

Chinese College Students' Intercultural Competence: Current Situation, Barriers and Solutions

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Abstract: Situated in Byram's intercultural competence model, this study employed survey questionnaires and face-to-face interviews to investigate the current situation of Chinese college students' intercultural competence through exploring a class of English majors. The results show that students were not satisfied with their reported intercultural competence; their desire for cultural learning was constrained by the current language teaching methods and content. Suggestions are made on how to position culture in language teaching and learning with implications for how teachers could provide more opportunities for authentic intercultural learning and prepare students to participate as global citizens.

Keywords: intercultural competence, culture teaching, language teaching, vocational education.

1. Introduction

Many countries, including China, have embedded culture teaching objectives such as cultivating students' intercultural ability and intercultural communication in language teaching guidelines. Some researchers (Han & Song 2011) point out that there is a lack of empirical research concerning this important topic in the context of mainland China. From a practical perspective, integration of language skills and intercultural competency could assist learners to be better prepared for interacting in the global world. To prepare students for their future careers, there is great need to emphasize the development of intercultural competence in the globalizing job market. Evidence suggests that students' intercultural abilities need to be developed (Liu 2016). It is necessary to conduct research, such as the one at hand, that seeks to explore students' current situation regarding intercultural competence.

This study seeks to enrich the existing intercultural literature by adding empirical information on the development of students' intercultural competence and filling the gap in research within the Chinese context. The study provides suggestions for language teachers in China and elsewhere on how to manage their future classroom teaching practice with the view to promoting the development of students' intercultural competence.

1.1 Culture learning and the cultivation of intercultural competence in language education

Culture is important for effective communication not only because it contains shared experiences but also because it involves individual life experience (Guilherme 2002). Liu and Fang (2017: 26) define culture from a post-structuralist perspective as "a complex social system, as opposed to natural system, that emerges through individuals' joint participation in the world giving rise to sets of shared knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and practices". Culture is not only a cognitive concept; it involves social practices. Many linguists, language educators, and teachers believe that it is necessary to integrate culture into language teaching and learning (Nguyen 2017). To communicate effectively, speakers must not only have

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knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but also know how to use them properly in a particular context (Choudhury & Kakati 2017). Brown (2001), cited in Nguyen (2017), contends that learners who are exposed to language-related culture can better participate in the real, functional use of language.

Fenner (2000) claims that language education should provide students with opportunities to acquire cultural knowledge, awareness, and abilities of the target culture and their own culture. Some researchers (e.g., Piątkowska 2015) illustrate the outcomes of cultural learning with reference to knowledge, awareness, and competence. Larzén (2005) proposes three aims of cultural teaching: knowledge of other cultures, skills for intercultural interaction, and tolerance as well as empathy. Cultural learning in language education is a process that involves developing cultural knowledge and skills, cultivating cultural awareness, and gradually bringing learners closer to high levels of intercultural competence. Byram (2000) posits that someone who is interculturally competent can see the relationship between cultures and develop a critical understanding of their own culture as well as other cultures. Nguyen (2017) makes an apt observation that, apart from the acquisition of cultural knowledge and skills, learners develop the ability to reflect, evaluate, and construct critical perspectives on cultural issues and identity. This helps them build tolerance and harmony towards their own and other cultures.

Previous research (e.g., Bean & Boffy-Ramirez 2019) indicate that overseas experience correlates with the development of intercultural competence. Apart from providing opportunities for overseas programs, language teachers can make an effort to promote development of students' intercultural competence. Zou and Yu (2019) emphasize proper and purposeful teaching design for promoting the development of intercultural competence in language classrooms. Piątkowska (2015) reviews main approaches, such as the comparative approach, that can be harnessed to integrate culture into language teaching.

Previous studies focus on the effects of classroom teaching approaches on students' intercultural competence development. Zhao (2013) used literature as a training resource to promote the development of learners' intercultural competence. Miao and Wang (2013) used network and multimedia resources to achieve the same goal. Ye (2014) promoted critical thinking and intercultural communication skills through application of comparative cultural case studies.

While these studies are encouraging, most focus on approaches used in the classroom environment. Besides classroom settings, researchers (e.g., Roberts et al. 2001, Wang & Kulich 2015) point out the necessity of encouraging learners to experience authentic intercultural interaction with interlocutors from other cultures. It is against this backdrop that the present study was designed.

Using authentic resources can help ESL/EFL learners participate in the target cultural experience (Choudhury & Kakati 2017). Traditionally, English courses connect English and English-speaking Western culture. New interpretations of culture challenge this simple understanding (Baker 2015). Too often in English teaching, cultural views favor Anglophone culture (Kramersch 2014), while “the dynamic and liminal nature of much intercultural communication” (Baker 2011:198) is overlooked. Apart from existing resources, Bray (2010) recommends the use of new tools based on evolving technologies. As Çiftçi (2015:322) points out, relying on training learners is not enough for effective intercultural interaction. It is necessary to create a stimulating environment that provides learners opportunities to engage with other cultures.

In addition to proper teaching designs, some researchers highlight the importance of fostering inclusivity in the classroom. Hurtado (2001) suggests that students may experience a sense of superiority or inferiority if they encounter cultural differences without a proper

guide. Guidelines (e.g., Jabbar & Hardaker 2012) have been developed that help teachers to work effectively with students from different backgrounds.

1.2 Cultivating intercultural competence in the Chinese context

In a market-driven, globalized education environment, development of students' intercultural competence has changed from a focus on value-added effects to full persuasive motivation (Huang 2017). Re-emphasizing intercultural education is essential, contributing to institutional internationalization (Deng 2013, UNESCO 2006). The Chinese government pointed out in its Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020) that “a large number of talents shall be cultivated that are imbued with global vision, well-versed in international rules, and capable of participating in international affairs and competition” (Huang 2017: 184). National guidelines for integrating the cultivation of intercultural competence into foreign language education at all levels have emerged from more than two decades of cross-cultural communication research and teaching experience in China. However, key concepts, skill sets, and procedures are not yet clearly defined, implemented effectively or studied comprehensively (Wang, Deardorff & Kulich 2015).

The connection between intercultural competence and foreign language education has been discussed in previous studies conducted in China (e.g., Chen 2012). Gao (2006) emphasizes the necessity of promoting students' intercultural competence in language teaching. Wang and Yu (2008) adopt Byram's (1997) model in a study focusing on non-English-majors' intercultural competence. They evaluated students' intercultural competence on four dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical awareness. Their survey results reveal that the 193 participating students' intercultural competence was unsatisfactory ($M=67.46$). After taking an intercultural communication course designed for English majors, Liu (2009) proposed that use of stereotyping in cultivating students' intercultural competence should be minimized. Fan, Wu, and Peng (2013) report that Chinese college students consider their foreign cultural knowledge to be inadequate and think their foreign language skills and cultural awareness should be improved for effective communication.

Although intercultural communication is reflected in the objectives and principles of official guidelines, the cultivation of intercultural competence is otherwise hardly addressed (Song 2008). Culture teaching is often taken to be teaching knowledge of the target culture explicitly (East 2012). Systematic development of intercultural competence with consideration of how this could be integrated effectively into language teaching remains a great challenge for Chinese language teachers and researchers.

Some researchers (e.g., Wang 2015) point out features of vocational colleges that are necessary for developing intercultural competence. They state that students in vocational colleges need more instruction on cultural competencies to address the fierce job-market competition. With rapid globalization, students have more chances to work with foreigners; this requires intercultural competence. Universities must prepare students adequately.

1.3 Intercultural competence and Byram's model

Although intercultural competence is a complex concept to define (Deardorff 2006) – “just as culture is constantly changing, scholars' perceptions of intercultural competence will change over time” (Romjue & MacDonald 2018: 258) – one can take it as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures. Byram (1997) explains that someone who is intercultural competent can communicate with people from other cultures who speak another language. They can negotiate interactions to satisfy both themselves and the interlocutor.

Byram's model of intercultural competence is widely accepted. It has four interacting dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills (of discovery and interaction, of interpreting and relating), and critical cultural awareness.

The first dimension, attitudes (*savoir-e^tre*), refers to "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram 1997: 50). The second dimension, knowledge (*savoirs*), refers to familiarity with "social groups and their products and practices in one's own country and in the country of one's interlocutor, and knowledge of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Byram 1997: 58).

The third dimension comprises two sets of skills. The first is skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir-comprendre*): the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to the documents from one's own" (Byram 1997: 61). The second is skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir-apprendre/faire*): "the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (Byram 1997: 61).

The fourth dimension is critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*): "the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram 1997: 63). Byram developed teaching objectives under these four dimensions as guidelines for language teachers.

Byram (2006) proposes the concept of *intercultural mediator* as one of the objectives of being interculturally competent. Another objective (Byram 2008, 2012) is promoting citizenship education. Byram's model has been used as the basis for developing projects such as the Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) and Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) projects (Byram 2014).

1.4 Research questions

RQ1: What are the current levels of students' intercultural competence along the four dimensions of Byram's model?

RQ2: What challenges/barriers do students face in acquiring intercultural competence?

2. Method

This research adopted a combination of a survey questionnaire and face-to-face interviews to collect data. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data allows the researcher to obtain more comprehensive information about the problem (Creswell 2014). The survey data were used to evaluate students' intercultural competence. The interviews explored problems and confusions among students in the area of language and cultural learning. The survey data were collected to assess the current situation of college students' intercultural competence and analyzed under the four dimensions according to Byram's theory. Qualitative interviews were conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results to help explain critical issues concerning the development of students' intercultural competence. The interview data also helped the researcher to explore students' learning situation.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from a vocational college in mainland China. A class of business English majors in their second year was randomly selected. All the students in the class were invited to fill in the questionnaire of intercultural competence, to evaluate their language ability and intercultural competence along the four dimensions of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness.

A total of 33 valid responses were used for data analysis: 26 female and seven male students who studied English for at least seven years. The researcher contacted those students who completed the questionnaire to explain the purpose and procedure of the interview in more detail. Ten students agreed to participate in face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Students were invited to share their views towards their cultural learning experience as well as barriers, challenges and expectations. In line with good ethical practice, each participant was given full information about the study and asked to sign a consent form before beginning.

2.2 Data collection

Collecting data from different sources (questionnaire and interview in this case) can help the researcher to fully understand the research problem and enrich the depth of discovery (Creswell 2008). Quantitative data from the questionnaire were collected through a Chinese online platform called Wenjuanxing. During interviews, students were encouraged to reflect on their experience and express their opinions regarding cultural learning in their language courses. The interview sessions were conducted in Chinese and recorded using an audio recorder. The interviews were transcribed and translated into English for subsequent analysis. The translation of quotes poses challenges such as difficulty translating concepts used by the participants (van Nes *et al.* 2010). Besides working with a professional translator, the researchers developed rich descriptions with the use of participant quotes.

The questionnaire *assessment of intercultural competence for Chinese college students* (AIC-CCS) was adapted from Wu's (2013) study assessing Chinese college students' intercultural competence. This tool was selected for its validity, firm theoretical base, and consideration of Chinese college students. Modifications were made to ensure that the wording was concise and avoid misunderstanding. Several items were added based the detailed objectives in Byram's model.

The revised questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part focuses on collecting self-evaluated language abilities and personal information. The second, composed of 46 questions, allows students to evaluate their intercultural competence along Byram's four dimensions using a five-point Likert scale from weakest agreement to strongest.

2.3 Data analysis

The questionnaire data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v.21.0. The qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The qualitative phase of the study revealed information about students' experiences and expectations of cultural learning in language courses. After transcription, reading and re-reading, interview responses were divided into common themes, as presented in the next section. All names have been changed.

3. Results and discussion

The researchers began this project with two primary goals: to better understand students' evaluation of their own intercultural competence and to explore barriers, confusions and expectations regarding the development of intercultural competence in language learning, from the perspectives of students. Results are reported under four main themes: learners' self-evaluation of intercultural competence and experience of intercultural interactions, learners' cultural learning experience in language courses, learners' after-class learning preferences, and learners' confusions and expectations towards language courses.

3.1 Self-evaluation of intercultural competence and experience of intercultural interactions

Table 1 shows students' self-evaluated intercultural competence: overall, and for each of the four dimensions.

Table 1: Students' self-evaluated intercultural competence.

	m (max 5)	SD
intercultural competence	3.06	.47
attitude	4.03	.81
knowledge	2.53	.48
skill	3.29	.63
awareness	3.18	.70

The mean score for attitude is 4.03: the highest of the four dimensions, indicating a general positive attitude towards culture, cultural learning and intercultural communication. Students considered their knowledge to be weakest ($m = 2.53$, $SD=0.48$). The results for skills and awareness are almost the same, with skills ($m = 3.29$) a little higher than awareness ($m = 3.18$). From the results, it can be seen that students' self-evaluated intercultural competence is not very satisfying.

The results echo findings from previous studies. Wu, Fan, and Peng (2013) gathered information on Chinese university students from five colleges. Their results show that, among the six factors they studied, knowledge of others and skills of intercultural communication ranked the highest. Knowledge of self and the attitude dimension were at medium level; intercultural awareness ranked the lowest. These findings confirm that intercultural teaching practice in the Chinese context still focuses on knowledge and skills training.

Aside from language, teachers are asked to cover areas such as culture and society. Due to increasing curriculum requirements, growing pressure, and lack of qualified intercultural trainers, teachers may not have the energy and skills to develop a truly intercultural curriculum (Wang & Kulich 2015).

These statistical findings are supported by the interview data. They reveal that the students felt they know little about intercultural competence or what is needed to communicate in intercultural situations. Students have vague perceptions of intercultural competence, which they have not learned about in previous courses. A considerable number of students indicated that they were not familiar with intercultural abilities.

S3: I can only say that I have vague consciousness. That is to say, when I communicate with people who come from different countries, we may have conflicts.

S5: This kind of high-level cross-cultural topic has not really been learned.

The researchers also explored students' experience interacting with foreigners. Experience of intercultural interactions influences students' intercultural competence. Bean and Boffy-Ramirez (2019) conducted a study to find differences in intercultural communication skills between undergraduate Chinese students in the United States and those studying in China. Their results reveal that the students who studied abroad generally demonstrated higher intercultural communication abilities compared to those who based in China.

The first aspect of students' previous contact with people from other cultures to be explored was the frequency of previous communicative experience. From the interview results, it was clear that most of the students did not have much experience with English

speakers. Most had never had any interaction with foreigners, while a few just had opportunities to say hello on occasion.

S2: It's just like "hello", then it's over; it's not a deep conversation.

S1: I haven't communicated with foreigners. Even if I really meet them, I think I might not be able to organize wording.

Two participants shared their experience interacting with foreigners. One helped foreigners buy things and gave directions on the street. Another communicated with foreigners when working in a plant. Some students had experience communicating with foreign teachers but only over a short period, and the communication tended to be passive.

S10: I talked to a foreign teacher recently, but it's kind of nothing to talk about, very passive, and sometimes I couldn't react quickly.

The student tried to find partners online to practice speaking, but she was afraid and opportunities were quite limited.

S10: Well, I tried to find it by myself, and there is some software that can be used, but it is infrequent because I didn't dare to take the initiative, especially in real life, I am willing to do but don't have the courage.

Students lack opportunities for intercultural interactions. Although they are willing to communicate, they sometimes lack the courage to do so. As students have limited opportunities, it is necessary for teachers to design classroom activities to provide students more opportunities to experience authentic intercultural learning. Activities should be designed to promote equal learning opportunities for all students. It is necessary to consider the knowledge base of each learner, help each to achieve common goals, and promote positive interactions outside the formal learning environment.

Another issue is students' experience dealing with misunderstandings or other difficulties that arise. All the students who had communicated with English speakers reported difficulties: problems understanding, problems with speakers' accents and the use of colloquial or difficult words, and problems expressing themselves, including the inability to find the right words and just being nervous or feeling awkward.

S9: Because my English is not very good, so when he said some difficult words, or he has an accent, I can't understand, because of that word, I can't understand the meaning of the whole sentence.

The study invited students to share their coping strategies. Most indicated that they seek help from others such as professional translators or rely on body language. It was evident that the participants did not have much experience or confidence addressing misunderstandings or dealing with difficulties in communication.

3.2 Cultural learning experience

First, the study explored the cultural dimensions the students were familiar with. Students mentioned etiquette (telephone, table, giving presents), daily life (eating habits), and entertainment (sports, movie, music). Students indicated they were not familiar with other cultures. They used words such as "some" and "a little" to express their cultural knowledge. The main channels they used to learn culture were social media, TV series, and tasks designed by their teachers. They highlighted cultural topics they were not familiar with such as customs.

S2: That kind of professional cultural customs, I may not know very well.

S10: I know a bit more life-like, for example, what to say when people are greeting me. In fact, I really don't know much.

When asked to recall what they had learned about culture in their language lessons, students reported a focus on facts. Only a few made reference to the integration of culture with language in ways that enhance the learning of both. When asked about aspects of culture (values, belief systems, etc.) discussed in language classes, students had few impressions. They knew a little about cultural differences such as taboos, but the learning was not systematic and could be biased – possibly due to limited teaching methods or ineffective curriculum design.

S2: They didn't mention it in my mind, that is, teachers rarely mentioned it, basically teaching is based on textbooks.

S5: It is actually according to the textbook, and less about daily life, I didn't learn it systematically.

Some teachers made an effort to teach culture and avoided stereotyping other cultures. One student cited a lesson she had in a reading class that changed her traditional way of thinking.

S9: Taking the reading course for example, in the United Kingdom, everyone is wearing a hat with an umbrella. Actually, it is very strange in the UK, and this changes my previous view.

Besides cultural knowledge, communication skills are necessary to cope with intercultural situations. When students reflected on communication skills they learned in language classes, it seems that they did not learn much. Students developed skills such as changing expressions in interactions, but the learning was quite limited. Students did not feel confident to communicate effectively.

S5: In fact, teachers taught us some expressions, for example, to express agreement we can not only use 'I agree with you', and there are still many other ways.

S4: I remember that in almost all countries, ladies don't want to be asked about age, which should be the matter of privacy.

Teachers can provide learners with a stimulating environment to engage with cultures (Çiftçi2015). When designing the environment, teachers must consider the diversity of digital tools (Bray 2010) and unique aspects of participation and context. Video technology provides an important opportunity for future practice and research. Effective design though requires interculturally competent language teachers who have knowledge of cultures and understand the theoretical background of intercultural dimensions. One teacher used such visual resources as movies; she also shared her work experience.

S5: She often let us watch some movies, such as the Rio Adventure for several times, and then the teacher explains a lot of details. For example, people in this place will say this, that is to say, in different situations, it may be different.... She told us about her experience, in some occasions, what you should say and what you should not say. For example, she used to work at the front desk and then she saw several foreign customers coming over. Then they were chatting, that is, what to say and what should not be said.

As Zou and Yu (2019) propose, meaningful intercultural interactions do not occur naturally; purposeful teaching design and adequate preparation of learners' mindset, skills, and behavior

are essential. Teachers can make use of guidelines (Jabbar & Hardaker 2012) to facilitate the cultural learning of students with different backgrounds. Unfortunately, how to communicate with people from other cultures is not being treated as an important consideration.

S8: It is not very specific; teachers only mentioned in some exercises.

S9: Teachers have not said it specifically, if you see a foreigner, how can you communicate with him, no teacher has specifically said it.

Most of the students interviewed considered were not confident communicating in intercultural interactions. Teachers should provide students more opportunities to pay attention to and explore cultural diversity. They should strive to influence the classroom atmosphere positively and encourage their students to analyze differences.

Table 2: Students' comments on language courses.

Positive	Neutral	Negative
It is really beneficial to have some activities such as video analysis.	Some activities are awesome but learning for language skills is still the priority.	Not much time for culture learning.
Some resources used by teachers are interesting and helpful.	One studies culture from the resources, but still lacks opportunities for cultural learning.	Relying too much on the textbook is still one of the major problems.
Some teachers provide opportunities for learning different communication skills.	It is nice to have some teachers who are willing to share own experience of communication, but very limited.	Skills and knowledge of business is an important part of course content; students who are not interested in business face difficulties in learning.

3.3 Preference for after-class learning activities

When discussing after-class language learning opportunities, students most frequently mentioned learning through entertainment, including English-language TV series, movies, songs, news reports and TED talks. A number of students shared their preferences:

S3: Singing English songs. Sometimes I will sing with the singer, but I find it really hard.

S6: Generally, I watch American TV dramas such as American Horror Story, I'm interested in this type anyway.

S5: In addition to watching American TV dramas, I also like TikTok. There are many videos that teach English. There is a teacher named Alex, and he will pose some videos teaching some methods of learning English, and some guidelines of how to improve spoken English.

S8: I use some video software or Weibo. There are many Chinese people studying abroad. On those platforms, they talk about some experiences abroad or the differences between foreign countries and China.

S2: I am now preparing for the CET-4 exam, so I have been memorizing the words and doing exercises for the exam.

The cultivation of intercultural competence cannot rely only on classroom teaching. Previous studies (e.g., Miao & Wang 2013, Zhao 2013) have focused on the effects of various classroom teaching methods on the development of students' intercultural competence.

However, encouraging students to “break the walls of the classroom” to experience authentic intercultural interaction remains a problem (Roberts et al. 2001: 243).

3.4 Confusions and expectations concerning language and culture learning

Most of the students want to improve their speaking skills. Achieving fluency, improving pronunciation, and interacting simply and fluidly are all concerns. Other things such as vocabulary, listening and writing skills, and grammar were also mentioned. Three main problems were identified: how to speak more fluently, how to improve listening and response, and how to enhance learning interest.

S1: I don't know how to learn English better, how to speak English fluently, and not to worry about it.

When asked about short-term expectations, most of the students talked about translation certificates or examinations such as the CET-4.

S2: The most important thing is the CET-4 exam. Then I especially want to improve my speaking ability, because I always know that my oral English is not very good, but I must insist on it, that is, to improve this ability.

Students expressed the desire to learn more about foreign cultures, cultural knowledge for daily life, and cultural differences: in short, they want to expand their cultural horizons. They want to improve their speaking ability, communicate fluently, and express their ideas freely. Some students said that they want to learn to communicate in a more confident way.

S2: Hope that teachers will involve more cultural content in the future, and it can help in learning English.

S9: I want to learn more, if I really see a foreigner on the street someday, after all, it is our major. Then how to communicate smoothly, just talk to him directly, not being afraid, and talk about casual topics.

S8: I am particularly interested in this aspect: that is, the difference between British and American culture and Chinese culture.

Students expressed the desire to learn more skills that are closely connected with their lives. They are keen to go beyond the textbook contents.

S2: It is better to learn things that are used in real life. Don't just teach history or geography, I feel a bit boring. It is better to involve a little bit of practical use, such as etiquette when you talk to foreigners.

S6: To understand a country, I think you should learn more aspects. Not just through the textbook.

If one looks at the higher education in China, English is the most important foreign language in the majority of educational institutions, although some universities provide instruction in other languages (Huang 2017). There are a large number of learners who study English through formal instruction. As Huang proposes, making full use of English as a lingua franca can be helpful and effective toward strengthening intercultural training programs.

4. Conclusion

This case study explored current circumstances concerning students' intercultural competence along with their language-learning problems and expectations at one vocational college. The

results show that students consider their intercultural competence not satisfactory. Their desire for cultural learning and improved intercultural competence is constrained by current language teaching methods, course contents, and an exam-oriented learning situation.

This research is timely. It has practical implications for English language teachers, teacher trainers and curriculum developers. Language teachers can find useful insights here and practical examples of students' learning situations, confusions, and expectations. Teacher trainers need to understand students' needs and opinions, to assist pre- and in-service teacher training by promoting the advancement of intercultural competence in the classroom. Curriculum developers can find help here for designing courses and preparing useful materials.

Future research should focus on the impact of specific teaching methods on the development of students' intercultural competence, along with studying English teachers' perception of intercultural competence and their teaching practices. As Huang (2017) writes, it is of great importance to investigate how to enhance teaching practices by building on Byram's model. Finally, future research can consider constructing an intercultural competence work model for designing programs and guiding teaching practices at the same time as shedding light on the current state of intercultural-communication courses.

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