five data sources and the two data collection instruments are explained below.

**Survey.** The main purpose of the survey was to collect data on the teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices of their incorporation of intercultural competence in their teaching, as well as their demographic backgrounds. The survey was designed in English for three reasons. First, as these were teachers of English in China, their English language competence was high and enabled them to provide responses in English. Second, the surveys were originally in English and translation might not provide

adequate adaptation of the original wording. Third, this was new research in China; I intended to explore IC dimensions based on adaptations of existing IC related content and activities in the western context, and then related them to the Chinese classroom context. I chose to do a paper survey instead of an online survey (i.e. using SurveyMonkey) mainly out of the concern about the accessibility of some websites in China.

The survey underwent a careful development process that included a compilation of work by researchers in the intercultural competence field and a pilot of the survey for a Chinese audience. The survey was initially developed by the researcher based on the previous work by Lies Sercu in an international investigation on foreign language teachers and intercultural competence (Sercu, 2005b) and Darla Deardorff on the identification and assessment of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). There were five sections (Sections A, B, C, D, E, and F) in the questionnaire. In the initial stage of survey development, Sections A, C, and D were excerpted from Sercu's (2005b) questionnaire with minor adaptation, such as replacing the "pupils" in Sercu's questionnaire with "students" since this research took place at tertiary level. Section A "Objectives of Foreign Language Teaching" was based on Sercu's Section 3.2 "How do you perceive the objectives of foreign language teaching?"; Section C "Teachers' Beliefs regarding Intercultural Competence in Classroom Teaching" was adapted from Sercu's Section 11 "Intercultural foreign language teaching: Your opinion"; Section D "Foreign Language Teachers' Practices regarding Intercultural Competence" included Sercu's Section 6.1 "What kind(s) of culture teaching activities do you practice during classroom teaching time?" and Section 6.3 "How extensively do you deal with particular cultural

aspects?” In addition to the sections adapted from Sercu’s questionnaire, Section B “Defining Intercultural Competence as a Teaching Objective” considered how the Chinese EFL teachers viewed the importance of the components that had gained consensus among the experts as to what constituted intercultural competence in Deardorff’s (2006) study. Section E in the questionnaire collected demographic information from the participants.

Using these two researchers’ work as the springboard, the researcher piloted the survey with a convenience sample of 10 Chinese teachers of English outside the research site to refine the final version. The piloting aimed to verify the internal reliability of the questionnaire and make sure that the language of the questionnaire was understandable and the questionnaire could be completed in a reasonable amount of time. The researcher sought input from the pilot participants concerning their view on the level of difficulty of completing the survey, the reasons for such difficulty, any potential problems they encountered with the survey questions, and any suggestions they might have for the instrument and the process. All pilot teachers reported that they completed the questionnaire within 30 minutes. Their main problems with the questionnaire lay in the understanding of some terms or difficult vocabulary. The instrument was then revised accordingly and sent to them for any additional feedback. Following is a summary of the alterations and adjustments as a result of the pilot.

***Section A: Objectives of foreign language teaching.*** In this section, six objectives of foreign language teaching were listed for the FL teachers to decide the importance of each on a 4-point Likert scale (1= “not important”; 4= “very important”).



Among the eight objectives of foreign language teaching tested in Sercu's questionnaire, objective 6 "Promote the acquisition of learning skills that will be useful for learning other foreign languages" (Sercu, 2005b, p. 192) was excluded considering the dominant status of English as the only required foreign language in the Chinese education system. Also, several pilot participants reported that they could not differentiate the objective of "assisting my pupils to acquire skills that will be useful in other subject areas and in live" with the objective of "promoting the acquisition of a level of proficiency in the foreign language that will allow the learners to use the foreign language for practical purposes" (Sercu, 2005b, p. 192). Therefore, these two objectives were combined. The piloted teachers also pointed out that certain words such as *enthuse* and *in live* in the original objectives were hard to understand, so they were replaced as *increase the interest* and *in real life* in the final survey.

**Section B: Defining intercultural competence as a teaching objective.** This section started with an open-ended question "what specific terminology do you use for 'intercultural competence' in Chinese?" The choices of the Chinese term for the concept of "intercultural competence" would illuminate how the Chinese EFL teachers might interpret the concept. Following this open-ended question was a list of twenty IC components for the teachers to indicate the importance of each component to the development of IC among English learners in China on a 4-point scale from "not important" to "very important". These twenty IC components resulted from the selection with 80% to 100% agreement from top intercultural scholars in Deardorff's (2006) study. According to the feedback from the pilot participants, some words in these twenty IC

components were simplified or paraphrased for easier understanding, such as *empathy*, *mindfulness*, and *ethnorelative*.

***Section C: Teachers' beliefs regarding intercultural competence in classroom teaching.*** Participants could show their level of agreement with the six beliefs regarding IC in classroom teaching on a 4-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Some statements in Sercu’s original questionnaire were excluded because of their lack of relevance to the English teaching context in China. For example, the statement that “all pupils should acquire intercultural competence, not only pupils in classroom with ethnic minority community children” (Sercu, 2005b, p. 212) did not apply to most classrooms in China since 95% Chinese students were of Han ethnicity. Some other statements were interrelated and therefore combined for clarity. For example, the statement “a foreign language teacher should present a positive image of the foreign culture and society” was combined with another statement “a foreign language teacher should present a realistic image of a foreign culture, and therefore should also touch upon negative sides of the foreign culture and society” (Sercu, 2005b, pp. 212-213).

***Section D: Foreign language teachers' practices regarding intercultural competence.*** This section was composed of three sub-sections focusing on intercultural topics, intercultural activities, and intercultural barriers respectively. The participants could indicate the frequency of discussing the listed intercultural topics, conducting the listed intercultural activities, and encountering the listed intercultural barriers in their classrooms on a 4-point scale from “never” to “always”. Considering the survey length, I grouped Sercu’s (2005b) intercultural topics into ten topics and consolidated Sercu’s

(2005b) intercultural activities into eight kinds of activities. The six intercultural barriers mainly came from the IC literature and researcher's personal EFL teaching experience. The participants also had the opportunity to write down any barrier not listed.

***Section E: Background information.*** Participants were asked to circle their gender, age range, years of teaching English, highest degree, types of courses they teach, and experiences in other countries. This section was placed at the end of the questionnaire for two reasons. First, some Chinese people tend to be sensitive to certain personal questions such as age or highest degree. During the pilot study, some participants did not circle their age range since they emailed the completed questionnaire directly to me and were likely concerned about revealing their ages. Putting the demographic questions at the end might ease such concern. Second, it was better to keep participants' minds on the purpose of the survey at the beginning of the survey. Demographic questions required less thought and thus would not create additional stress at the end of the survey.

***Class observations.*** Data collected during observations were in the form of memos. The observation memos aimed to describe the appearance of the classroom, the activities that the students were asked to complete, the cultural topics discussed by the teacher and the students, and the interactions that took place between the teacher and the students. Observation memos were kept in a two-column grid, one column for recording the course content, activities and discussions, the other for notes on non-verbal behaviors and situational cues as well as my comments, thoughts and questions. The observation memos represented a mixture of English and Chinese according to what language the

teachers used in their classes. I also noted the amount of time that the Chinese teachers of English employed English (the target language) or Chinese during instructional time, which provided additional insight into what was discussed in the class and how the information was conveyed.

**Interviews.** The interviews aimed to probe for additional aspects of personal and educational experiences that might be influencing the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in English teaching in China. The interviews were approximately 30-minutes long and audio-recorded. Though the interview prompts in the "Teacher Interview Guide" (Appendix IV) were in English, the interviewees were able to respond in Chinese after the prompt was provided because it was anticipated that allowing the participants to speak in their native language during the interview would invite the richest responses, as well as ease their anxiety, especially when they were trying to explain complicated ideas, values and opinions.

The eight interview questions in the interview guide (Appendix IV) were designed to collect three types of information: personal history, IC beliefs, and classroom practices. Though the interviews followed the eight questions in the general interview guide, there were also specific questions for an individual participant generated from class observations, or his/her response to the survey questions, to further inform the research questions.

**Teachers' curriculum materials.** Several curriculum materials were collected from the teachers, such as course syllabi, lesson plans, teaching materials, sample test papers and copies of the texts. These materials provided further understanding and

verification of the teachers' self-reported IC practices in the survey, such as IC objectives, activities and assessments.

**Field memos.** I used field memos as tools for reflective analysis throughout each phase of this study. The field memos described the scenes, settings, people, and actions I observed. I tried as much as possible to keep the original words of the participant in the memos to ensure the accuracy of message. For example, the interview memo was a narrative based on the key phrases I took down during the interview and a description of the participant's responses during the interview, such as facial expression, gesture, emotion, etc. In addition, these memos recorded emergent interpretations, questions and themes, and thus helped attend, focus and guide next-step observation and analysis.

## **Procedure**

The data collection timeline is represented in Table 2 below. The researcher travelled to the research site to meet and speak with all the Chinese teachers of English at the university site. This meeting was scheduled conveniently after one of their weekly staff meetings. The researcher visited each office, explained the study in Chinese and distributed the letters (attached in Appendix V) to potential participants and informed consent forms for survey (attached in Appendix VI) with the approval stamp from the George Mason University (GMU) Institution Review Board (IRB). Participants were informed of the nature of the research, that participation was voluntary and then asked to sign the informed consent form if they agreed to participate. The Chinese teachers of English in this research had all passed the English proficiency test in China at the highest level to be qualified for teaching English in the university, so they had no problem

understanding the letter to potential participants and the informed consent forms in English. This HSRB procedure was new to them, however, so the researcher explained these procedures, which provided them additional insight into the U.S. system of research.

Table 1

*Data Collection Timeline*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
September 18, 2012	Distributed research invitation letters and informed consent forms for survey; Collected signed consent forms for survey and distribute surveys.
September 18, 2012 – September 28, 2012	Collected completed surveys; Selected participants for class observations and interviews.
September 21, 2012 – October 12, 2012	Distributed consent forms for class observations and interviews to selected participants; Collected signed consent forms for class observations and interviews; Observed classes; Interviewed participants; Collected curriculum materials.
October, 2012 – December, 2012	Member check for translated interview transcripts; Administered follow-up questions.

After the participants signed the informed consent form, they were provided a survey with an envelope directing them to return the survey to the collection box set up in a teachers' lounge at the university site. At the end of their survey, they were able to indicate in an attached sheet if they were willing to participate in class observations and interviews and provide relevant curriculum materials (i.e. lesson plans, assignments,

tests, etc.). This sheet was returned separately from the survey to keep their surveys anonymous.

The researcher then selected participants for the second stage of data collection according to their availability and backgrounds, and to achieve representation in terms of age, gender, educational backgrounds, overseas experiences, years in teaching, etc. This strategy of sampling is called “purposeful sampling” in which “particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). Maxwell (2005) lists four goals for purposeful sampling: achieving representativeness, capturing the heterogeneity in the population, examining cases for testing theories, and establishing comparisons. Purposeful sampling in this study involved all of these goals.

After the participants signed the informed consent form for class observations and interviews (Appendix VII), they provided the researcher with a schedule to conduct a 50-minute classroom observation, and presented supplementary course information, such as their course syllabus, lesson plans, and teaching materials. The date and time of these observations were at the discretion of the teachers, and no preparation of any kind was required in advance. The researcher also set up a convenient time and location with each of the participants for a follow-up interview. Initially, the researcher used the prompts in the interview guide (Appendix IV) focusing on the participants’ educational and professional experiences, their views of EFL teaching in China, and their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about intercultural competence in Chinese EFL teaching. The researcher also asked the interview participants to explain their beliefs about what was

going on as various events took place in the classroom setting and further elaborate on what they were thinking at that moment, and why they were thinking in this manner. As interviews proceeded, the researcher attended to related topics, themes, and categories generated by respondents to deepen her understanding of their accounts and to provide insights on what classroom practices they employed to promote the development of IC among the learners.

Ongoing member checks with all participants were conducted to gain greater clarity and understanding of previously collected data from interviews, observations, and curriculum materials. To ensure participants accounts were clearly documented, I probed participants to explain their meaning regarding specific statements made during the interviews. I conducted member checks with all participants to solicit feedback on the translation of the data collected and the interpretations and conclusions drawn in the study.

### **Data analysis**

As explained under the data source section, there were five data sources for this study: surveys, class observations, interviews, curriculum materials, and field memos. The survey was the primary quantitative data source; whereas the remaining four data sources were qualitative sources. Detailed procedures for analyzing these two sets of data are addressed below.

#### **Quantitative Data**

Quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 18.0). The trend and variations of teachers' beliefs about and



self-reported practices regarding IC were summarized and described using descriptive statistics. In the survey, the teachers were asked to either rate the importance of a statement or indicate the frequency of a teaching activity on a 4-point Likert scale. For each question, the mean score of each item was calculated, and the mean scores were then ranked in descending order to reveal an order of importance or frequency.

Further, inferential statistical analyses were performed to explore the influences of the demographic variants, such as age, years of teaching, years of overseas experiences, etc. SPSS *t*-tests were conducted to explore possible differences of the mean scores between *Gender* groups, *Age* groups and *Years of Teaching* groups, and ANOVA tests among *Academic Degree* groups and *Experiences Abroad* groups, at the .05 level of significance. If a statistically significant difference of the mean scores between the groups was detected in the *t*-tests, the effect size of mean difference was examined. If a statistically significant difference of the mean scores among the groups was detected in the ANOVA tests, the Turkey post hoc test was conducted for further pairwise comparisons and to examine the effect size of mean differences.

### **Qualitative Data**

Qualitative data analysis started from the time of data collection and continued throughout the study. I followed Maxwell's (2005) qualitative data analysis strategies: memos, categorizing strategies (coding and thematic analysis), and connecting strategies (narrative analysis). Field memos served as initial analytical records. Writing these in-process memos helped me clarify ideas and examine new information in light of what I had previously understood.

The interview data were transcribed on an ongoing basis along with field observations and my review of curriculum materials, with transcription of the interviews occurring as soon as possible after the conclusion of the interview. Since the medium of language for the interview was Chinese with occasional English phrases due to the participant's background as English teachers, I transcribed the interview recordings as each language was used to ensure the accuracy of the verbal exchange. During the transcribing process, I read the field memos and annotated the transcript with ongoing thoughts in the brackets after the relevant chunks of message.

I then translated the transcripts into English and emailed the translation to the interviewee for member checking. Creswell (2008) defines *member checking* as “a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (p. 267). Since all participants in this study were proficient English users, member checking used in this study provided them an opportunity to pinpoint translation errors, clarify the terms, jargons and idioms they used both at professional and philosophical levels, and thus enriched the translated transcripts with their perspectives. Some Chinese “native concepts” were kept in Chinese *pinyin* (phonetic symbols) in the translated transcript to preserve their authenticity. Translating them into English might lead to subtleties lost in the translation. However, detailed explanation of these concepts was provided in the notes on the translation.

After the process of member checking for translation, I read the transcripts many times both in Chinese and in English and generated a list of *emic* codes using direct quotes from the English translation of the transcript. The use of direct quotations allowed

capturing the exact thoughts and provided richer detail to the reader. The same coding process was also applied to the analysis of the class observation memos for further understanding of the relation between beliefs and practices. I then combined the codes to see if there were certain trends, themes, or contrasting comments. I looked for patterns and used cross-case charts and displays that helped me make sense of the data.

### **Validity**

The limitations of the study might come from researcher bias. My background in the WL teaching and teacher education field might influence my judgment of the teachers against some external standards and cause me to overlook ideas that do not fall into the framework. I tried to guard against this tendency by reading the transcripts and the observation memos repeatedly to see what was and was not present. In addition, I tried to distinguish between descriptive and analytic notes and keep records of events without attributing feelings to the participant. To minimize researcher bias, I considered Greene's (2007) ideas of "appropriate balance of participant and observer roles, lengthy time on site, keen perceptive acuity, and reporting of observations in rich, descriptive contextualized detail" (p. 167). I followed Maxwell's (2005) advice of reviewing data for "discrepant evidence and negative cases" (p. 112), constantly soliciting assistance of committee members to help with the identification of validity threats, including my own internal biases and assumptions, along with possible flaws in my logic or methods. I employed member checks to obtain feedback from participants about the data I collected and the conclusions I drew from them, and used respondents' words as often as possible to demonstrate findings. I also used the insights from my past experience of English

teaching at the research site to detect possible areas of threat and mis-interpretation, and discussed such possibilities with the participants for verification or clarification.

Another potential validity threat was the reactivity of the participants, especially in the qualitative data collection process. To attend to reactivity, in my data analysis, I made a point to ask myself whether some classroom practices were prompted by my presence and the teacher's heightened awareness of the need to address IC in the classroom. Moreover, as I had chosen to conduct research at my former work location where I had developed deep collegial connections and trust with faculty members, I wanted to be sure that location was taken into account as I analyzed the data. I took the above precautions to prevent reactivity, to the degree possible, from interfering with what I hoped to learn from this study.

Finally, the interview was conducted in Chinese. The translation of language might create certain misunderstandings, which could not be easily measured or observed. I considered the inclusion of "native concepts" in their original language in my data analysis to offer a faithful and illuminative way to present my findings. I also made every attempt to translate these concepts accurately into understandable English terminology for fellow educators. In addition, I sought member checking for accuracy and credibility of translation.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Three presents the research methods employed to conduct this mixed methods study and explains the development of the instruments. Based on Maxwell's (2005) interactive research design model, research methods, including participant and site

selection, data collection, research instruments design, data analysis techniques, and steps taken to attend to validity threats were guided by the research questions. The next chapter will present and discuss the findings from the data collected to answer the three research questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

This study has investigated intercultural competence in EFL teaching from the Chinese perspective. A mixed method design was utilized to examine aspects of intercultural competence in EFL classes in China and explore its development in instructional approaches and practices. In this chapter, I first offer findings from the survey that provide additional information on the participants' background, which present important dimensions concerning the participant responses and contribute to the findings and overall analysis of the data. The findings are organized according to each of the three overarching research questions, as follows:

- How do Chinese teachers of English in China perceive intercultural competence in their teaching?
- How do Chinese teachers of English apply dimensions of intercultural competence in their teaching?
- How do their intercultural competence beliefs and other factors inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?

Both quantitative and qualitative data inform the research questions. For each question, both the quantitative and qualitative findings are presented.

## Background Information

The survey (Appendix III) used for data collection provided additional background information of the participants, e.g. gender, age, teaching experience, academic degree, and experiences abroad. Although these findings were not initially intended to address the research questions themselves, they have been found to provide important information about the participants which, in turn, has now also served to inform a deeper analysis of the data.

A total of 82 surveys were sent out, of which 77 were returned, a valid return rate of 93.9%. Among them, 65 were female and 12 male. According to the results of the demographic questions, 2.6% of the teachers were between the age of 20 and 30, 57.1 % were between 31 and 40, 29.9 % between 41 and 50, and 10.4 % were 51 and above. While 7.8 % of the teachers held the BA degree, 71.4 % of them reported to have completed an MA program and 20.4% had a PhD degree. Teaching experience of the teachers was as follows: 1-5 years (3.9%), 6-10 years (18.2 %), 11-15 years (32.5 %), and 16 years and more (45.5 %). Most teachers (62.3%) reported less than 6-months experience in an English-speaking country, while 15.6% of the teachers had 6-months to 1-year, and 22.1% had spent over a year. This additional information from the survey data is presented in Table 3.

Table 2

### *Background Information of Survey Participants*

Background	Raw Data	Data after Collapse
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Categories	Stratum	N (Total N = 77)	Stratum	N (Total N = 77)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	65	Female	65
	Male	12	Male	12
<b>Age</b>	20-30	2	Below 40	46
	31-40	44		
	41-50	23	Above 41	31
	51 and Above	8		
	1-5	3		
<b>Years of Teaching</b>	6-10	14	Below 15 years	42
	11-15	25		
	16 and Above	35	Above 16 years	35
	Bachelor	6		
<b>Degree</b>	Master's	55	Master's	55
	PhD	16	PhD	16
	Less than 6-mon	48	Less than 6-mon	48
<b>Experience Abroad</b>	6-mon – 1-year	12	6-mon – 1-year	12
	Above 1 year	17	Above 1 year	17

As the sample sizes of some strata in *age* and *years of teaching* were too small ( $N < 5$ ) for valid statistical analysis, the raw data were also collapsed in Table 3. The teachers were regrouped into two *age* groups (below 40 and above 41) and two groups of *years of teaching* (below 15 years and above 16 years) for data analysis. The new groupings of the teachers according to their age/background provided the researcher with insights into similarities and differences in the ways these teachers approach IC in this university.



### **Research question 1: How do Chinese teachers of English perceive intercultural competence in their teaching?**

The response to research question one is addressed in two principle ways. First, the data indicate that Chinese teachers' perceptions of IC are varied. They perceive the concept of IC as primarily comprised of three aspects: the purpose of communication, the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and the expansion of cultural perspectives.

Representative themes drawn from interview data are presented below indicating the varied and multiple definitions they provided about this concept. Second, results of survey data indicate that the Chinese teachers of English incorporate four principle dimensions of IC in their teaching: behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic.

Ranking of these dimensions provide additional information about the importance the teachers assign to each IC dimension in their teaching.

#### **IC Definition**

Data sources that inform the definition of IC include the Chinese translations of the term *intercultural competence* in the survey and the interview participants' responses to the question "what does intercultural competence mean to them in their EFL classroom?" I first examined the ways in which participants referred to "intercultural competence" in Chinese in their survey responses, as their choices of the Chinese term might suggest their interpretation of the concept of IC. I then used the interview information to substantiate, and further explore, the understandings of these Chinese terms by the participants. Data suggested that participants viewed IC in terms of

learners' communicative skills, cultural knowledge, language proficiency, and natural ability.

**IC translation.** More than half of the survey participants had difficulty finding an equivalent term in Chinese for “intercultural competence”. Among the 36 translations received, 28 were “intercultural communicative competence,” six were “intercultural competence,” one was “interlingual competence,” and one was “intercultural talent”. The Chinese characters and *pinyin* of these IC translations provided by the survey participants were listed in Appendix VIII. These different terms used by the teachers suggested that the teachers viewed the concept of intercultural competence in different ways. Thus, the survey responses revealed that the teachers' interpretation of IC tended to address areas of communication, culture, language. Some teachers implied that a natural ability, or aptitude, was involved in IC by using the word “talent.” These personal “definitions” provided the researcher with baseline information about how the Chinese teachers might be perceiving the concept of intercultural competence, which were addressed in greater specificity through the qualitative data.

**Interview findings and discussion.** While the survey data provided a set of succinct ideas about the teachers' views about IC, there were still many questions that called for the addition of greater detail. Data from the 11 interviews offered such detail. When asked about how to define IC during the interviews, rather than providing a direct response to the question, all the teachers addressed it in a more indirect manner through their statements of teaching goals or objectives. Their struggling in providing a direct definition might suggest that these teachers were not in the habit of thinking about this

concept. For example, four out of the 11 interview participants defined IC as the acquisition of knowledge in cultural facts and practices in other countries. Ms. Ye emphasized the cultural background knowledge of the texts because “the students knew too little; they did not even know the full name of UK;” Ms. Yang said that she hoped to be able to share more cultural experiences in other countries with the students, as illustrated by this comment: “we are getting more and more chances going abroad, so we should bring more authentic stuff back to our students.”

The teachers’ choices of Chinese translation for IC seemed to prominently revolve around the communicative purpose of language teaching. Yet in the course of the interviews, the teachers appeared to focus on cultural practices and products, and meanings attached to these practices and products, as well as cultural perspectives in terms of how language learners view the world, both their own and others’.

For example, four teachers referred to IC as the fostering of cultural empathy through cultural comparison, as in Mr. Ge’s views that “by learning English, the students should be able to see a new world, to compare this new world with their own Chinese-speaking world, and to cross over the two worlds freely.” Ms. Liao further indicated that “if the students were able to think in others’ shoes, they would be less surprised to see things happening in other countries.”

Another three teachers described IC as in-depth understanding of perspectives, thoughts, and ideas behind the foreign language. Ms. Zhao rejected discussing IC merely in terms of knowledge and behavior: “if we just stay at the surface level of discussing intercultural competence, it’s like scratching an itch with boots on (隔靴搔痒, Chinese

proverb, meaning an ineffective effort). I hope the language study could be integrated with more profound study of literature, history, and philosophy so that the students can grow multiple perspectives in their thinking.” Ms. Gong provided an alternative interpretation that focused on how the nature and structure of a language could provide insights into the culture: “language and culture are interconnected. Why Chinese text is reader responsible and English text is writer responsible? This could be the start of my introduction of different thought patterns to the students.”

### **IC Dimensions**

The findings and discussion of how Chinese teachers of English perceive each of the IC dimensions were informed by quantitative data collected from survey questions and qualitative data from the interviews. The primary source of findings came from the survey questions on teaching goals based on Sercu’s work and the survey questions IC components based on Deardorff’s work. In the literature review in Chapter Two, four dimensions of IC were elaborated: behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic. The researcher first ranked these teaching goals and IC components according to their mean scores to show the order of importance in the opinion of the teachers and examined their connection with the four IC dimensions. Possible variations among the teachers were also investigated using the grouping information provided in Table 3 for statistic analysis. SPSS *t*-tests and ANOVA tests were run to compare the means between the sub-groups of *gender*, *age*, and *years of teaching*, and among the sub-groups of *academic degrees* and *experiences abroad* at the .05 level of significance. The interviews extended the discussion and revealed some interesting consistency and discrepancy between what the

teachers reported via the survey and what a sub-group of the teachers told during the interviews.

**IC goals.** How Chinese teachers of English perceive the IC dimensions in their teaching were first explored through the survey question on their IC-related teaching goals (Section A in survey). The survey participants were asked to indicate the importance of six foreign language teaching goals excerpted from Sercu's study (2005b) on a 4-point scale, 1 for *Not Important* and 4 for *Very Important*. Table 5 presents the dimensions of these objectives and the participants' responses to each objective according to the mean scores. The higher the mean score is, the more the teachers viewed the importance of this objective.

Table 3

*Teachers' Perceptions of Language Teaching Goals*

Order of Importance	Goals	Mean Score	SD	Dimensions
1	Increase students' interest in learning a foreign language.	3.51	.719	Affective
2	Promote students' familiarity with the culture, the civilization of the countries where the foreign language which they are learning is spoken.	3.32	.697	Cognitive
3	Promote the acquisition of an open mind and a positive attitude towards unfamiliar cultures.	3.06	.760	Affective
4	Assist students to acquire skills that will be useful in other subject areas and in real life (such as memorize, summarize, give a presentation, etc.).	2.97	.730	Behavioral
	Assist students to acquire a level of proficiency in the foreign language that will allow them to read literary works in	2.97	.784	Behavioral

	the foreign language.			
5	Assist students in developing a better understanding of their own identity and culture.	2.82	.869	Cognitive

*Note.* Mean scores range from 1 to 4, calculated based on the following conditions: 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; and 4 = very important.

The teachers' responses indicated that they generally perceived the affective goals to be more important than the behavioral goals. For instance, participants ranked the affective goal of "increasing students' interest in learning a foreign language" as the most important ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = .719$ ). The other affective goal focusing on "an open mind and a positive attitude towards unfamiliar cultures" was also viewed as important, with scores ranking it in third place ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .760$ ). The two behavioral goals of English teaching - for real life use and for reading literary work – were considered "somewhat important" at fourth place ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .730/.784$ ). The teachers viewed the importance of the two cognitive goals quite differently. "Promoting students' familiarity with the culture and the civilization associated with the foreign language" was found to be the second most important goal ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .697$ ), whereas "assisting students to understand their own cultural identity and their own cultures" the least important ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = .869$ ).

The order of importance of these six teaching objectives found in this study appears to parallel the findings in Sercu's (2005b) study in seven European countries where the European teachers prioritized the affective dimension of language learning and tried to develop the learners' cognitive dimension primarily associated with the foreign

language and culture they were learning, rather than paying more attention to reflection on one's own cultural identity.

SPSS results showed there was no significant difference among the *gender*, *age*, or *years of teaching* sub-groups ( $p > .05$  for all six goal statements). There was a statistically significant difference among the *Academic Degree* sub-groups and among the *Experiences Abroad* sub-groups. The mean difference between the *PhD* group and the *master's degree* group was of medium effect size regarding the affective goal "promote the acquisition of an open mind and a positive attitude towards unfamiliar cultures" ( $p = .019$ ,  $\eta^2 = .103$ ) and of large effect size regarding the cognitive goal "assist students in developing a better understanding of their own identity and culture" ( $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .149$ ). These results suggest that the teachers with Ph.D. degrees regarded having an open mind and positive attitude in intercultural encountering as more important than did the group holding master's degrees; this group also reported that they considered one's own identity and culture to play a more active role in their EFL teaching than did the master's degree holder group. Another significant mean difference was detected between the *below 6-month* group and the *6-months to 1-year* group regarding the goal "promote students' familiarity with the culture, the civilization of the countries where the foreign language which they are learning is spoken" ( $p = .031$ ,  $\eta^2 = .087$ ). Teachers with *6-months to 1-year* experience abroad rated the importance of this cognitive goal higher than those with less than 6-months experience.

**IC components.** The survey question on the IC components (Section B in survey) offered another way of investigating the teachers' perception of the IC dimensions. In

the survey, participants were asked to rate the importance of the 20 components of intercultural competence that had received 80% or higher acceptance by the top U.S. intercultural scholars in Deardorff's (2006) study. Table 5 lists the mean score of each component obtained in this study and the dimension of each component.

Table 4

*Importance of IC Components*

<b>Order of Importance</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Dimension</b>
<b>1</b>	Open attitude toward cross-cultural learning and to people from other cultures	3.26	affective
<b>2</b>	Adaptability and adjustment to new cultural environment	3.16	behavioral
<b>3</b>	Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others')	3.16	cognitive
<b>4</b>	Understanding the value of cultural diversity	3.15	symbolic
<b>5</b>	Respect for other cultures	3.13	affective
<b>6</b>	Ability to adapt to different communication and learning styles	3.12	behavioral
<b>7</b>	Skills to listen and observe	3.10	behavioral
<b>8</b>	Understanding of role and impact of culture and the impact of situational, social, and historical contexts involved	3.09	symbolic
<b>9</b>	Culture-specific knowledge and understanding host culture's traditions	3.09	cognitive
<b>10</b>	Learning through interaction	2.99	behavioral
<b>11</b>	Skills to analyze, interpret, and relate	2.95	behavioral
<b>12</b>	Cultural self-knowledge	2.92	cognitive
<b>13</b>	Cross-cultural awareness	2.90	cognitive
<b>14</b>	Flexibility	2.83	behavioral
<b>15</b>	Understanding others' situation, feelings and motives	2.79	cognitive
<b>16</b>	Curiosity and discovery	2.78	affective
<b>17</b>	Understanding others' worldviews	2.76	symbolic
<b>18</b>	Understanding from other's cultural frame of reference and cultural lens	2.71	symbolic
<b>19</b>	Tolerating and engaging ambiguity	2.68	affective



20	Withholding judgment	2.59	affective
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*Note.* Mean scores range from 1 to 4, calculated based on the following conditions: 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; and 4 = very important.

The nine important IC components ( $M > 3$ ) cover the four dimensions of IC as discussed in Chapter Two: behavioral, cognitive, affective and symbolic. For example, the teachers ranked the affective component “open attitude toward cross-cultural learning and to people from other cultures” as the most important ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .681$ ), followed by the behavioral component “Adaptability and adjustment to new cultural environment” ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = .713$ ), the cognitive component “deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one’s own and others’)” ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = .689$ ) and the symbolic component “Understanding the value of cultural diversity” ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .730$ ).

Survey results from the IC components section (Section B) are consistent with results from the IC goals section (Section A) in several ways (see Table 4.2, 4.3). First, an open attitude toward a foreign culture has been determined as important in IC development. Second, deep knowledge of the foreign culture is reported as prerequisite for IC. Third, the skill-related behavioral dimension of IC appears to be less important than affective, cognitive, and symbolic dimensions, with the only exception being of the skills to listen and observe.

SPSS results showed that there was no statistically significant difference among the *Gender*, *Age*, *Years of Teaching*, or the *Experiences Abroad* sub-groups,  $p > .05$  for all the IC components in this part of the survey. Statistically significant difference was found between the *PhD* group and the *master’s degree* group regarding the importance of

the IC component “deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one’s own and others’)” ( $p = .033$ ,  $\eta^2 = .101$ ). The *Ph.D.* group rated the importance of the IC component “deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one’s own and others’)” higher than the *master’s degree* group. Such difference might suggest a connection between the teachers’ increased cultural knowledge from educational experiences and their strengthened belief in cultural learning.

### **Interview Findings and Discussion**

The interview findings indicate both similar and different information to that found in the survey responses. First, the survey indicated that the Chinese teachers of English rated skill-related IC goals or components generally less as important as other goals or components of their teaching. A detailed look at the interview content revealed that the teachers often talked about language skills when they were addressing IC. For example, Ms. Zai hoped that her students would be able to “use the expressions they learned from the texts.” Both Ms Liao and Ms Liu emphasized the importance of “improving accuracy in their listening, speaking, reading, and writing.” Mr. Deng added that such accuracy requirement would help the students “pass the exams.” These quotes suggested that the skills Chinese teachers emphasized in IC development seemed to depart from the skills discussed in the Western context, such as intercultural exploration, understanding, interpretation, and medication (Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003). Chinese teachers of English indicated a strong level of care toward language skills developed from textbook and for test-taking, such as discrete grammar points and specific

syntactical constructions, whereas the western teachers and scholars leaned toward language use in real life.

Second, survey results also showed that the Chinese teachers of English rated “the skill to listen and observe” ahead of “skills to analyze, interpret, and relate”, the most important IC component identified in Deardorff’s (2004) study. This result was echoed in Mr. Zhuang’s words during the interview: “all good writings start from copying (天下文章一大抄, Chinese saying). You (students) need to listen to the native speakers, observe the way they talk, memorize their words, and use them to express your own thoughts.” Here, the Chinese teachers’ choice of focus on skills of listening, observing, memorizing and reproducing implied their distinctive way of viewing learning. As Hu (2002) pointed out, memorization was a typical Chinese learning strategy. He distinguished memorization from rote learning as such memorization was memorizing with understanding, memorizing what was understood and memorizing for deeper understanding. The results of such memorization were mental activeness rather than verbal activeness. Examining the findings from both the survey and interview data that addressed the skills Chinese teachers emphasized through the lens of Hu’s (2002) elaboration of memorizing with understanding might suggest a distinctive Chinese way of approaching IC development. This perspective is demonstrated in Ms. Yang’s comments on how she views achieving IC: “The most important thing is to learn more – get in touch with authentic articles, soap operas and movies, observe their pronunciation and intonation, imitate the authentic expressions, and finally internalize them.”

Third, survey results revealed that, although the Chinese teachers of English emphasized an open attitude toward other cultures, they appeared to care less about the IC components of “flexibility,” “tolerating and engaging ambiguity,” and “withholding judgment.” Some teachers’ responses as found in the interview data shed more light on how Chinese teachers of English perceive these three IC components. For example, Mr. Deng commented that intercultural competence was “not only about etiquette, but also about understanding the rules in other cultures.” Ms. Zhao connected her intercultural teaching goals with moral education “we need to tell them (students) what are good qualities, namely, hard-working, sincere, and down-to-earth. However, they won’t listen to us if we are just preaching. Therefore, we need to integrate these qualities into our discussions in the classroom.”

By examining both the survey and the interview findings, and connecting them to Eastern thought, these results provide an interesting insight into teaching English as a foreign language. In this case, the data suggest that the moral value of education that was heavily invested with Confucianism impeded the way Chinese teachers of English appreciate the IC components of “flexibility”, “tolerating and engaging ambiguity”, and “withholding judgment.” Confucianism proposed a natural predisposition towards both external and internal learning drives. The external referred to pragmatic acquisition of essential knowledge, whereas the internal referred to a natural drive towards the cardinal Confucian virtue *benevolence* (仁, *ren*) (Li, 2003; Li & Yue, 2004). In Confucian learning, the external social aspect of performing in society and the internal aspect of moral cultivation come together in the practice of *rituals* (礼, *li*). Thus, language

education was perceived in the Confucian tradition also for knowledge acquisition and moral cultivation where little flexibility and ambiguity was tolerated as suggested by the interview data.

Finally, the survey participants showed little interest in either cultural identity or cultural self-knowledge. Throughout the interviews, no interview participant addressed these IC components. One reason for this might be found in the domains of eastern and western thought and approach to life. Researchers (e.g. Hofstede, 1991) found in his cultural dimensions research that Chinese culture was often conceptualized as collectivist, in contrast to the American culture as individualist. Cultural identity or cultural self-knowledge that focused on the understanding of oneself was regarded as less important among the Chinese teachers and, therefore, less likely to be included in their conceptualization of IC.

## **Summary**

To answer research question one, both survey and interview data were analyzed. The findings from the surveys and interviews were analyzed separately and then compared to provide a more complete understanding and to seek reliable results. The Chinese teachers of English perceived the concept of IC in terms of the purpose of communication, the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and the expansion of cultural perspectives. The Chinese teachers of English recognized all four dimensions of IC as discussed in Chapter Two. However, within each dimension, the Chinese teachers showed their distinctive features. They preferred to develop the students' language skills based on textbook content instead of real life language use; they prioritized the skills of

listening and observing in language learning; they were reluctant in accepting flexibility and ambiguity in intercultural teaching; and they showed minimum interest in helping the students discover their cultural identity or build up cultural self-knowledge. In addition, the data suggest that the teachers' educational background and their experiences in other countries were found to contribute to some variations among the teachers in their IC perceptions.

**Research question 2: How do Chinese teachers of English apply dimensions of intercultural competence in their teaching?**

To answer this research question, the teachers' practices both reported in the survey and observed in their classrooms were examined. Two sub-questions were asked: 1) what intercultural topics and activities did the Chinese teachers of English engage the students in their classrooms?, and 2) were there any identifiable patterns in their ways of applying IC dimensions in the classroom?

**Intercultural Topics and Activities**

Intercultural topics and activities in the Chinese EFL classrooms were explored primarily through the self-reported practices from the survey data and the observed practices from the classrooms. Interviews and course materials provided by the teachers served to offer additional insights or clarifications to their self-reported or observed teaching practices. I will first report the findings from the survey and the class observations, and then discuss the findings by making connections to their self-reported practices

**Survey findings.** The survey findings are composed of three sections of questions in the survey: Section C, Section D-A and Section D-B. The questions on IC beliefs (Section C) reported how intercultural competence was addressed in the participants' classroom. The questions related to cultural topics (Section D-A) and those on classroom activities (Section D-B) provided information about how often varied cultural topics were offered, as well as how often various cultural activities were conducted in participants' EFL classrooms. I will report the findings by theme as reported in the responses to the questions; I will then share possible variations among the teachers regarding their self-reported teaching practices in the survey.

The survey participants scored six statements regarding various facets of IC in classroom teaching on a 4-point agree-disagree scale. From the participants' responses, I hoped to determine what intercultural content they wanted to cover in their English classrooms, i.e. foreign culture *vs.* home culture, American and British culture *vs.* cultures from other countries. I also sought to understand how they included intercultural content in their teaching. Specifically, I examined whether or not they presented both positive and negative sides of a culture, if they taught language and culture in an integrated way, and if they waited till the students had acquired a level of competence in English before they included intercultural topics or activities in their classes. Table 5 shows the level of agreement through the mean scores obtained for each belief statement and the percentage of teachers who strongly agreed with each statement.

Table 5

*Teachers' Beliefs regarding Intercultural Competence in Classroom Teaching*

Level of Agreement	Beliefs	Mean Score	SD	Strongly Agree
1	English teachers should present a realistic image of a foreign culture, and therefore should touch upon both positive and negative sides of the foreign culture and society.	3.53	.575	57.1%
2	English teaching should focus on developing students' attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other peoples and cultures.	3.52	.553	54.5%
3	English teaching should touch upon both English and Chinese culture in order to help students to mediate between the two cultures.	3.48	.598	53.2%
4	Based on your experience, English language and its culture can be taught in an integrated way.	3.26	.733	41.6%
5	Besides British and American cultures, English teachers should also touch upon cultures of other countries.	3.17	.657	29.9%
6	Before you can do anything about the intercultural dimension of foreign language teaching, the students have to possess a sufficiently high level of proficiency in the foreign language.	2.64	.759	11.7%

*Note.* Mean scores range from 1 to 4, calculated based on the following conditions: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; and 4 = strongly agree.

Among the participating teachers, 57.1% strongly agreed that IC development in the language classroom should focus on familiarizing students with both the perceived positive and negative sides of a foreign culture ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = .575$ ), 54.5% with enhancing students' openness towards other cultures ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .533$ ) and 53.2%



with helping them to mediate between their home culture and the foreign cultures ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = .598$ ). Less than half of the participants (41.6%) strongly agreed that language and culture could be taught in an integrated way ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .733$ ). Only 29.9% of them strongly agree that they should also include cultures from other countries than the U.S. and U.K. ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .657$ ), and 11.7% strongly agreed that language competence should be prerequisite for the inclusion of intercultural topics and activities in their classrooms ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = .759$ ). However, in the interviews, all the teachers mentioned how the low language proficiency of the students prevented them from introducing more culture-related topics into the classes. “My first-year students were not even able to discuss about their daily life, not to mention any cultural topics.” (Interview with Ms. Liu).

Table 6 shows the frequency the participants dealt with the ten cultural topics in their EFL classes on a 4-point scale. The top three cultural aspects frequently dealt with or taught by teachers were “cultural differences” ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .699$ ), “literature, music, theatre, film” ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = .692$ ), and “values and beliefs” ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = .630$ ). The Chinese teachers talked the least often about “technological development” ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = .602$ ), “ethic and social groups” ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = .556$ ), and “religious beliefs” ( $M = 2$ ,  $SD = .589$ ). Also shown in Table 4.5 are the scores the majority of teachers assigned to each cultural topic. More than half of the teachers frequently talked about “cultural differences,” “literature, music, theater, film,” “values and beliefs,” and “daily life and routines” in their classroom.

Table 6

*Frequency of the Cultural Topics Discussed in the EFL Class*

Order of Frequency	Cultural Topics	Mean	SD	Majority Score/ Percentage of Teachers
1	Cultural differences	2.93	.699	3/54.5%
2	Literature, music, theatre, film	2.91	.692	3/51.9%
3	Values and beliefs	2.84	.630	3/58.4%
4	Daily life and routines (food, drink and living condition, etc.)	2.74	.616	3/55.8%
5	Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions	2.6	.634	2/48.1%
6	History, geography, and political conditions	2.53	.680	2/57.1%
7	Educational systems	2.49	.663	2/51.9%
8	Technological development	2.4	.602	2/70.1%
9	Ethnic and social groups	2.22	.556	2/71.4%
10	Religious beliefs	2	.589	2/72.7%

*Note.* Mean scores range from 1 to 4, calculated based on the following conditions: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = frequently; and 4 = always.

The participants were also asked to indicate how often they practiced a number of possible culturally focused teaching activities on a 4-point scale. As shown in Table 7, only two activities were marked by the majority of the teachers as being used *frequently*: 41.6% of the teachers frequently used the activity of telling students about the foreign country or culture ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .756$ ), and 46.8% frequently asked students to make cultural comparisons ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = .674$ ). The majority of the teachers rated the frequency of using the rest of the activities as *sometimes*: asking students to explore cultural implications in articles and teaching materials ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = .730$ ), asking students to explore culture-related topics or events independently ( $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = .762$ ), or in pairs or small groups ( $M = 2.34$ ,  $SD = .825$ ).

Table 7

*Frequency of Activities for Addressing Culture-related Topics in the English Class*

<b>Order of Frequency</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Majority Score/ Percentage of Teachers</b>
<b>1</b>	I tell students what I heard, read, or experienced about the foreign country or culture.	2.86	.756	3/41.6%
<b>2</b>	I ask students to compare Chinese and English culture regarding the topic.	2.6	.674	3/46.8%
<b>3</b>	I ask students to explore cultural implications in teaching materials.	2.4	.730	2/54.5%
<b>4</b>	I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Chinese and English speaking people and explain the causes.	2.39	.732	2/54.5%
<b>5</b>	I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic.	2.36	.583	2/61%
<b>6</b>	I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss or debate over a cultural topic.	2.34	.825	2/44.2%
<b>7</b>	I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in events/documents.	2.24	.764	2/55.8%
<b>8</b>	I ask students to independently explore cultural events.	2.01	.762	2/53.2%

*Note.* Mean scores range from 1 to 4, calculated based on the following conditions: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = frequently; and 4 = always.

SPSS results suggested that variations exist among the teachers regarding their self-reported teaching practices. There was a statistically significant difference found between the group with less than 6-months of experience abroad and the group with 6-months to 1-year experiences abroad regarding the agreement of the IC belief “English

language and culture can be taught in an integrated way” ( $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .136$ ). The 6-month to 1-year group showed higher agreement in this belief. As for cultural topics, the group aged below 40 addressed the topic of cultural differences more often than the 41-and-above group ( $p = .027$ ,  $\eta^2 = .072$ ). In terms of cultural activities, the PhD group asked the students to make cultural comparisons more frequently than the master’s degree group ( $p = .027$ ,  $\eta^2 = .114$ ).

**Class observations findings.** The researcher observed seven teachers’ classes ranging from College English classes (level one to four) for non-English majors, English Reading classes for English majors, and an English Writing class for English majors. The average time allocated for culture-related topics and activities ranged from five to ten minutes per 50-minute class period. After coding the observation field notes and making connections of the codes, the researcher noticed several themes regarding the instructional features for IC development among the teachers. First, culture seemed to be secondary to language teaching during the English classes. Second, culture appeared in the class mainly as facts, or concrete information about a culture’s products, practices and perspectives. Third, cultural comparison was the most commonly used strategy of teaching culture, which also engaged the learners in thinking about their own culture, their use of both English and Chinese languages and the social implications of the language choices. Fourth, the culture-related instruction and discussions in these EFL classes were teacher-driven.

***Language first, culture second.*** Although teachers reported in the survey that they somewhat agree with the integral way of teaching language and culture, the

development of language proficiency was given the priority in their actual teaching practices. Culture was rarely specifically mentioned or discussed in the classes. During the classes, typical questions the teachers asked were: “What is the meaning of this word?” “What is the difference between this word and that word?” “Can you explain this phrase/sentence?” The teachers had a keen interest in an exact understanding of every word, a low tolerance of ambiguity, and a focus on discrete grammar points and specific syntactical constructions. As a result, 80- 90% of classroom time was spent on the elaborate explanation of language points, with all the students either listening or taking notes. In addition, translation either from English to Chinese or from Chinese to English was widely used in the classroom and seen as a reliable way of testing and measuring the students’ mastery of the language and understanding of the text.

These data suggest that culture appeared to be included as part of class as more of a “seize-the-opportunity” or a “by-the-way” instead purposeful. When a cultural topic in the text came up that needed elaboration, the teachers would seize the opportunity. Their comments were prompted by textual information in the textbook which usually took the form of a definition, a quick comparison, or a translation. The following excerpt from the field notes illustrated Mr. Deng’s seize-the-opportunity way of introducing the use of personal check in the US (personal checks are not commonly used in China):

The title of the text was Children and Money. Mr. Deng read the first sentence “Parents who decide that the time has come to teach their children about money usually begin by opening savings accounts.” He paused, looked at the students, and asked “what’s the meaning of ‘opening savings accounts’?” Several students whispered the

Chinese translation of the phrase, *kai zhanghu*. ... Looking back at the textbook, he read the next sentence “To a kid, a saving account is just a black hole that swallows birthday checks.” Facing the students, Mr. Deng made a brief remark “in China, we give *shengri hongbao* (生日红包, meaning *birthday gift money in cash sealed in a red envelop*); but in the U.S., they use checks often. Here they give the kids birthday checks so that the kids can deposit them in hope of getting interest.

The “by-the-way” style of inserting cultural comments occurred more spontaneously and sometimes ended up with a digression on the topic. For example, when Mr. Yao was explaining the new word in the text *lobby*, he extended the discussion to the word *gate*, then to *water gate*, next to a discussion of President Nixon and his contribution to Sino-US relationship, and finally to an anecdote in the research site related to Nixon’s first visit to China.

***Culture as facts.*** Culture was taught in the observed classes mainly as factual information for learners to remember. The main body of cultural content was composed of cultural products, practices and perspectives. Teachers tended to use questioning as a primary teaching technique. The questions were both of a factual and inferential nature with the factual questions dominating. Questions served primarily two purposes: checking students’ knowledge or understanding and soliciting students’ opinion. Most questions fell into the first category and generally led into either a cultural discussion or cultural comparison. The teachers then provided additional explanation for why people in another culture would do or view things in a certain way. For example, the following

exchange took place when Ms. Zai was explaining an article in the textbook on the American table manners of eating spaghetti.

Z: The author is talking about the “socially respectable way of eating spaghetti”.

Who knows how to eat spaghetti?

Ss: (Smile; show in body language how to eat spaghetti).

Z: you know how to eat it?

Ss: (explain how to eat spaghetti in Chinese).

Z: (Nod; smile.) You put the fork into spaghetti, wind it up, and then put it into your mouth. Do you think the Chinese table manners are the same as the American’s?

Ss: No.

Z: Give an example.

S1: Chinese people like to talk loudly at dinner table.

S2: Chinese people slurp the soup.

S3: The arrangement of the seats. In China, *miannan weizun* (面南为尊, meaning *prestigious guest should sit facing south*).

Z: Yes, in China, talking loudly at dinner shows the host’s hospitality, and slurping the soup shows how much the guests appreciate the food. However, usually you don’t talk with a full mouth no matter in China or in the States.

This example of cultural content also demonstrated another important feature regarding teaching culture in the Chinese EFL classroom – teachers used a cultural

comparison approach to show differences and similarities between the target culture and the Chinese culture, which will be discussed in the next section.

***Cultural comparisons.*** The teachers reported in the survey that they should include both English and Chinese cultures in their classes to help the students mediate between the two, for example, question A-6 and C-3. In the classroom, the teachers did frequently ask the learners to recall their own culture on various cultural topics and compare different cultures. However, the observation data suggested that the cultural comparisons were used more from a cultural stance as definitions or conclusions than from an intercultural stance as an opportunity for mediating between different cultures. The primary form of cultural comparison was associated with English-Chinese translation. Translation was widely used in Chinese EFL classrooms as an instructional strategy to help learners comprehend, remember, and produce the language. It also served to help students make cultural comparisons. One such example was found in the class observation field notes excerpt on Mr. Yao's explanation of how to translate *personal leave* and *business leave*.

Mr. Yao started the class with a roll call. A student named Li Jia was absent and her classmate answered for her:

S: *Binjia* (病假, meaning *sick leave*).

Y: She is on sick leave. *Shijia ne?* (事假呢, meaning *how to say personal leave*).

Ss: Business leave. (*Shijia* is *business leave* when translated word-for-word).

Y: It's personal leave. Business leave is *chuchai* (出差). Due to the collectivist culture in China, there is actually no Chinese equivalent of *personal leave*, but a



more general word *shijia* (literally meant *business leave*) to refer to personal leave.

The teachers' comparative approach also addressed cultural practices, as demonstrated in the above table manners example. When comparisons were drawn at the level of practices, the approach was primarily declarative and the typical form was: the Americans do this, we Chinese do that. Comparisons at the level of perspectives were found mainly inferred from things and behaviors, such as the way Ms. Zai explained the Chinese perspectives on talking loudly at the dinner table or slurping soup.

***Teacher-directed cultural instruction.*** All the classes the researcher observed tended to be teacher-directed in terms of content and instructional delivery. Teachers appeared in the classroom mainly as a knowledge provider. Consistent with the “seize-the-opportunity” or “by-the-way” comment insertion mentioned above, the cultural content teachers provided were mainly comprised of the cultural topics in the textbooks and a wide range of topics and issues potentially of interest and relevance to the students. From the textbooks these teachers used, the researcher found that cultural topics, though primarily related to the U.S. and the U.K. (about 60%), also covered other countries and areas. Table 8 provides an example of the topics covered in the textbook for the College English Level IV class. In no instances did teachers provide “experiential” opportunities for cultural learning, such as a role play or guided discovery which might have led towards more critical reflection on the cultural topics. Instead, cultural instruction in the classes observed was implicit. The finer dimensions of IC beyond observable behavior were left to be interpreted by the students.

Table 8

*Topics in the Textbook for the College English Level IV Class*

Unit	Topic	Background countries/cultures
1	Pride comes before a fall: the stories of Napoleon and Hitler	France/Germany/Russia
2	Automobile industry	U.S./Japan
3	Job interview	U.S.
4	In search of the Davos Men	Globalization (U.S./Europe/Asia)
5	A friend in need.	U.K.
6	Technology and time	U.S./U.K.
7	New York's mood of the 9/11	U.S.
8	In the jungle	Ecuador

Culture topics or issues outside the textbook varied greatly among the teachers I observed, but one common topic teachers frequently chose was current events. At the time of the research, political tension between China and Japan was in the news due to the Diaoyu Islands conflict. Therefore, *Japan* or the *Diaoyu Islands* was touched upon as a cultural topic in different classes I observed during that time period, as depicted in the following field notes excerpt.

Mr. Yao was explaining the word *minefield* and he gave the sample sentence “Diaoyu Islands are the minefield in the Sino-Japan relationship.” ... He went on with the word *incident* and defined it as a minor occurrence. He then gave the example of *lugouqiao shibian* (卢沟桥事变, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the marker for the start of Japan's full scale invasion of China in 1937). “*Lugouqiao shibian* is an incident....Then why is it called an *incident*? What's the cause of it? Because the

Japanese army needed an excuse to start the war – a Japanese soldier was claimed missing in the vicinity of the bridge and therefore they sent troops over to investigate. Here *incident* is not a major event; it's minor."

During the discussion of these cultural topics, the teachers controlled the pace and the flow of communication. It appeared that they often introduced, told, or informed students about cultural knowledge and also provided their own understanding and interpretation of cultural issues. The main strategies of teaching culture were either commenting or elaborating on the cultural topics. They asked questions, but the questions generally were meant to find out whether students understood and what they knew. Occasionally, some teachers engaged students in pair or group activities mainly for the purpose of exchanging ideas on certain cultural topics instead of helping students construct knowledge and promote their cultural awareness. This finding from the class observations seemed to echo what teachers said during the interviews about the students' low engagement in the classroom. Mr. Yao described his concern in student participation in the class: "I want to let the students be the teacher teaching their peers. I think it's the best way to learn. ... They are not able to do it (teach their peers); their linguistic competence is just too low." Ms. Liao also said: "The biggest problem is language proficiency. They (students) are not able to say clearly what they are doing, not to mention anything deep about culture."

Also, some teachers created PowerPoint files to support their teaching, but in the classes the researcher observed these PowerPoint files served no more than a substitute for traditional blackboard where words, phrases, and language points addressed during

the class were listed. Although in the interview some teachers emphasized the use of technology in the classroom, they used technology mainly as the conveyor of teaching materials that could arouse students' interest, as in Ms. Yang's comments "if I use the video clips from *Vampire Diary*, the students will think I'm cool." Thus, the video clips, which could have contained some interesting insights into current young adult interest and culture was left without seizing the opportunity to help the students draw interesting parallels or differences.

### **IC Teaching Patterns**

From the class observations and interviews, three major patterns of teaching practices regarding IC development emerged among the Chinese teachers of English. Using coding and connecting strategies in the content analysis of the observation field notes, I labeled these patterns as the utilitarian pattern, the traditional pattern, and the humanist pattern. As found in the survey results, teachers' educational background and their experiences in other countries appeared to play a significant role in teachers' perceptions of IC. I therefore selected three teachers with different educational and overseas experiences - Mr. Yao, Ms Deng, and Mr. Zhao- to represent these three patterns and analyzed them individually to search for potential features of IC practices in each category.

In each example, I start with a quote from the teacher. Quotes in their original language are provided in Appendix IX. I also provide a profile of the teacher, including his or her life story, learning experience, professional development, teaching philosophy and self-reported teaching practices, using information collected from the interviews. I

then describe details about each of the teacher's classroom practices regarding IC. I open this part with a vignette of the teacher's classroom. It is not an exact description of one specific class but a composite sketch. The data sources for the vignette are the field notes from the classes. I then present important aspects of the teaching practices that feature the pattern this teacher represents, and examine how intercultural elements are introduced or acknowledged in the classroom through instructional materials and teachers' explanations.

**The utilitarian pattern – The case of Mr. Yao.**

*“The students spent too much time on the book knowledge, but the book knowledge was so detached from the real life. ... What we discussed in the classroom as ‘culture’ was detached from the ‘culture’ in real life in the foreign countries. It’s a waste of time.”*

--- Mr. Yao

**Mr. Yao's profile.** Mr. Yao was 36 years old with 13 years of teaching experience at the time of the study. A typical EFL teacher recruited during the fast expansion period (1999-2004) of the Chinese universities, he started working at the research site in 1999 when he received his BA in English from a top university in China. In 2005, while working full-time, he obtained a MEd (TESOL) degree from an Australian university in an off-shore mode, which meant the MEd program was based in a university in Shanghai and taught by faculty both from the Australian university and from the hosting university in Shanghai.

When asked about his view on intercultural competence, Mr. Yao mentioned the influence from a philosophy course he took in the college, in which contrastive thought patterns across diverse cultures were discussed. He learned from the course that thinking systems were different from person to person, with the difference being more apparent between cultural groups. For example, the western way of thinking tends to be linear and straightforward, whereas the eastern way of thinking features restraint and elusion. Such difference had its implications in English learning and teaching in the Chinese context. He learned that an English text is typified by a clear and direct statement of the author's view and argument on a topic presented in a straightforward manner. However, from his teaching experience, he noticed that Chinese students tended to use English with the indirectness that often sounded illogical or unclear from the perspective of native English users. Therefore, Mr. Yao emphasized to his students such differences in the thinking systems and kept reminding them of such differences as demonstrated in their use of English.

Mr. Yao owed his current teaching style to the influence from the external English language training schools, such as the Beijing New Oriental School. Founded in 1993, the Beijing New Oriental School was an English training school well-known in China for the preparation courses on TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, IELTS, etc. and boasted an annual enrolment of over a million test-takers in China from 1997 to 1998 (Wang, 2004 ). Mr. Yao took an English course at the school and was impressed the most how the teachers there managed to keep the students interested in the course.

Chinese students usually start taking an English course with much interest, but get bored in the class soon. The New Oriental teachers believe in ‘keeping them awake by all means’: they talk fast; they tell jokes; they teach the students some fun stuff that can be used immediately. The fast pace of teaching keeps the students awake; and the students’ interest are maintained throughout the class because they can see the immediate result of learning.

Mr. Yao called the New Oriental teachers’ practices as “student-centered” and incorporated these practices in his classes.

***Mr. Yao’s Teaching Practice.*** At the time of this study, Mr. Yao was teaching a College English Level II class and his students were mostly second-year fashion and art design majors. As College English courses for the non-English major undergrads ranged from pre-Level, Level I, Level II, Level III, to Level VI, this group of students started from pre-Level, the lowest level of English proficiency when they entered the university. Mr. Yao met the students once a week, four 50-minute sessions each time. Thirty students registered for the course.

***Classroom Vignette.*** It was 6:30 pm on Thursday. Mr. Yao was standing in the front of a language lab with 21 students scattered in 40 booths arranged in 5 rows. He started the class with a roll call. Whoever called should tell his/her horoscope sign in English as a review of what was taught in the previous class.

After the roll call, Mr. Yao went on teaching the words listed in the text under the section New Words and Expressions. The first word he taught was “style”.

Y: “Ni zhen you xing” (你真有型, buzzword in Chinese), how to say it in English?

Ss: You really have a style.

Y: How to say zao xing shi (造型师)?

Ss: Stylist.

Y: Remember, “In style” means “in fashion”.

When teaching the word “harmless”, Mr. Yao emphasized the affix -less and gave examples of careful vs. careless, fearful vs. fearless, and useful vs. useless. He quoted “the Husseinless Iraq” from an article in Time magazine to further help the students understand how the affix worked. He asked one student about the differences between “accomplish”, “complete”, and “finish”. The student answered in Chinese, which was repeated and further clarified by Mr. Yao in English.

Y: “Accomplish” involves a lot of effort, just like “da gong gao cheng” (大功告成, Chinese idiom, meaning accomplishment of a difficult project). For example, it’s easy for you to write a one-page letter, but for my grandmother, it’s a tough job. When she “finished” a page, she “accomplished”. “Finish” involves reluctance, without your own will. So we can say before marriage, a man is incomplete; when he is married, he is finished.

Ss: (laughing.)

Mr. Yao talked at a fast pace and walked down the rows while explaining the words. While he used English in the class, he slid into Chinese from time to time when the students seemed not able to catch up with him or showed less interest in the topic. He



stepped back to the blackboard to write down a word or phrase in English. The students were busy taking notes, copying the text from the blackboard, and uttering a few words or sentences to answer the questions. When the students looked less attentive, he tossed out mind twisters, like “What do we call fortune’s daughter? Misfortune,” and “How to make time fly? Throw the clock away.”

*Utilitarian features.* I assigned the term “utilitarian” style to Mr. Yao because of the instrumentality of language and culture presented in the class. Viewing both language and culture as tools, Mr. Yao seemed to care less about implementing a structured approach of teaching. When teaching, he emphasized the connections of language and culture with real life. He said to his students “connect what you are learning with something you already know.” Therefore, he taught students how to say certain Chinese buzzwords in English; he demonstrated how to use the words in the students’ disciplines; he referred to local, national and international points of interest, such as the Shanghai Pudong Convention Center, Yangzi River, Mount Tai, Pearl Harbor, Darling Harbor, etc., in his sample sentences. Among the classes I observed, such connections with real life appeared mainly in the classes of teachers in their 20s or 30s; this particular aspect was not observed in the classes of the more senior teachers.

The primary activity in Mr. Yao’s class was Chinese-English translation. He gave the students words, phrases, or short sentences in Chinese and asked the students to put them immediately into English using the new words and expressions they just learned. In Mr. Yao’s opinion, the use of native language in the translation exercise not only increased the instructional pace and, as a result, excited the learners, but also helped the

students make effective cross-lingual and cross-cultural comparisons. When making cultural comparisons, Mr. Yao adopted an approach that seemed touch-and-go without addressing much of the contrastive thought patterns behind such differences. The reason might be he wanted to stay at a level of complexity where he would keep the interest of his students.

**The traditional pattern – the case of Mr. Deng.**

*“As a responsible teacher, you should help the students pass the exams. Only after meeting this basic requirement, you can start considering the practical side of language teaching, such as how to improve the students’ communicative competence.”*

*-- Mr. Deng*

**Mr. Deng’s profile.** Having been teaching in the same university for 38 years, Mr. Deng was a senior teacher and promoted to associate professor 10 years ago. He was retiring in two years. Considering his age and experience, he felt that it was neither worthwhile nor necessary to pursue a master’s or doctoral degree, but he had taken several part-time graduate courses for professional development. In the year 2000, he spent one year in the United Kingdom studying on Computer-aided Language Learning (CALL).

Mr. Deng clearly stated from the start of the interview that he prioritized the objective of helping the students pass the exams over the objective of improving students’ communicative performance in English teaching. He recognized the students’ needs of improving language skills: “the students want to be able to talk with foreigners; they don’t want to speak English with a stutter.” However, there was irreconcilable

conflict between the curriculum requirements and the students' needs: "the curriculum focuses on academic English and topics, such as education, tradition, values, and current social affairs, but the students are interested in topics close to their life: fashion, entertainment, shopping and cuisine." Mr. Deng chose to stick with the curriculum requirements as there were two obstacles that prevented him from going further: textbook and class size.

Textbooks are designed according to the curriculum, and therefore composed of mainly topics for academic discussions. The language in the textbook is divorced from real life. How can you help students improve real life English communication skills without providing relevant language? It's just like the students want to build up their muscles, but they are provided training on their flexibility abilities. ... There are too many students in one class, 50 of them. It's not possible for each of them to get a chance of practicing English in the class.

Mr. Deng concluded that, at the tertiary level of English teaching in China, English courses were test-oriented degree courses designed according to the curriculum, while skill-oriented courses could be left with the independent language training schools. He got this idea from an English resume written by a native-speaker. In the resume, the writer listed his MBA degree courses and in a separate section training courses he took for improving his negotiation skills. Mr. Deng felt college English courses in China, just like the MBA degree courses, could also be separated from skill training.

When talking about intercultural competence in English teaching, Mr. Deng remarked that "intercultural competence could not be trained." Although at the end of

each unit in the textbook there's a section called "Cultural Differences" that introduced cultural facts and made cultural comparisons, Mr. Deng stated that the problem with the students was that they were not aware when they were faced with intercultural challenges. He used his personal experience in UK thirteen years ago to support his point. When he travelled from London to Manchester by train, he was surprised to learn that he could get the student ticket for half the price. Though he held a student ID and knew there was student discount, he did not realize he was entitled to the benefit because in China student benefits were subject to both student status and age. It would be unimaginable for someone with grey hair to enjoy the student benefit as such benefit was for the young and dependent. This experience taught him that intercultural competence could not be learned from the textbook, but acquired from experiences, either personal experience or experience shared by the teachers.

***Mr. Deng's teaching practice.*** Mr. Deng was also teaching a Level II course, but his students were freshmen from various majors. Compared to Mr. Yao's students, Mr. Deng's students entered the university with much higher English proficiency. Mr. Deng met the students twice a week for three 45-minute sessions. Fifty-five students were registered in the course.

*Classroom Vignette.* It was 6:30pm. In a regular lecture room with 70 fixed seats arranged in eight rows, over 50 students almost filled the classroom. Mr. Deng stood in front of the class behind the teacher's desk and projected a PowerPoint file with Usage Exercise in English:

Principal/Principle

- The. \_\_\_\_\_ aim of the policy is to bring peace to the area.
- Complaints from the teachers and students began arriving at the \_\_\_\_\_'s office.

Mr. Deng asked the students to turn to page 17 of the textbook where the exercises were and went through the Usage Exercise with the students. In this exercise, the students were asked to differentiate pairs of words that either looked similar or carried similar meanings and chose the proper word for the sentences listed below. He read the first sentence, paused for several seconds, gave the word principal as the right answer, and then explained it as “chief, the major one”. He then moved on with the second sentence in the same manner. He clicked the mouse once and the PowerPoint file turned to the next page with the words continual and continuous, and two sample sentences with missing words. After explaining 5 pairs of words and 10 sample sentences in 10 minutes, Mr. Deng asked the students to turn to page 21 of the textbook and started teaching the text.

Mr. Deng went through the whole text sentence by sentence at a slow tempo in a mixture of English and Chinese. From time to time, he translated the sentences in the text into Chinese. He asked questions occasionally to check students' understanding of words and sentences and usually provided an answer shortly after no matter if the students had answered or not. The classroom was generally quiet with the noticeable sound of students' taking notes on their textbooks or notebooks. At the end of the class, Mr. Deng projected five questions related to the text and asked the students to prepare for

the next class. Some students used their smart phones to take a snapshot of the questions; while others were busy taking them down on paper.

***Traditional features.*** I assigned the term “traditional” to Mr. Deng’s class because of its reliance on the textbook, focus on the in-depth analysis of literary texts, exam-oriented practices, and grammar-translation method. His approach might be labeled direct instruction (Shrum & Glisan, 2004). He seldom inserted materials outside the textbook in his class. As may have become apparent from the vignette, Mr. Deng’s classroom focused on language learning with very few forays into culture. The textbook supplied most culture learning opportunities. His comments prompted by textual information in the textbook usually took the form of a translation, a definition, or a quick comparison. For example, when the word “salvation army” appeared in the text, he first provided the translation as *jiushijun* (救世军) and then a definition of it as *a charitable organization*. Perhaps because of his perceived obstacles for going beyond the textbook, he appeared to struggle with the introduction of more cultural topics in his class. Also in the “salvation army” example, after providing a translation and definition, he simply asked the students to Google for more information without further explanation or discussion.

During the interview, Mr. Deng associated intercultural competence development primarily with “foreign” cultural experiences. Based on his anecdotal experience in the UK, he believed that learners could not fully understand foreign cultural norms until actually experiencing them in another country. His awareness of this belief functioned as a limitation to what he could do in the classroom. In addition, Mr. Deng shared an

opinion that only when culture and intercultural competence were reflected in various English tests in China would it be more likely for the English teachers in the traditional category to integrate culture in their classroom teaching.

**The humanist pattern – The case of Ms. Zhao.**

*“Our textbooks only offer limited topics and shallow social understandings. The teachers should integrate frontier social issues and their own thoughts on these issues into the classroom discussions so that the students could develop extensive interests and be proactive in exploring these social issues.”*

-- Ms. Zhao

**Ms. Zhao’s profile.** In her late 30s, Ms Zhao has been teaching at the research site for 12 years after receiving her MA degree in English Literature from another university in Shanghai. When talking about her classroom teaching, she kept referring to her professor in college whom she took as her model.

When I was an English major in college, the professor who impressed me the most in my English classes was not those who explained texts or vocabulary clearly and in great details. It was the professor who covered extensive topics in the class and included his own thoughts in the lessons. ... He told us about Freud and Foucault. Though we didn’t understand these fully at the time, we picked up these names and also interests in exploring more in the future.

In Ms. Zhao’s view, the pursuit for humanism is descending among the current college students: “The students care less and less about humanism; they prefer utilitarianism. Whatever you teach, they just want to know if it can help them make big

money in the future.” Ms. Zhao was disappointed when she first noticed this, but decided soon that it’s the teacher’s responsibility to share his/her thoughts with the students. “I don’t care if they listen; I need to tell them what I like and teach them my way. It’s my responsibility as a teacher. They will feel my sincerity at the end.” To Ms. Zhao, it’s unbearable just repeating things year by year in the classroom: “I want to add new stuff; I want to make connections with the current world. I have been trying to add what I have learned, what I have read, and what I have thought into my lessons.”

Ms. Zhao’s emphasis on humanism includes two sides: good values and multiple perspectives. In her opinion, the college students can be easily lost in the values in the society due to their inexperience and therefore need guidance from the teachers. However, due to their age, the students tend to be repellent to teachers’ direct preaching. The teachers should, instead, integrate text elaboration with the introduction of good values. Ms. Zhao also analyzes texts from multiple perspectives and encourages the students to use these perspectives to look at social issues. She hopes that the students could grow mature, objective, and discriminating in this process.

As for intercultural competence, Ms. Zhao remarks that language has already carried much culture and there are different levels of reading this culture. It could be as shallow as explaining when is appropriate to say “thank you”; it could be factual knowledge of British society or American society. She considers her humanistic way of teaching a more in-depth way of thinking interculturally.



***Ms. Zhao's teaching practice.*** Ms. Zhao was teaching an English reading course for the third-year English major students. She met the students three times a week for two 45-minute sessions. Thirty students registered for the course.

*Classroom Vignette.* It's 9:00 am. Ms. Zhao's classroom was a lecture room with 70 seats in 6 rows. The thirty students in the class chose to sit close to each other from the second to the fourth row. Among them, three were male. Ms. Zhao was standing between the teacher's desk and the students' desk, holding her textbook in hand. The text she taught was George Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant*. Ms. Zhao asked one student to tell the class what the story was about. She then summarized the story:

The story concerns a colonial police officer's obligation to shoot a rogue elephant. The officer does not want to shoot the elephant, but feels compelled to by a crowd of indigenous residents, before whom he does not wish to appear indecisive or cowardly. The situation and events that Orwell describes underscores the hostility between the administrators of the British Empire and their subjects. Both sides feel hatred, distrust, and resentment.

She shared with the class a paragraph from Said's book "Orientalism":

The division between East and West is shown by the Prime Meridian at the Old Royal Observatory in the London Suburb of Greenwich. This is more than a hidden hint at the British or Western view of the world and the power of London as the center of the Empire.

She proceeded with an explanation of how East-West relation was viewed from the colonial age and the post-colonial age respectively. She then assigned a writing homework for the students:

Starbuck's newly opened outlet close to Hangzhou's Lingyin Temple has been called a second "cultural invasion," with critics saying the US chain's commercial style will spoil the serenity that an oriental Buddhism temple should embrace.

What do you think of this? Does the reading of Orwell's story or the excerpt from Orientalism give you any additional thought on this?

Ms. Zhao stood in the front of the class most of the time and walked occasionally right-and-left. She used English all through the class in a clear, crispy voice. Whenever she asked a question based on the text, the students would give her a brief answer in English. She would then elaborate on the students' answers with abundant information and comments. Sometimes her cultural comments expanded into a mini lecture. The students were sitting quietly, busy taking notes, and looking up words occasionally in their electronic dictionaries.

***Humanist features.*** Ms. Zhao emphasized the inclusion of humanism in language education. During the interview, she talked about her care about the value of education, aiming at cultivating young minds at a deeper level and producing better citizens instead of mere linguistic brokers. In her teaching practices, she tried to open the door to the values that she held as important and encouraged examination of these values. She took more of a social constructivist view of IC that emphasized the role that individual perspectives played in IC development (i.e. Byram, 2008). For example, as

shown in the vignette, she encouraged the students to explore the viability of various perspectives on the east-west cultural conflicts, rather than searching for a definite and correct answer.

Though also practicing direct instruction most of the time, she was modeling the language by conducting the class entirely in English and engaging the students in the target language, rather than merely telling the students to do an exercise or repeat phrases not in context. Her view of culture went beyond the traditional “Big C” that referred to history, geography, artifacts, technology, literature, art, music, and the way of life, and the “Little C” that referred to the culturally influenced beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors, such as customs, habits, dress, foods, leisure, and so forth (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993), but focused more on the ideological and mental view of culture that referred to how culture can be understood through investigating people’s beliefs, values, and reasoning systems, which the symbolic dimension of intercultural competence aimed to examine.

### **Summary**

To answer research question two, the survey responses on IC beliefs, cultural topics and cultural activities were explored. Findings addressing the teachers’ IC practices were presented. Three instructional patterns were identified in the teachers’ ways of applying the IC dimensions in their classroom. The results suggested that intercultural topics or activities were not a regular focus in most participating teachers’ classes and that culture entered the classroom mainly as extended factual knowledge from the textbook or teachers’ improvisation. Teachers appeared to interact in class primarily

as the knowledge providers. Occasionally, they appeared to engage in their approach to cultural teaching from more in-depth intercultural perspectives. Cultural topics were mostly associated with a few major English speaking countries partly due to the fact that the textbooks gave priority to the culture of the United States and the United Kingdom. When cultural topics or activities were included in the classes, the teachers relied heavily on cultural comparisons between the target culture and the Chinese culture. The traditional way of lecturing still dominated the participating teachers' cultural teaching practices.

**Research question 3: How do their intercultural beliefs and other factors inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?**

Research question three addresses the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC. It aims to 1) understand factors that contributed to the construction of teachers' IC beliefs and practices; 2) understand what might be the barriers for the Chinese teachers to implement their IC beliefs; and 3) understand the dimensions of IC in the Chinese context.

Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC have been discussed under research questions one and two. Some of the beliefs and self-reported practices found in the survey and interview data were reflected in their practices observed in the classroom while others appeared to conflict with the classroom practices. The survey questions that focused on what might comprise barriers for addressing culture-related topics in class offered some insight into what might have caused such conflicts. The interviews provided more in-depth ideas as to not only why teachers viewed or practiced IC in

certain ways, but also explained how these participants came to such beliefs about culture and how they incorporated these approaches in their teaching of culture. In this section, I explore aspects of how teachers' beliefs may be impacting their teaching practices; I also examine the prompts, or what appear to be constraints, for the teachers in implementing their beliefs.

### **Construction of IC Beliefs and Practices**

Teachers' beliefs regarding IC reported in both survey and interviews were determined to have an impact on their teaching practices. Survey and interview data suggested that the Chinese teachers' beliefs regarding IC mainly revolved around acquiring cultural knowledge, understanding cultural differences, and fostering open and positive attitude towards different cultures. These beliefs were reflected both in the self-reported practices from the survey and the interviews and in the observed practices as focusing on arousing learners' interest, making cultural comparisons, and teaching cultural facts, perspectives and values.

As Borg (2003) pointed out, teacher cognition was related to his/her past experience, education background, knowledge, perception and environmental factors. Past research on teachers' beliefs also suggested that teachers' beliefs and conceptions shaped teachers' instructional behavior to a considerable degree (i.e. Prosser & Trigwell 1999; Williams & Burden 1997). Thus, insights on the construction of teachers' beliefs were crucial for the researcher to understand more specifically the way in which teachers integrated intercultural competence development in foreign language education and the reasons underlying their actual practices. Three factors emerged from the data as being

part of the construction of the Chinese teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in EFL teaching, Chinese philosophy, institutional context, and personal background.

First, the traditional Chinese teaching philosophy played an important role in shaping the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the teaching of cultural knowledge. Han Yu, one of important ancient Chinese philosophers, defined three roles of being a teacher in *On the Teacher*: to propagate the doctrine for, to impart professional knowledge to, and to resolve doubts of students. Nurtured with such an educational philosophy, Chinese teachers of English tended to teach tangible knowledge such as cultural facts, products and perspectives rather than intangible skills such as analyzing culture and negotiating between cultures. Ms. Liao's comments on what made a good English teacher during the interview echoed such philosophy: "Good teachers could associate texts with the knowledge in life; and the best ones were able to quote freely the wisdom of the masters that applied to the situation."

Second, teachers reported during the interviews that their choices of intercultural teaching approaches were based on their understanding of the characteristics of the students. Chinese students were said to be quiet, respectful of, and obedient to teachers, as demonstrated in Ms. Gong's comment: "Many teaching methods that I learned from Australia did not work here. For example, discussion was widely used in Australian classrooms. However, our students here were quiet and passive. Thus, it (classroom discussion) was no longer effective to the Chinese students." In addition, Chinese students were also presented as being reluctant to speak English in public. Accordingly, in the class observations, Chinese teachers were found to raise mainly lower cognitive

questions based on the information from the textbook. In the meantime, the teachers expected straightforward answers from students usually in chorus because answering in chorus would “give the students a sense of safety” in Mr. Yao’s words. Also accommodating the students’ principal learning habits, the teachers generally adopted a traditional Chinese teaching approach, which consisted primarily of modeling, memorizing and reproducing in the classes the researcher observed. The Chinese teachers found it hard to apply in their classrooms new pedagogical approaches they had acquired from various sources, such as pedagogy workshops or advanced degree programs in which they had enrolled. For instance, Ms. Zai commented that “the more I learned (about pedagogy), the more I got confused. I was taught this method and that method, but they just didn’t apply to the situation here.”

Third, the teachers’ IC beliefs and practices appeared to be largely the result of their own experiences as language and culture learners. Among the 11 teachers interviewed, everyone talked about how their professors in college influenced their current thinking and how such thinking was transferred into their current teaching. Ms. Liao gave a vivid description of her professor in the college: “he taught in a very traditional way; no PowerPoint; just a piece of chalk. He never looked at us. Instead, he looked up at the ceiling from time to time. But I like his class, boundless as the sea and sky (海阔天空, Chinese idiom, meaning *contents ranging far and wide*).” This type of image of a teacher could again be connected with what Han Yu said about the three roles of being a teacher.

## Barriers

Although the Chinese teachers' teaching practices were found generally consistent with their beliefs regarding IC development, as discussed above, some discrepancies were nonetheless noticed. First of all, though cultural teaching was strongly recognized in the survey and interview data, the amount of time allocated for addressing cultural topics was still minimal in their teaching practices as observed in the classroom. In addition, incongruence was also found between the teachers' IC beliefs and practices lies with the position of communication in IC and the amount of time allowed for communication in the classroom. From both answers to the IC definition question in the survey and the interview data, the teachers emphasized the importance of communication in their conceptualization of IC, such as in Ms. Yang's words: "I translate intercultural competence as intercultural communicative competence. Since without communication, what's the purpose of intercultural competence?" However, in the classes observed, few authentic communicative situations with clear communicative goals were noted. Teacher questions posed during class generally were meant to determine whether students knew or understood the content; teachers did not appear to seek additional feedback or elaboration from the students.

Table 9 includes findings from the survey question (Section D-C) that probed for potential barriers for addressing culture-related topics in their classes. Ranked between 2 (sometimes) and 3 (frequently), the teachers' top three barriers were: limited teaching resources ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = .649$ ), limited time in each teaching period ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD =$



.700), and limited cultural contents in the textbooks and teaching materials ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = .836$ ).

Table 9

*Barriers for Addressing Culture-related Topics in the Class*

Order of Frequency	Barriers	Mean	SD
1	Limited teaching resources	2.71	.649
2	Limited time in each teaching period	2.55	.700
3	Limited cultural contents in the textbooks and teaching materials	2.48	.836
4	Pressure for the students to pass national English exams	2.44	.763
5	Unfamiliarity with the cultural topics	2.29	.962
6	Students showing little interest in cultural topics or activities	1.90	.771

*Note.* Mean scores range from 1 to 4, calculated based on the following conditions: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = frequently; and 4 = always.

Examining interviews and relevant course materials uncovered further constraints voiced by the teachers as they implemented their IC beliefs in their EFL classes. The following constraints emerged as themes after the survey results were connected with interview findings and the teaching materials: teachers' lack of cultural knowledge, the test oriented system, curriculum requirements, and students' limited language proficiency.

**Teachers' lack of cultural knowledge.** In line with Han Yu's view on the teachers' role, teachers are expected to be highly knowledgeable in terms of subject matter and ready to give an answer when being asked. Yet many teachers indicated their

lack of cultural knowledge, which in turn appeared to present itself as a lack of confidence in their ability to teach cultural knowledge. Both survey and interview results revealed that overseas experience could offer first-hand knowledge about the target cultures which might not be achieved through reading books. Through cultural immersion in another country teachers gained a heightened awareness that understanding a people required experiencing their culture. Mr. Zhuang gave his dining experience in the U.S. as an example.

Our book knowledge is sometimes outdated. From my readings, I always thought we should order a full course consisting of soup, salad, meat, and dessert in a western restaurant. However, when eating in a restaurant in the U.S., I saw people just order steak, nothing else. Teachers really need to travel more to enrich their experiences.

However, most of the Chinese EFL teachers (48 out of 77 teachers who took the survey) at the research site had had limited overseas living experience (less than 6 months). In addition, both teachers and students should have similar access to information about other cultures today from such sources as books, the Internet, and mass media, which further prevented the teachers from addressing cultural issues as it might be a concern if they were not able to address them fully. Ms. Zai talked about this concern in the interview: “It’s getting harder and harder to control the class. The availability of various information sources plays a major part in it. Whatever you say in the class, the students can easily *Google* it. They might even know more than you do, which could really decrease your confidence.”

**Test-oriented system.** The teachers also talked about how the pressure to help students pass English tests overtook many instructional hours that could have been spent on IC development. As discussed as part of the context information regarding English teaching in the China in the Chapter Two, the teachers needed to prepare students for the national English proficiency tests such as CET 4. These tests tended to make the students perceive EFL learning more from the traditional linguistic perspective. Thus, classes that addressed intercultural content in a significant way might pose a threat to these students. Ms. Zai expressed such concern during the interview:

The students need to pass CET 4 or CET 6. If I find a text interesting and I'd like to share more cultural information with them, I can't. They (students) don't want me to spend the limited class time on content not related to the tests. Some texts are really boring, but I still have to cover them in details as they are required by the curriculum and test-related. So in general, you cannot teach as you want.

**Curriculum.** Even though the national curriculum has included culture as one of the foci of English teaching in China (China Ministry of Education, 2000, 2004), when it came to specific courses, both class observations data and teaching materials collected indicated that the teaching objectives for daily lessons appeared to still focus on pure language learning. For example, culture did not appear in all the five course objectives listed in the syllabus for College English Level II:

- Listening: understand lessons in English; understand English spoken at 120 words per minute after listening twice; understand basic conversations.

- Speaking: know how to use basic English in the class, how to raise and answer questions in English in the class, and how to conduct basic English conversation.
- Reading: understand general English articles; read at 70 words per minute for regular reading and at 90 words per minute for fast reading; use effective reading techniques.
- Writing: write 100-word article in 30 minutes based on reading materials or writing guides; write coherently with proper grammar.
- Translating: translate articles that are less difficult than the textbook articles; express the ideas of the original article correctly in the translation at a speed of 280 words per hour from English to Chinese and 220 words per hour from Chinese to English.

Interview data also confirmed that the teachers found the curriculum not supportive for IC development in their teaching. Mr. Deng talked about the conflict between the curriculum and the students' intercultural needs: "The curriculum focuses on the language skills in the academic field, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, students' basic intercultural needs are not considered, such as conversational skills, social negotiation skills, etc."

**Limited language proficiency.** Almost all participating teachers during the interviews mentioned that students' limited language proficiency was the major obstacle which restricted them from including more cultural topics and activities in their English classes. Students' language proficiency, according to the teachers, was caused by small

working vocabulary and the influence from their native language Chinese. Ms. Ye gave the example that some of her students could not even use basic vocabulary such as “fifteen” or “the United Kingdom” in conversations. Ms. Yang showed how her students used English in the Chinese way: “They wanted to say *soap dispenser*, but they translated word literally from Chinese as *give soap machine*; they wanted to say *there are a lot of people*, but they ended up saying *this is a lot of people*.” Ms. Yang responded to this problem by “offering them more articles and video materials so that they could read more, hear more, and absorb more.”

### **Dimensions of IC in the Chinese Context**

Teachers’ beliefs regarding IC were found mostly transferred to their classroom practices since both the beliefs and practices were rooted in and constructed from the teachers’ understanding of the Chinese EFL teaching context. Thus, the concept of IC and the practices of IC development in Chinese EFL teaching explored in this research were also invested with Chinese characteristics. In this section, the intercultural dimensions in the Chinese context will be discussed based on the information from the survey, class observations, and interviews. Findings will be discussed aligned with the four IC dimensions, behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic. Though these four dimensions are discussed separately, they are often interwoven in the classrooms of the participants.

**The behavioral dimension.** Both survey and class observations results indicated that the intercultural teaching practice in the Chinese EFL classroom appeared to be frequently associated with the acquisition of cultural knowledge rather than intercultural

skills such as cultural adaptability or communicative skills (Byram, 2007; Deardorff, 2004). In the behavioral dimension of IC in the Chinese context, such knowledge mainly focused on appropriate everyday behavior such as table manners. This might be due to the EFL context where English is mainly learned and practiced in class. Students have very little opportunities to be involved in authentic intercultural communication, so teachers do not feel the urge to help students to acquire skills to conduct intercultural communications. Another reason for the low recognition of the behavioral dimension of IC in Chinese EFL teaching might be found with a group of teachers who resented the instrumental view of teaching and held that language learning at the college level should be a part of liberal education, such as in Mr. Zhuang's words "you (teachers) should not degenerate yourself into skill training. Though the students may find such training practical, it departs from what we call as the fostering of humanism in college education."

**The cognitive dimension.** The cognitive dimension of IC development in the Chinese EFL classrooms can mainly be associated with Bennett's (1993) DMIS, and specifically with the promotion of students' cultural sensitivity and awareness to cultural difference in their learning of cultural knowledge. Interview and class observation data revealed that cultural teaching in the Chinese EFL classroom mainly aimed to provide general cultural background relating to the text. Such general cultural knowledge was sometimes too broad to be adequately learned or taught. Therefore, the teachers tended to make cultural comparisons in their teaching, hoping to help students identify the cultural similarities and differences in a given situation. Mr. Zhuang explained in the interview why cultural comparisons were typical in English teaching in China:

All Western cultures could be categorized as one group and in no way could the Chinese culture be blended into this group. Thus, one important feature of English teaching in China, particularly regarding intercultural competence, was the rivalry between the Chinese culture and the Western cultures with cultural comparisons as its basic form.

In the cultural comparisons, Chinese culture provided the cultural frame through which both the teachers and the learners could understand foreign cultures. The most commonly referred cultural frame among the interview participants was found in the contrastive thought patterns between the East and the West. For example, Ms. Gong talked about the influence of contrastive thought patterns on her teaching of English writing.

I emphasize the cultural comparisons to my students because language and culture are connected. Why Chinese writing tends to be indirect and implicit? It's due to the thought pattern shaped during the historical literary inquisition (文字狱, imprisonment or execution of an author for writing something considered offensive by the imperial court of the Qin Dynasty from about 200 B.C.E).

Therefore, when I found my students wrote in Chinglish, I asked them to examine their way of thinking in comparison with that of the native English speakers'.

**The affective dimension.** The affective dimension of IC as discussed in the literature review referred mainly to positive attitudes towards different cultures (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978, Cui & Van den Berg, 1991; Sercu, 2004; Spitzberg, 1991). Such positive attitudes discovered in the Chinese EFL teaching context

were mainly associated with the development of an interest in and curiosity for cultures both home and abroad. Ms. Ye gave an example of her recent routine in the English classes for the first-year college students. When the freshmen came to her class, she would play the video clip of President Obama's remarks at the back to school event at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia in 2009. She hoped that the students would first find interest in English learning because "the English language in the video was simple and thus not so scary"; and second develop a curiosity to "look beyond their native country especially when they felt reassured after seeing the first day of school in another country look familiar to them".

Another side of the affective dimension noticed during the interviews and class observations was the fostering of open-minded attitudes towards different cultures, or, in Ms. Liao's words "I include cultural information in my classes so that they (students) will not be so easily surprised by things in other cultures." Ms. Yang commented on how to develop students' open-mindedness: "the good thing about the current college students is that there's nothing they cannot accept, so the issue is how to get them exposed to various things." Mr. Deng offered an example from his class.

When I was teaching how to write scholarship application letters in English, I used an example from an American applicant. In that letter, the applicant elaborated in great details her volunteer work, but brushed through her academic achievement. This was eye-opening to the students because Chinese students were used to emphasizing their academic achievement in scholarship application.



I hope such exposure could help the students understand values and qualities appreciated in different cultures.

**The symbolic dimension.** One important feature of the symbolic dimension found with the Chinese EFL teachers in their practices of IC development was how they reinforced appropriate societal values in their teaching in order for students to set up values and moral standards. Chinese education has been advocating both imparting knowledge (教书) and cultivating people (育人), as stated as teachers' duties in the *Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China* (1993). The teachers in this research expressed their concerns about issues relating to morality and psychology as it applied to current university students. For example, Mr. Ge commented that "facing the fast-pacing society, today's students are getting impatient. They love reading fast-food type of things that require limited thinking and thus tend to mix up information with knowledge and wisdom." To some teachers, cultural teaching could serve as guidelines for making moral decisions and cultivating people. Mr. Zhuang used an article in the textbook called *A Letter to a B Student* as an example of how he included moral standards in cultural teaching.

This is my favorite piece. The article was from a professor to a B student. He knew the student was upset with the grade, so he told the student that what judged one person was not A or B, but the person's kindness, generosity and humor. These made the characteristics of a person. I told my students these characteristics of a person would decide their future in the society. You (students) should not focus so much on the grades. You are not valued by the mark you got

from your schooling. Many people are short-sighted and just focus on the short-term results. I hope by reading this article, my students could have a long-term vision and start cultivating themselves.

As a goal of IC development indicated in Sercu's (2005b) study and part of the symbolic system in IC development (Kramsch, 2011), cultural identity construction was neither mentioned by the teachers during the interviews nor highly recognized in the survey. However, the message of cultural identity could still be identified. For example, Mr. Yao used "face-losing thing" to describe a lack of cultural knowledge and particularly the inability to talk about Chinese culture in English in intercultural encountering:

I hope the students have a good command of general cultural knowledge.

Whatever the foreigners say, they (the students) know what they are talking about.

They (the students) need to understand the Chinese culture, including *taichi* and *yingyang*. It's a face-losing thing not knowing your own culture. They also need to know the foreign culture, but it's reasonable not knowing everything in a foreign culture.

## **Summary**

Research question three examined the construction of the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in the Chinese context, the impacts of teachers' beliefs and other factors on their practices, and the interpretation of intercultural dimensions in the Chinese EFL teaching beliefs and practices. Data from surveys, interviews, class observations, and teaching materials suggested that Chinese philosophy, institutional context, and

personal background contributed to the construction of the Chinese teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in EFL teaching. The barriers for the teachers to implement their beliefs appeared as teachers' lack of cultural knowledge, the test oriented system, curriculum requirements, and students' limited language proficiency. The intercultural dimensions of the Chinese EFL teachers' IC beliefs and practices were elaborated through connecting the findings from the research data with the intercultural dimensions identified in the literature.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Four presents and discusses the research findings in the order of the three research questions. The findings of this study indicate that for the Chinese teachers of English the concept of IC is complex. They address this concept in the areas of communication skills, cultural knowledge, and cultural perspectives. Their IC conceptualization bears distinctive features: 1) their emphasis on English language skill development is bound to the teaching of textbook content that is usually detached from real life; 2) skills of listening and observing in language learning are prioritized; 3) their intercultural teaching allows little flexibility and ambiguity; and 4) cultural identity or cultural self-knowledge construction is not a common concern in their intercultural teaching.

Survey, interview and class observation results indicate that intercultural topics or activities are not a regular focus in the participating teachers' classrooms. Cultural topics are presented mostly as factual knowledge; teachers act primarily as the knowledge providers. Cultural topics are associated mainly with major English speaking countries,

such as the U.S. and the U.K.. Cultural comparisons between the English speaking countries and their home country (China) appear to be the most frequently used cultural activity.

The findings further reveal that the Chinese EFL teachers' cognition and practices regarding IC appear to be largely a result of the interaction of social, cultural and personal factors. Barriers that prevent the teachers from implementing their intercultural beliefs are reported as teachers' lack of cultural knowledge, the test oriented system, curriculum requirements, and students' limited language proficiency.

The next chapter provides analysis, conclusions and implications drawn from the study. Several recommendations are also presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

One of the most significant changes over the past few decades has been the recognition of the intercultural dimension as a key component of language education. With the emergence of the standards movement in the 1990s in U.S. world language education, defining what students and teachers should know and be able to do has placed a focus on learning outcomes. As part of this movement toward proficiency oriented language learning it has become imperative that we also understand more about how teachers help students develop language skills, deepen knowledge of the cultures and literatures of the target language, and meet the standards. With Culture being one of the five foci of the National Standards for Language Learning (ACTFL, 1996), it is important to help students meet that standard by understanding the cultures associated with the target language and, specifically, to develop cultural and intercultural competence as they simultaneously develop their communicative skills and overall language proficiency.

The standards movement has transformed the nature of the experience of teaching and learning languages to a great extent. Languages are related to their cultures (Fox & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Kramsch, 1993); language learners are encouraged to become competent interculturally (Alptekin, 2002; Byram & Zarate, 1994; Matsuda, 2002; Tam, 2004). Language teachers are expected to guide students in the acquisition of intercultural skills, contribute to the development of students' knowledge and understanding of a

target language and culture(s), and help them reflect on their own culture as well (Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003; Kramsch, 2011; Matsuda, 2002; Sercu, 2006).

Culture has also been written into the Chinese national curriculums for English major and non-English major college students as an important area in English language teaching (China Ministry of Education, 2000, 2004). Chinese EFL scholars have identified successful intercultural communication as one of the EFL teaching goals (Chen, 2001; Hu & Gao, 1997; Wang, 1999) and called for more empirical studies regarding culture teaching and IC development (Li & Wang, 2007). The present study aimed to investigate the beliefs of Chinese EFL teachers regarding culture and intercultural competence development in their foreign language education classes and to explore the extent to which they incorporate their beliefs into their classroom practices. The study was framed by the following questions:

1. How do Chinese teachers of English in China perceive intercultural competence in their teaching?
2. How do Chinese teachers of English apply dimensions of intercultural competence in their teaching?
3. How do their intercultural competence beliefs and other factors inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?

The study, which took place in the English language department in a university located in a large city in eastern China, employed a mixed methods approach to allow for a broad, deep and comprehensive understanding of different facets of the complex phenomenon of beliefs and practices pertaining to IC. The research questions were thus

addressed by examination of both quantitative and qualitative data. This study is unique in nature because it employs a combination of Eastern and Western perspectives: the researcher herself grew up and taught in China and also has spent considerable time in school and teaching in both Chinese and western settings. These experiences have informed both the research design and the analysis of the data. The survey instrument was adapted from a western model in an effort to explore IC dimensions based on existing IC related content and activities in the western context; the analysis and interpretation related the questions to the Chinese classroom context. The study was most specifically developed in response to multiple recent calls for more empirical research in intercultural competence (Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Sercu, 2006). Analysis of the data also employed western and non-western perspectives in an effort to understand more about how IC was viewed similarly or differently in different cultures, and particularly in eastern and western cultures (Deardorff, 2009; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

This final chapter begins with conclusions based on the research findings presented in Chapter Four. Implications and recommendations for curriculum design, teacher professional development, and future research follow.

### **Conclusions**

In Chapter Four, I used the three research questions of this study as filters through which I sifted the data I collected to examine how Chinese teachers of English perceived IC and applied their intercultural thinking in their practices. Using an insider's perspective as a former Chinese teacher of English in China, a U.S. perspective as a

teacher of Chinese and foreign/world language teaching methodology in the U.S., and an outsider's perspective as a researcher (Glesne, 2010), I will summarize three principle conclusions drawn from this study. I address them in the following sections: teachers' perceptions of IC, teachers' practices of IC, and conceptualization of IC in the Chinese EFL context.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of IC**

The Chinese teachers of English addressed the concept of IC in tentative ways and mostly through statements of goals rather than direct definitions. They perceived IC both in terms of knowledge and attitude and in consideration of perspectives, values and beliefs, which Byram (1997, 2008) regarded as essential components of intercultural language teaching. The most commonly shared goal of IC in EFL teaching among the Chinese teachers of English was to promote the acquisition of a body of cultural knowledge. While some teachers stressed the need to foster students' ability to understand target cultures and interpret cultural difference between home and target culture, others recognized students' needs to understand culturally determined values and behaviors. These different foci of cultural teaching were demonstrated in their teaching practices as distinctive teaching patterns which would be further discussed under teachers' practices of IC.

Another important goal that the Chinese teachers of English articulated regarding IC development was to develop students' curious, tolerant, and open attitudes toward the foreign cultures. However, in the classroom, they generally chose to arouse the students' interest in and positive attitudes to cultural learning by exposing the students to cultural



information rather than engaging students in seeking cultural information from various sources and reflecting critically on it, which was the same as what Sercu (2006) found in her study involving European foreign language teachers.

The survey results indicated that most teachers perceived promoting students' understanding of target cultures as a primary goal of intercultural teaching. The teachers also emphasized in the interviews the importance of teaching Chinese culture in the EFL classroom, which was consistent with the findings from previous studies (Pan, 2001; Si, 1998; Su, 1996; Xiao, 2007; Xu, 2000). Some researchers in previous studies (e.g., Su, 1996; Xiao, 2007) maintained that learning one's home culture would have a positive effect on learning the target culture. Interview results in this study suggested that the participating teachers supported this view by arguing that knowing Chinese culture provided Chinese students with a cultural framework for making cultural comparisons in English learning.

Survey results also indicated that the Chinese teachers of English attached less importance to identity construction as a goal of IC development, which might be explained by Parmenter's (2006) finding that the concept of *identity* was less firm in East Asian context as in the Western context. Although previous research on IC in a Chinese EFL context (e.g. Xu, 2000) found that the acquisition of both home and target culture would allow students to voice their cultural identity in intercultural communication, the teachers in this study did not articulate the same point, with the exception of a gentle argument that it was a "face-losing" issue for the Chinese students not being able to talk

about their home culture in English when communicating with people from other countries.

Interview results suggested that teachers in this study also viewed the goal of IC from the perspective of their students' growth as a whole person. This finding supported Parmenter's (2006) argument that, in East Asia, it is the teacher's responsibility to support the moral and humanistic development of the students. The idea of cultivating students as a whole person might be traced back to the Confucian view on education for both external and internal purposes: the external referred to pragmatic acquisition of essential knowledge, whereas the internal referred to moral cultivation (Li, 2003; Li & Yue, 2004). Teachers in this study mentioned that they found that current college students needed guidance in terms of social values, moral standards, and worldviews in their transitioning from obedient and dependent students to responsible and independent social beings. Therefore, these teachers took it as their responsibility to prepare the students for life by teaching good values, moral standards, and worldviews.

While the teachers reported in the interview that language proficiency was a prerequisite for cultural teaching and learning, 41.6% of the teachers in the survey considered it very important to teach language and culture in an integrated way. However, in the classroom, culture was still found to be an add-on for language teaching instead of an integral component. Survey and interview data also indicated that teachers cared less about skill-related IC goals, especially skills related to real life communication. Their interests in intercultural skills in the classroom appeared to focus on linguistic accuracy, on appropriate everyday behavior and on their students with regard to forms of

listening and observing rather than analyzing, interpreting, and relating. As argued by Hu (2002), the communicative approach of language learning had its internal conflicts with the Chinese culture of teaching and learning in terms of purposes, approaches, and the perceptions of the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students. Details of such conflicts as represented in the Chinese EFL classroom will be discussed below under the Cultural Heritage sub-section.

To sum up, Chinese teachers' IC beliefs involved their perception of the importance of IC development in EFL education and how they articulated the various intercultural teaching goals. In the next section on teachers' IC practices, I will focus on the features of intercultural teaching in Chinese EFL classes and how these features are related with the IC beliefs and constructed in the social and institutional context.

### **Teachers' Practices of IC Development**

As indicated by survey and interview data, the Chinese teachers of English perceived the promotion of cultural knowledge acquisition as the primary goal of IC development in EFL teaching. However, observation data indicated that cultural teaching had not yet become a regular focus in their teaching, which resembled Sercu's (2005b) findings in the European foreign language education context. While some of the teachers in this study did make an effort to provide cultural knowledge to their students in the classroom, three distinctive patterns emerged among the teachers which the researcher labeled as a *utilitarian pattern*, a *traditional pattern*, and a *humanist pattern*. These three patterns were representative of the different foci of cultural knowledge teaching that the teachers reported during the interviews: understanding cultural products (how people in

other cultures do it), understanding cultural facts (what people in other cultures do), and understanding culturally determined values and behaviors (what people in other cultures think).

In addition, the IC practices observed in this study also exhibited several features that seemed to contradict the teachers' perceived goals of teaching cultural knowledge and fostering intercultural awareness and attitudes. First, language learning dominated instruction in the form of vocabulary learning, grammar explanations, and English-Chinese translation. Cultural readings and cultural inserts in the class were used as points of departure for reading comprehension or grammar lessons. Some cultural assignments such as "write something about..." reinforced the notion that language production was the paramount goal. Therefore, teachers in this study still perceived culture as something external to language teaching, rather than as being the "background of language learning" (Kramsch, 1993, p.1).

Second, teachers in this study tended to transmit to their students observable and surface features of culture, such as "Big C" and "Little c" (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). As researchers in the past decade suggested, culture teaching should go deeper (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003; Fox, & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Matsuda, 2002; Sercu, 2006; Tam, 2004). Shrum and Glisan (2005) argued that the products and practices were not always easily identifiable with perspectives; sometimes perspectives had lost their historical significance. Therefore while incorporating facts, foods, fashions, etc., foreign language teachers should also augment their goals toward deeper cultural understanding. However, most teachers in this study did not address the intercultural dimension for

cultural teaching that investigated people's values, and reasoning systems under the surface of culture. This did not just present a problem in the Chinese context. The intercultural dimension of cultural teaching has also been found largely missing in European foreign language classes (Aleksandrowicz-Pedich, Draghicescu, Issaiass & Sabec, 2003; Sercu, 2006).

Third, although the teachers talked about fostering students' intercultural awareness and attitudes, they seemed to impose a more homogeneous perspective to both Chinese and the target cultures in their classrooms. They tended to project an image of people and their culture as a homogeneous group with statements such as "the Americans do it that way" and "the Chinese do it this way." Such a simplified approach to culture teaching has the negative potential outcome of reinforcing stereotypes and projecting unrealistically homogeneous images of cultures which may encourage potential overgeneralizations. Knutson (2006) suggested that teachers could start with their home culture and remind students of the existence of variations among members of their home culture, such as the differences between age, gender, social, ethical, and regional groups. Although, in the classes observed in this study, all the students were Chinese citizens, there were some variations among the students in terms of their ethnic and regional background. However, the teachers did not encourage the students to reflect on or engage in any discussion across the subcultures.

Fourth, both interview and classroom observation data suggested that the teachers' cultural teaching mainly focused on the cultures of the United States and the United Kingdom. This may be partly due to the fact that the textbooks were dominated

by these cultures and cultural information from other countries was limited, which confirmed Sercu's (2000) finding that the presence of intercultural themes in textbooks did little in promoting IC. Also, teachers in this research tended to select teaching materials from the dominant American and British culture, partly because most of their intercultural experiences were associated with these two countries. As Kachru (2005) pointed out, the EFL learners not only communicated with people from the inner circle countries (e.g. U.S., U.K.), but rather with people all over the world with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, an intercultural view of World Englishes as advocated by Kachru (2005) would help both the teachers and their students communicate successfully with both native and non-native English speakers worldwide.

Finally, the participating teachers were determined to be following what might be considered a traditional teacher-centered approach of cultural teaching in their classrooms most of the time. They introduced or "told" their students about cultural knowledge; occasionally, some teachers provided an explanation as to why people from the target cultures spoke, thought, or behaved in certain ways. Cultural values and perspectives also became a body of knowledge for students to understand and learn. Larzen-Ostermark (2008) proposed that intercultural teaching should go beyond the pedagogy of information and focus on the pedagogy of preparation and encountering, which meant that students should be provided with the opportunity to develop their cultural understanding through engaging in cultural learning, reflecting, and interpreting.

## Conceptualization of IC in the Chinese EFL Context

As elaborated in the conceptualization of IC in the literature review, IC in this study was viewed not only in terms of behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic dimensions, but also as a socialization process. The findings and discussion of the perspectives and practices of the Chinese teachers of English revealed details of each of the four intercultural dimensions, as represented in Figure 2.

Intercultural Competence in the Chinese Context			
<b>Behavioral dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Linguistic skills</li><li>•Appropriate everyday behavior</li></ul>	<b>Cognitive dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Culture knowledge</li><li>•Cultural awareness</li><li>•Chinese traditional learning process</li></ul>	<b>Affective dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Positive attitude toward language learning</li><li>•Positive attitude toward culture learning</li><li>•Positive attitude toward different cultures</li></ul>	<b>Symbolic dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Development of a moral person</li><li>•Identity construction through face-saving</li></ul>

*Figure 2* Dimensions of Intercultural Competence in the Chinese EFL Context

Based on the findings and discussion of the beliefs and practices of Chinese EFL teachers regarding IC development in their classrooms, the behavioral dimension of IC in the Chinese EFL context was determined to mainly focus on the development of language proficiency and the practices of appropriate everyday behaviors. What Corbett (2003) argued as important features of intercultural behaviors, including culture being a

regular focus of the information exchanged and learners reflecting on how cultural factors influencing the exchange, were not acknowledged by the Chinese teachers in this study.

The cognitive dimension of IC identified in this study was largely associated with Bennett's (1993) DMIS, and specifically with the promotion of Chinese students' cultural sensitivity and awareness of cultural difference in their learning of cultural knowledge. The teachers in this study frequently employed the strategy of culturally comparing Chinese culture and foreign cultures, with the Chinese culture providing the cultural frame for understanding foreign cultures. In addition, the Chinese teachers of English highly acknowledged the Chinese traditional learning process of memorizing, understanding and reproducing, as a necessary step in the development of IC.

The affective dimension of IC in this study was mainly associated with the development of an interest in and curiosity about cultures both home and abroad, which was consistent with positive attitudes towards different cultures as discussed in various studies (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978, Cui & Van den Berg, 1991; Sercu, 2004; Spitzberg, 1991). Data also supported the findings of Hammer et al. (1978) indicating that affective components, such as open-mindedness, empathy, sensitivity to difference, and ethnorelative attitudes were also important aspects of Chinese teachers' practice.

An important feature of the symbolic dimension found in this study should be noted: the Chinese teachers of English reinforced moral teaching in their EFL classrooms in order for students to develop values and moral standards. Promoting moral standards was an integral part of education in China under the Confucian influence, and



the findings from this study support this as an important addition to the symbolic dimension of IC as elaborated upon in the literature review.

In this study, intercultural competence was also viewed as a socialization process by the Chinese teachers, where the teachers' intercultural identities appeared to emerge from and influence their intercultural behaviors and mindsets (Deardorff, 2004; Byram, 2008). Three general themes emerged in the construction of teachers' intercultural identities in this study: cultural heritage, life experience and institutional context.

**Cultural heritage.** In the context of Chinese teachers teaching English as a foreign language in China, the data suggested that IC development in the Chinese classroom carried with it a sense of Chineseness and an emphasis on transmitting a Chinese consciousness. The cultural heritage in the Chinese EFL context referred to the influence of the traditional Chinese values on the intercultural dimension of English teaching in China. Even though these were English language classes, Chinese traditional values remained in place and shaped the teaching practices of Chinese teachers of English in their classroom.

The Chinese teachers of English believed that language learning was incremental and followed a building block approach. To make each block into a sound foundation for the following one, teachers stated that the students should work by memorizing, recognizing and reusing the blocks of knowledge to express meanings relevant to their life. The teachers viewed culture learning as acquiring knowledge of a culture's products, practices and perspectives. Such beliefs in language and culture learning suggest a teacher-centered transmission model of teaching in the English classroom.

The Chinese teachers of English in this study held the common belief that teachers were the ultimate source of knowledge, suggesting that the teachers of English in this study represent the traditional Chinese view of the role of teacher. This being the case, Chinese teachers may be skeptical of activities such as asking the students to explore culture as these activities require them to hand some teaching functions over to the students themselves. In this study, the teachers rarely engaged students in any exploratory activities; some teachers expressed their concerns of being challenged by students who were heavily influenced by abundant information from the media and Internet.

Confucian culture is embedded in the way of life in China. In the classes observed, teachers seldom engaged students in any class activities for an active exploration of cultural knowledge or understanding. This might be explained by the deeply-embedded Confucian culture that serious learning was supposed to be silent hard work. However, with the increasing exchanges with the outside world, some teachers have realized the importance of interaction and student-initiated learning in English classes, as Ms. Zai reported in the interview that “if you tell the students about the cultural background, they will listen, laugh sometimes, and then forget. If you ask them to search for information online and present the information to their peers, the learning effect is better.”

In addition, examination that has been traditionally associated with the individual's success in China still influences the teachers' instructional decisions. In China, teachers may tend to overemphasize learning outcomes at the expense of the

learning process (Hu, 2002; Simpson, 2008). Thus, this study's findings suggested that students' performance continued to be assessed solely based on the results of paper-and-pencil exams.

Chinese education has long been involving moral and civic education, focusing on the cultivation of young minds at a deeper level. The Chinese teachers of English in this study also reported to connect with this practice. They incorporated such moral dimensions of education in their intercultural teaching, aiming at producing better citizens beyond mere linguistic brokers.

**Life experience.** The life experience that influenced the intercultural dimension of teaching appeared to come mainly from the teachers' educational background and, more specifically, from their pedagogical preparation. All of the EFL teachers in the research site were graduates from a college majoring in English. Most of them had a master's degree in either linguistics or literature, which is in their area of content expertise. Only a few of them completed programs or courses that offered pedagogical preparation for EFL teaching. Therefore, they reported the same difficulty of teaching culture in a principled way as reported in previous studies on the barriers of effective intercultural teaching (e.g. Allen 2000; Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune 1996). These findings would support the importance of augmenting content knowledge and ability to speak English with opportunities to learn new methodological approaches to support learning (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In specific regard to developing intercultural competence and cultural understanding in their students, Shrum and Glisan (2010) stressed the teachers' needs for pedagogical support. Data in this study suggested that he

Chinese teachers of English received limited solid pedagogical knowledge from both teacher preparation and professional development, and thus tended to find it overwhelming to develop extracurricular materials and teaching aids in their already busy teaching schedule in order to make the language classes more interculturally rich.

Facing the tension between the Chinese traditional values and the contemporary English teaching methodology primarily generated from a western context, the observation and interview data suggested that many EFL teachers chose to follow the traditional track they had followed as English learners. All the teachers reported in the interviews that their pedagogical decisions were strongly influenced by the teaching methods of a former professor or the learning strategies of a former successful peer student. Following the traditional approach, they believed that one must first achieve a certain level of language proficiency before being able to tackle culture. The reason they reported was not knowing how to integrate culture into their own classrooms. In other words, they lacked the pedagogical preparation for how to teach language and culture in an integrated fashion. In addition, some teachers perceived culture learning as the result of a cultural experience and not of classroom learning.

**Institutional context.** The institutional context that framed the teachers' intercultural identities in this study included the curriculum and textbooks. Although the teachers recognized the importance of IC development in EFL teaching in the survey and interviews, they continued their teacher-centered teaching approaches in the classroom because their primary goal in EFL teaching was to help their students achieve a high passing rate in the grammar-oriented national standardized English exams, such as in the

case of Mr. Deng. Some teachers did try to make some changes in the classroom by focusing more on developing students' intercultural understanding, but such effort was usually a compromise which appeared either for limited amount of class time or in the form of an after-class assignment, as in the case of Ms. Zhao.

Data from survey, interviews and class observations suggested that textbooks and the teachers' personal intercultural experiences were the primary source of cultural information for these teachers. The textbooks that were framed to develop learners' language proficiency included only limited cultural information, leaving the teachers to rely largely on their personal knowledge and experiences as cultural resources. Survey and interview data indicated that the teachers participating in this study reported their intercultural knowledge and experiences to be insufficient.

### **Implications**

This study focused on teachers' understanding and practices of IC development in Chinese EFL classrooms. Though data have suggested that IC development has not been a common practice to date in this university in China, the findings also indicate that it has become an area of language learning that the teachers are beginning to consider.

Language is a social practice which needs to be presented in its cultural context in which its meaning is constructed (Kramsch, 1993). Several implications have emerged from these findings for stakeholders in the Chinese EFL field, such as teacher educators, policy makers, instructional material developers, and Chinese teachers of English.

### **For Teacher Educators**

The findings of the study point to a need for in-service teacher professional development programs. It is especially important that such programs provide courses that emphasize the inclusion and integration of IC in language education in China. Researchers who have expertise in IC development should collaborate with teacher educators to develop programs that engage teachers in purposeful learning about the nature of foreign language education, the role of IC in foreign language teaching, and IC theories based on the cultural and institutional contexts.

It is also highly desirable for these programs to help teachers recognize their identity as Chinese teachers of English and the unique advantages of their role as a cultural mediator between Chinese and other cultures (Feng, 2009; Kramsch, 1993). Communities of practice (CoP) could be established by using technology and global connections to enhance the teachers' knowledge and provide them with authentic encounters with target language cultures (Freeman, 1998). This effort should be purposeful and goal oriented, with scaffolds for connecting these experiences to classroom practice.

### **For Policy Makers**

The findings from this study provide implications for educational policy makers regarding English education in China. The results reveal that intercultural competence development is still insufficient in the Chinese EFL classroom. While this study does not connect to policy directly, it might serve to inform policy makers regarding how to help the teachers in building IC development into English teaching: what kinds of teacher

education program would help Chinese teachers of English address IC development in their EFL classrooms? What are the possibilities for the teachers to enhance their intercultural teaching in China's effort to internationalize its education? In addition, policy makers might reconsider the use of national standardized grammar-oriented English exams as the only tool for the evaluation of English teaching quality or retool the exams to include aspects of IC.

### **For Developers of Curriculum and Instructional Materials**

At the current time, development of cultural knowledge and IC are not an active component of materials supporting English language programs. The Chinese EFL curriculum would benefit from working on this aspect of language teaching. For example, it would be beneficial for teachers and curriculum developers to form CoPs and hold discussions about IC. By developing clearly articulated teaching objectives that incorporate elements of intercultural development, the curriculum can include a cultural framework which outlines major cultural dimensions of the target culture that could be accessed by teachers for selection and implementation to support cultural and linguistic development for all learners.

In the meantime, the important role of Chinese culture in EFL teaching and, particularly, in IC development could be given more attention and support in curriculum development. Rather than implying the potential loss of one's cultural and ideological roots, the curriculum can build upon these roots to augment a deeper world understanding through language and cultural development, and provide students with opportunities for acting as responsible cosmopolitan citizens. Current textbooks are still insufficient in

providing resources for IC development. Teachers need teaching materials that support them in IC integration in terms of cultural content and instructional pedagogies. It is hoped that professionals from the IC field would be among the stakeholders invited to contribute to material development in foreign language education.

### **For Chinese Teachers of English**

Though teachers might not have sufficient overseas experience, they do have access to a tremendous amount of international information through books, media, and especially the internet. The EFL teachers have reported in the study the benefit of using such information in their classrooms in terms of arousing students' interest in learning. However, the question for these teachers is how to incorporate such information in the intercultural dimension of teaching.

Teachers' professional development can also take place in CoPs through the communication and collaboration between colleagues from both home and abroad. Those who teach different sections of the same course might share their teaching experience and communicate about various aspects of teaching, such as teaching materials, activities, and pedagogy. Technology has the potential to provide a contemporary cultural window into the broader English speaking population of the world.

### **Further Research**

This study has provided insight into how Chinese teachers of English at a large university in eastern China perceive the intercultural dimension of English teaching and how they are incorporating their perceptions into their practices. The study contributes new understanding and insights about the complex concept of intercultural competence in



an international context. As indicated in Sercu's (2005b) study, teachers' IC practices are shaped and influenced by "the social, psychological and environmental realities of the school and classroom" (p. 174). Future research questions could be: how might factors such as university culture influence the Chinese EFL teachers' practices regarding IC development? How might Chinese EFL teachers differentiate intercultural teaching when facing various college student populations? How might the teachers' intercultural thinking and teaching change over time?

In this research study, the survey investigating teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence was administered only to the Chinese teachers of English in one university. A future large-scale survey has the potential of helping multiple stakeholders understand more about how and to what extent the Chinese teachers of English in other Chinese universities perceive and incorporate IC in English education. Additional research questions could be: how might the teacher preparation process influence the teachers' IC perceptions? How might the teachers' overseas experiences influence the teachers' IC perceptions?

In addition, investigations into student outcomes as a result of IC development can also be conducted to compare with those of the teachers. Research questions to be explored include: how do Chinese college students view IC? How do Chinese college students respond to culture teaching in the English classes? How do Chinese college students address intercultural issues in the classroom and in real life? What might influence Chinese college students' decisions in intercultural encountering?

### **Final Thoughts**

During the research, I have benefited from both the insider's perspective as a Chinese EFL learner and teacher and the outsider's perspective as a researcher educated both in the east and in the west; I have also benefited from the intercultural conversations I had with my professors and colleagues both in the U.S. and in China. Such inclusive perspectives and collaboration among professionals in fields of foreign language education are both the contributing factors to and the expected results of intercultural competence development. Maintaining dialogue across languages and countries will advance our collective understanding of effective ways, as a profession, that we might incorporate the conscious development of intercultural competence for our students.

In the EFL context, students might not be able to apply the foreign language and intercultural competence they acquired from foreign language learning immediately in their life, but hopefully the educational significance will benefit their lives long after they leave school. Lustig and Koester (2000) refer to intercultural competence as an artistic talent that makes communication appropriate and effective. I hope to see that foreign language learning experiences can help students develop such talent and acquire the empathy, respect, and dignity they need when they encounter people who speak different languages or come from different cultures.

## APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANTS PROFILE (SECOND STAGE)

Table 10

*Profile of Participants at the Second Stage of Research*

N	Name (Pseudo)	Age	Gender	Degree	Yrs of Tchg	Title	Exp. Abroad	Class Observation	Interview
1	Yang	27	F	Master	2	Assistant Lecturer	Never	No	Yes
2	Liu	29	F	PhD	2	Lecturer	Never	No	Yes
3	Ye	34	F	Master	8	Lecturer	1 mon	Yes	Yes
4	Yao	35	M	Master	13	Lecturer	4 mon	Yes	Yes
5	Zhu	37	F	Master	12	Lecturer	1 yr	Yes	Yes
6	Liao	42	F	Master	17	Lecturer	1 yr	No	Yes
7	Ge	42	M	PhD	20	Associate Professor	Never	Yes	Yes
8	Gong	46	F	Master	24	Associate Professor	2 yrs	Yes	Yes
9	Zai	46	F	Master	24	Associate Professor	1 mon	Yes	Yes
10	Deng	59	M	Bachelor	38	Associate Professor	1 yr	Yes	Yes
11	Zhuang	69	M	Master	40	Professor (Retired)	1 yr	No	Yes

## APPENDIX II: RESEARCH DESIGN MATRIX

Table 11

### *Research Design Matrix*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Q1.</b> How do Chinese teachers of English perceive intercultural competence in their teaching?		<b>Q2.</b> How do Chinese teachers of English apply dimensions of intercultural competence in their teaching?		<b>Q3.</b> How do their cultural beliefs and other factors inform their choices in IC practices?	
<b>Why?</b>	<b>1.1</b> To understand how the Chinese teachers of English define IC in their teaching;	<b>1.2</b> To understand the importance of each IC dimension to the Chinese teachers of English	<b>2.1</b> To understand their IC objectives and activities;	<b>2.2</b> To delineate possible IC teaching patterns, or lack thereof	<b>3.1</b> To understand what might be the prompts/constraints for them in implementing the IC beliefs?	<b>3.2</b> To understand the dimensions of IC in the Chinese context
<b>Who/ Where?</b>	96 Chinese teachers of English in a Chinese university for survey 7-11 of these teachers for class observations and interviews, varying in gender, age, educational background, etc.					
<b>Kind of data</b>	Survey, Field notes of Classroom Observations, Follow-up interview, Course materials (Sample syllabus, lesson plans and test papers)					

Survey	<b>Quant:</b> Mean of IC components <b>Qual:</b> Chinese translation of “IC”	<b>Quant:</b> Mean of IC dimensions	<b>Quant:</b> Mean and Percentage of perceived IC objectives and activities	/	<b>Quant:</b> ANOVA-Impact of demographic factors Correlation between beliefs & perceived practices	<b>Qual:</b> Integrate the quantitative and qualitative data
Field notes	<b>Qual:</b> Inferences about their perceptions	/	<b>Qual:</b> Cross-case: themes	<b>Qual:</b> Grouping	<b>Qual:</b> Analyze with themes from field notes and interview transcripts and with course materials	
Interview	<b>Qual:</b> Possible clarification in follow-up interview questions					
Course materials	<b>Qual:</b> Inferences about their perceptions	/	<b>Qual:</b> identify objectives, activities, and other dimensions of IC practices			
<b>Validity Threats</b>	Researcher bias, Reactivity, Translation from Chinese to English					

**APPENDIX III: SURVEY ON TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**A. Objectives of Foreign Language Teaching**

Six possible objectives of foreign language teaching have been listed below. Please circle the number that shows the importance of each of them in your opinion. Number “1” indicates the objective which you consider **Not Important**, and “4” **Very Important**.

Objectives		Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
1	Increase students’ interest in learning a foreign language.	1	2	3	4
2	Promote students’ familiarity with the culture, the civilization of the countries where the foreign language which they are learning is spoken.	1	2	3	4
3	Assist students to acquire a level of proficiency in the foreign language that will allow them to read literary works in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4
4	Assist students to acquire skills	1	2	3	4

	Objectives	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
	that will be useful in other subject areas and in real life (such as memorize, summarize, give a presentation, etc.).				
5	Promote the acquisition of an open mind and a positive attitude towards unfamiliar cultures.	1	2	3	4
6	Assist students in developing a better understanding of their own identity and culture.	1	2	3	4

**B. Defining Intercultural Competence as a Teaching Objective.**

1. What specific terminology do you use for “intercultural competence” in Chinese?

**Components of Intercultural Competence for English Language Learners in China.**

The following twenty items have been mentioned in different literature as components of intercultural competence for English language learners. Please circle the number that shows the importance of each of them in your opinion to the development of intercultural competence among English learners in China.

	Components	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
1	Understanding others' worldviews	1	2	3	4
2	Cultural self-knowledge	1	2	3	4
3	Adaptability and adjustment to	1	2	3	4

	Components	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
	new cultural environment				
<b>4</b>	Skills to listen and observe	1	2	3	4
<b>5</b>	Open attitude toward cross-cultural learning and to people from other cultures	1	2	3	4
<b>6</b>	Ability to adapt to different communication and learning styles	1	2	3	4
<b>7</b>	Flexibility	1	2	3	4
<b>8</b>	Skills to analyze, interpret, and relate	1	2	3	4
<b>9</b>	Tolerating and engaging ambiguity	1	2	3	4
<b>10</b>	Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others')	1	2	3	4
<b>11</b>	Respect for other cultures	1	2	3	4
<b>12</b>	Understanding others' situation, feelings and motives	1	2	3	4
<b>13</b>	Understanding the value of cultural diversity	1	2	3	4
<b>14</b>	Understanding of role and impact of culture and the impact of situational, social, and historical contexts involved	1	2	3	4
<b>15</b>	Cross-cultural awareness	1	2	3	4
<b>16</b>	Withholding judgment	1	2	3	4
<b>17</b>	Curiosity and discovery	1	2	3	4



	Components	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
<b>18</b>	Learning through interaction	1	2	3	4
<b>19</b>	Understanding from other's cultural frame of reference and cultural lens	1	2	3	4
<b>20</b>	Culture-specific knowledge and understanding host culture's traditions	1	2	3	4

**C. Teachers' Beliefs regarding Intercultural Competence in Classroom Teaching**

Circle a response that best represents your opinion

	Beliefs	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1.	Based on your experience, English language and its culture can be taught in an integrated way.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
2.	Before you can do anything about the intercultural dimension of English teaching, the students have to possess a sufficiently high level of proficiency in English.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
3.	English teaching should touch upon both English and Chinese culture in order to help students to mediate between the two cultures.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
4.	Besides British and American cultures, English teachers should	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

	also touch upon cultures of other English-speaking countries.				
5.	English teaching should focus on developing students' attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other peoples and cultures.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
6.	English teachers should present a realistic image of a foreign culture, and therefore should touch upon both positive and negative sides of the foreign culture and society.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

**D. Foreign Language Teachers' Practices regarding Intercultural Competence**

**D-A. In your teaching, how often do you touch upon the following topics?**

Topics	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<b>1. History, geography, and political conditions</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>2. Ethnic and social groups</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>3. Daily life and routines (food, drink and living condition, etc.)</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>4. Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>5. Values and beliefs</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>6. Literature, music, theatre, film</b>	1	2	3	4

Topics	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
7. Cultural differences	1	2	3	4
8. Educational systems	1	2	3	4
9. Religious beliefs	1	2	3	4
10. Technological development	1	2	3	4

**D-B. How often do you apply the following activities when you address culture-related topics in your English class?** (Circle the corresponding answer).

Activities	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1. I tell students what I heard, read, or experienced about the foreign country or culture.	1	2	3	4
2. I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic.	1	2	3	4
3. I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss or debate over a cultural topic.	1	2	3	4
4. I ask students to compare Chinese and English culture regarding the topic.	1	2	3	4
5. I ask students to independently explore cultural events.	1	2	3	4
6. I ask students to explore cultural implications in teaching materials.	1	2	3	4
7. I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Chinese and English speaking people and explain the causes.	1	2	3	4

8. I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in events/documents.

1                      2                      3                      4

**D-C. What might have been the barriers for you to address culture-related topics in your English class?** (Circle the corresponding answer).

Barriers		Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1.	Unfamiliarity with the cultural topics	1	2	3	4
2.	Limited cultural contents in the textbooks and teaching materials	1	2	3	4
3.	Limited time in each teaching period	1	2	3	4
4.	Limited teaching resources	1	2	3	4
5.	Pressure for the students to pass national English exams	1	2	3	4
6.	Students showing little interest in cultural topics or activities	1	2	3	4
7.	Other. Please specify:	1	2	3	4

**E. Background Information** (Circle the corresponding answer).

1. Your gender                      **(1) Female**                      **(2) Male**
2. **Your age**                      (1) 20-30                      (2) 31-40  
    (3) 41-50                      (4) 51 and over
3. **Years of teaching English**                      (a) 1-5                      (b) 6-10                      (c) 11-15                      (d) 16 and over
4. **Your highest degree**                      (a) Bachelor                      (b) Master                      (c) PhD
5. **Please check type(s) of**                      (a) Undergraduate non-English major courses

**the courses you teach  
(you may respond to  
more than one  
answer.)**

- (b) Undergraduate English major courses
- (c) Graduate non-English major courses
- (d) Graduate English major courses

6. **Your experiences in  
other countries in  
total:**

- (a) Less than 6 months
- (b) 6 months – 1 year
- (c) Above 1 year

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Thank you for participating. As a follow-up to this survey, I would like to observe some classes and interview some teachers regarding the beliefs and practices of your English teaching. If you are willing to share your ideas and opinions with me, please leave your contact information below.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [jtian@gmu.edu](mailto:jtian@gmu.edu)

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear teachers:

☐ Yes, please enter my email into the drawing to win a gift card. My email address is: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ No, thanks.

#### **APPENDIX IV: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Can you tell me how you were prepared to be an EFL teacher? How do you think these experiences have influenced your teaching?
2. Can you tell me your experiences of EFL teaching? How do you think these experiences have influenced your teaching?
3. What are your main goals in EFL teaching?
4. How do you think about “intercultural competence” as a goal?
5. What do you want your students to know or be able to do in terms of intercultural competence?
6. Please share two different activities that you use for developing students’ intercultural competence in your classroom. Why do you use these activities with your students?
7. Please share two different assessments that you use to evaluate students’ intercultural competence. Why do you use these assessments with your students?
8. Is there anything else related to intercultural competence that I should have asked you about or that you want to add?

## **APPENDIX V: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS**

Dear teachers,

My name is Jie Tian, a doctoral candidate from George Mason University, USA. I am inviting you to participate in a research project concerning English teaching in China. The results of this research will offer useful information to the English teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers both inside and outside China to understand the current situation, needs and challenges of English teaching in China. By participating in this study, you may benefit as well from reflecting on your teaching practice and the nature and objectives of the subject matter.

This research project is approved both by the Office of Research Subject Protection in George Mason University and by the College of Foreign Languages in Donghua University. If you would like to participate in this study, please complete the questionnaire and return it to me as instructed on the questionnaire. For the second stage of the research, I would also like to observe your classes and invite you for a one-hour follow-up interview. If you would like to participate in the second stage of the research, please leave your contact information on the separate Contact Information Sheet at the end of the questionnaire, detach it, and return it as instructed. I will contact you soon to arrange a time for the class observation and interview that is most convenient for you.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please feel free to contact me. Thank you in advance for supporting this research endeavor.

Yours sincerely,

Jie Tian, PhD candidate

Email: jtian@gmu.edu



## **APPENDIX VI: INFORMED CONSENT FORM – SURVEY**

### **Study Title: Beliefs and Practices Regarding the Intercultural Competence among Chinese Teachers of English in a Chinese University**

#### **RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

This research is being conducted to gain an insight into the knowledge of Chinese teachers of English in the College of Foreign Languages, Donghua University, China, with a focus on their existing beliefs about and practices of intercultural competence. The findings from this study may provide the field of foreign/world language education with empirical evidence with respect to intercultural competence development.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey contains 20 questions about your beliefs and instructional practices and 14 demographic items on your educational and professional background. The survey will be in English. It will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

#### **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

#### **BENEFITS**

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in the field of foreign/world language teacher education.

**Compensation:** At the end of the survey, you will have the option to enter into a random drawing to win one of three \$25 (equivalent in Chinese *yuan*) local grocery store gift certificates. The odds of winning are approximately 1 in 30. Winners will be notified by email by Jie Tian before October 30, 2012. Drawings will be made from the list of email addresses provided to the prompt “Yes, Please enter my email into the drawing to win a \$25 gift card. My email address is \_\_\_\_.” found on the survey page titled “Enter to Win.” At the end of the survey data collection, Jie Tian will immediately detach the “Enter to Win” page and keep them in a separate folder so that there are no identifying markers associated with the survey data. Jie will print the list of emails. She will cut each email on a slip of paper and fold it in half. All the folded slips will be placed in a bowl, from which three will be randomly selected by an impartial volunteer. Jie will notify winners by email and request a name and address for mailing each of the gift certificates. Winners who do not respond to Jie's email within 10 days will forfeit their gift certificate and another winner will be randomly selected.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data in this study, including the data from this survey will be confidential. Your name or other identifiers will not be placed on surveys or other research data.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

**CONTACT**

This research is being conducted by Jie Tian at George Mason University. She may be reached at [jtian@gmu.edu](mailto:jtian@gmu.edu) for questions or to report a research-related problem. Her faculty supervisor is Dr. Rebecca Fox. You may contact Dr. Fox at 1-703-993-4123 or [rfox@gmu.edu](mailto:rfox@gmu.edu), and Jie Tian at 1-703-953-8972 or [jtian@gmu.edu](mailto:jtian@gmu.edu). You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research. You will be provided with a paper copy when you take the survey.

**CONSENT**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

## **APPENDIX VII: INFORMED CONSENT FORM- OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEW**

### **RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

This research is being conducted to gain an insight into the knowledge of Chinese teachers of English in the College of Foreign Languages, Donghua University, China, with a focus on their existing beliefs about and practices of intercultural competence. The findings from this study provide the field of foreign/world language education with empirical evidence with respect to intercultural competence development.

If you agree to participate, you will provide Jie Tian with a schedule for observing you teach two 50-minute lessons and supplementary course materials, such as syllabus, lesson plans, and sample test papers. During the classroom observations, Jie will take field notes. You will also be asked to do an individual interview with Jie Tian. During this interview, Jie will ask you about your thoughts related to teaching languages and your classroom practices. This interview will be in Chinese. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will be audio-recorded.

### **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

### **BENEFITS**

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in the field of foreign/world language teacher education.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data in this study will be confidential. Jie Tian is the only researcher who will know your identity as a participant in this study. Your name will not be used on the paper survey or other collected data. She will assign a pseudonym to you before you complete the paper survey. This pseudonym will be used when transcribing the audio-recorded interview and in her field notes during the classroom observations. Therefore, no identifying markers or actual names will be used in the paper surveys, the interview transcriptions, or the field notes. Through the use of an identification key, Jie will be able to link your interview transcript and her field notes from classroom observations to your identity to ensure appropriate data analysis practices. However, she is the only researcher who will have access to this identification key. Audio recorded interviews will be transcribed immediately after each interview and then immediately deleted.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

**CONTACT**

This research is being conducted by Jie Tian at George Mason University. She may be reached at jtian@gmu.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem. Her faculty supervisor is Dr. Rebecca Fox. You may contact Dr. Fox at rfox@gmu.edu. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research. The HSRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form. You will be provided with a paper copy the first day you meet with Jie Tian.

**CONSENT**

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

☐ I agree to be audiotaped for the interview.

☐ I do not agree to be audiotaped for the interview.

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Name

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Date of Signature

## APPENDIX VIII: CHINESE TRANSLATIONS OF THE TERM “INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE”

Table 12

*Chinese Translations of the Term “Intercultural Competence” from Survey Participants*

Chinese Characters	<i>Pinyin</i>	Literal Meaning
跨文化交际能力	<i>kuawenhua jiaoji nengli</i>	intercultural communicative competence
跨文化交流能力	<i>kuawenhua jiaoliu nengli</i>	intercultural communicative competence
跨文化沟通能力	<i>kuawenhua goutong nengli</i>	intercultural communicative competence
跨文化能力	<i>kuawenhua nengli</i>	intercultural competence
跨语言能力	<i>kuayuyan nengli</i>	interlingual competence
跨文化才能	<i>kuawenhua caineng</i>	intercultural talent

## **APPENDIX IX: ORIGINAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS FOR TEACHERS' IC BELIEFS QUOTED IN THIS DISSERTATION**

### **Quote 1:**

*“The students spent too much time on the book knowledge, but the book knowledge was so detached from the real life. ... What we discussed in the classroom as ‘culture’ was detached from the ‘culture’ in real life in the foreign countries. It’s a waste of time.”*

*--- Mr. Yao*

### **Original Interview Transcript Excerpt for Quote 1:**

“中国学生花了很多时间在 book knowledge 上面，但是课本编制有问题，很多东西都跟生活脱节的，...。包括我们现在所学的文化，很多和现实生活中老外的文化有很大的差距，所以很多东西学了白学。”

### **Quote 2:**

*“As a responsible teacher, you should help the students pass the exams. Only after meeting this basic requirement, you can start considering the practical side of language teaching, such as how to improve the students’ communicative competence.”*

*-- Mr. Deng*

### **Original Interview Transcript Excerpt for Quote 2:**

“你作为一个负责的老师，你要让他们通过考试。除了这个基本要求，还要考虑到语言的实用性，我们说是交际能力，尽可能改善或者提高。”

**Quote 3:**

*“Our textbooks only offer limited topics and shallow social understandings. The teachers should integrate frontier social issues and their own thoughts on these issues into the classroom discussions so that the students could develop extensive interests and be proactive in exploring these social issues.”*

-- Ms. Zhao

**Original Interview Transcript Excerpt for Quote 3:**

“我们的课文它的接触面非常窄，它对于这个社会的理解是非常浅的，老师要会把他的一些思考，以及他所了解的一些社会前沿问题给融入到教材的讲解中来，这个能够促进学生在课外有更广泛的兴趣，然后能自己做一些研讨。”

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