Integrating Cultures into Teaching EFL in Vietnam: Teachers' Perceptions

Châu Thị Hoàng Hoa
University of Foreign Language, Hue University, Vietnam
cthhoa@tvu.edu.vn

Trương Viên
University of Foreign Language, Hue University, Vietnam
truongviensp@gmail.com

Abstract

In the context of ASEAN integration, intercultural education has gained a better position in teaching and learning English. As a part of educational reformation, an experimental English coursebook version for Grade 10, 11 and 12, which is integrated with intercultural content, has been applied to gradually replace the current version. To foster intercultural education, it is essential to explore the status of intercultural education from teachers' perceptions. This study aimed to investigate: (1) teachers' beliefs and perceived practices of intercultural integration, (2) their concerns about intercultural integration prior the change of curriculum as part of educational reformation, and (3) supportive factors to teachers' awareness and concerns about intercultural integration. From the data collected from 119 upper-secondary school teachers in Tra Vinh, a province in the Mekong Delta, Southern Vietnam through a five-Likert-scale questionnaire and open-ended questions, the findings illustrate that (1) the teachers had good awareness of intercultural integration but (2) they still had many concerns especially about the curriculum and management, and (3) the teachers who used the experimental coursebooks were more confident with intercultural integration than the ones who used the current version. The findings suggest that teachers should be more oriented towards intercultural instruction, and educational management should be consistent with the intercultural aims of the reformed curriculum to ensure the success of intercultural education.

Keywords: educational reformation, intercultural education, intercultural integration, teachers' perceptions, Vietnamese education

Introduction

Intercultural competence (IC) is essential for global citizens in the 21st century, the era of integration (Stiftung & Cariplo, 2008). In response to this trend, Vietnamese language-in-education policy has shown an increasing interest in developing IC for students especially in general education. It is proven by the fact that a wealth of intercultural content is added in the new English coursebooks (still at experimental stage, hereafter called experimental coursebooks). However, how to incorporate culture in to language teaching in terms of objectivity and strategies is still controversial. Besides, improper culture teaching strategies might bring some negative effects, namely loss of home culture identity and distortions of intercultural development (Baker, 2015; Guest, 2002). Henceforth, teachers' understanding of intercultural

teaching was essential for the success and efficacy of intercultural education. To provide the educational management with information about the degree to which the teachers are acknowledged and prepared for intercultural teaching, I conducted a study with three research questions specified as follows.

1. How do the teachers perceive the roles and practices of intercultural integration into teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in upper secondary schools?

2. What are teachers' concerns about intercultural integration into teaching EFL in upper secondary schools?

3. What are supportive factors to the teachers' perceptions of intercultural integration into teaching EFL in upper secondary schools?

Since the integration of culture is at a turning point of Vietnam general education, this study focuses on teachers' concerns instead of teachers' constraints to cover their perceptions and reflections of experiences on the basis of situational and professional factors.

The three research issues are examined from the view of intentional inclusion of teaching cultures to teaching EFL with the concepts, frameworks and principles presented in the next part, the review of literature.

Literature Review

Communicative competence (CC) has been defined differently by many researchers but they all approved the social and contextual factors of the communication. Social and cultural dimensions are most striking in Van Ek' s (1986) CC framework with six elements: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, sociocultural, and social competence. Sociocultural competence and social competence involve motivation, attitude, tolerance, and empathy. These factors affect the learners' language and culture acquisition and ensure the effectiveness of intercultural communication (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003).

As for IC, two widely recognized models have been introduced by Byram (1997) and Fantini (2006). Byram (1997) developed a model composed from five interrelated components, also known as the five - savoirs: (1) savoir être - attitude, (2) savoirs- knowledge, (3) savoir comprendre - skills to interpret and relate, (4) savoir apprendre/faire - skills to discover and interact, and (5) savoir s' engager - critical cultural awareness. Fantini (2006) proposed another model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), including multiple constituents and four IC dimensions: knowledge, (positive) attitudes, skills, and awareness, which are arranged in a spiral and dynamic circle. Due to the dynamicity and progressiveness of the four elements in Fantini's (2006) model, they are adopted as four levels or dimensions of IC objectives of intercultural teaching.

To clarify, the connections among CC, IC, and ICC are obviously seen in their definitions. CC refers to a learner's ability to use a language to communicate successfully. IC is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately within and across cultural and linguistic backgrounds in learner's native language. ICC refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately within and across cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a language other than learner's native language. Therefore, to enable learners to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural boundaries in ASEAN integration, the objectives of EFL education in Vietnam should focus on developing their ICC, or IC and CC, not CC only. Integrating cultures to language teaching or intercultural teaching for developing learners' ICC requires an active process of learners' engagement in social intercultural interaction (Byram,

2006; Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999; Deardorff, 2006; Liddicoat and Crozet, 1997; Newton, Yates, Shearn, & Nowitzki, 2010; Newton, 2016). In light of intercultural teaching, Liddicoat and Crozet (1997), Newton, Yates, Shearn, and Nowitzki (2010), and Newton (2016) proposed principles for intercultural integration into language teaching:

1. Intercultural integration should involve a balance of cultural and linguistic focus.

2. Intercultural integration should be both implicit and explicit with clearly stated intercultural outcomes.

3. Intercultural integration should foster learners' process of language and culture learning and acquiring.

4. Intercultural integration should take the diversity of learners and contexts into account with variety of intercultural language activities.

5. Intercultural integration should aim to facilitate learners how communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts.

Studies of related theoretical framework on intercultural teaching is presented in the next part.

Previous studies

Teachers' perceptions of intercultural integration have been thoroughly researched in international and local contexts (Chau & Truong, 2018; Gönen & Sağlam, 2012; Hoang, 2014; Nguyen, 2013; Sercu et al., 2005; Zhou, 2011). It was generally proven that teachers had good perceptions of intercultural integration. They strongly believed that intercultural integration contributes to learners' IC and CC and they approved the explicit incorporation of cultures into teaching (Chau & Truong, 2018; Gönen & Sağlam, 2012; Hoang, 2014; Sercu et al., 2005; Zhou, 2011). However, intercultural teaching was considered inferior to language teaching and focusing on intercultural knowledge transferring (Gönen & Sağlam, 2012; Hoang, 2014; Sercu et al., 2005; Zhou, 2011). It is worth noticing Hoang (2014) and Nguyen (2013) confirmed that EFL teachers in Vietnam were not fully aware of their responsibilities for intercultural teaching. Also in local context, Chau and Truong (2018) found the void of intercultural objectives as well as the discrepancy between teachers' perceptions and practices regarding intercultural teaching. In general, teachers were receptive to the integration of cultures into teaching English but they still had ambivalent attitudes towards the balance of language and culture and their responsibility awareness.

Intercultural teaching constraints have been identified in the literature. The two striking constraints were the limitation of curriculum and teachers' instruction (Karabinar & Guler, 2015; Lázár, 2007; Nilmanee & Soontornwipast, 2014; Zhou, 2011). Curriculum factors, namely course objectives, time distribution, and teaching materials were wide spread and typical for top-down educational system. The other factor, teachers' intercultural instruction, was specified with teachers' intercultural integrating pedagogy, intercultural knowledge and experience (Ho, 2011; Lázár, 2007; Nguyen, 2013; Nilmanee & Soontornwipast, 2014; Zhou, 2011). Moreover, learner aspects, namely lack of motivation and low language proficiency should be considered (Ho, 2011; Lázár, 2007; Nguyen, 2013; Zhou, 2011). To conclude, three intercultural teaching constraints reported belonged to curriculum, teachers' instruction, and learners' learning.

In comparison to previous study, this research has practical and theoretical contributions. First, the research areas were adapted and added to investigate the local context of an educational reformation towards intercultural integration prior to regional and global integration. Though the

educational reformation is believed to be flexible, it is centralized in terms of time distribution and testing. That is why these two aspects were considered as management constraints. Besides, intercultural education has just been introduced, so it is necessary to explore how much the teachers were aware of the possible risks of intercultural teaching as Baker (2015) and Guest (2002) mentioned. Second, supportive factors from the teachers' backgrounds related to their intercultural teaching perceptions were defined. It is meaningful for the successful implementation because intercultural teaching is more contextualized than centralized.

Methodology

Considering the methods applied in the previous studies and accessibility of data resources, this research combined qualitative and quantitative instruments with the use of a Likert 5-point-scale questionnaire and two open-ended questions. Data collection and analysis were mainly and statistically based on the responses from 119 EFL teachers in the upper secondary schools in Tra Vinh, a rural province in the Mekong Delta, Southern Vietnam. Teachers' optional responses to open-ended questions provided more in-depth information and further explanations to teachers' perceptions of intercultural integration beyond the collection of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Research Context and Participants

Since 2008, the Ministry of Education and Training has carried out the National Foreign Language Project 2020 as a renovation of language in education policy from macro to micro levels. As a part of it, a new English curriculum, from Grades 3-12, has been introduced into teaching EFL in general education. Of the series, experimental coursebooks for Grade 10-12, which were included with intercultural content of home culture, English speaking cultures, and international cultures, were introduced in 2014. In an evaluation of experimental English coursebook (grade 10, volume 1), Lai (2016) proved the proportion of home, target and international culture is 51%, 31% and 18% respectively. This research was conducted at the beginning of academic school year 2018-2019, when the two versions of English coursebooks, the current and experimental one, have been implemented concurrently.

Target participants of this research were 190 upper secondary school EFL teachers in the province. Only 119 (84.03%) of the expected participants engaged in this study by giving all qualified responses to the questionnaire survey. Demographic information of participating teachers is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' demographic information

Category	Number of participants
Coursebook teaching	33 (teaching both versions), 86 (teaching the current version only)
International experience	28 (been abroad at least 1 week), 91 (never been abroad)
Qualifications	35 (Master's degree in TESOL), 84 (Bachelor's degree in TESOL)

Research Instruments

Questionnaire
The final questionnaire comprised two sections with 26 items total focusing on teachers' perceptions of intercultural integration objectives, perceived practices, and concerns. In light of intercultural teaching, parts of the questionnaire, teachers' beliefs and perceived practices, were adopted from Chau and Truong (2018). The rest part, relating teachers' concerns, was adapted from Ho (2011), Nguyen (2013), and Sercu et al. (2005). All items were opinion-based, graded from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree.* They were organized deliberately within each section in Table 2.

Table 2. Item distribution in the questionnaire

Clusters	Items
Teachers' beliefs in the roles of intercultural integration	A1, A2, A6, A8
Teachers' perceived practices of intercultural integration	A3, A5, A7, A9, A10, A11, A12
Teachers' concerns about intercultural integration	B1 - B15

The items in teachers' beliefs focused on the importance and objectives of intercultural integration (item A1, A2, A6, and A8). Those of teachers' perceived practices were general descriptions of intercultural teaching strategies (item A3, A5, A7, A9, A10, A11, and A12). Teachers' beliefs and perceived practices are coined in the term "teachers' awareness". Teachers' concerns address five areas: curriculum constraint (item B1 - B3), teacher constraint (item B4 - B6), learner constraint (item B7 and B8), management constraint (item B9 - B11 and B15), and doubtful effects of intercultural integration (item B12 - B14).

Open-ended questions
Two open-ended questions were optional and inserted right after their related parts in the questionnaire. These questions were designed so that the participants could add their own opinions and experiences besides what were presented in the questionnaire.

Validity and reliability
The questionnaire was first delivered, as a pilot, to a group of 51 teachers in another province of Mekong Delta, with positive values of coefficient reliability for the two sections: teachers' awareness and concerns (α = .722 and .772 respectively). The used questionnaire achieved qualified levels of coefficient reliability (α = .771 and .740 respectively). As previously mentioned, the amount of the participants (119) reached the recommended sample size for a population of 190 at a degree of accuracy of 5.0% and a confidence level of 92% ($\alpha > 90\%$). In addition, the questionnaire was proofread, checked and rechecked many times by statisticians, researchers, teachers of English and Vietnamese to avoid ambiguity and multiple meanings.

Data collection and analysis
Quantitative data were analysed for mean score of each item, cluster, average mean score, and mean compares of teachers' awareness and concerns within and cross groups defined in Table 1 by one-way ANOVA. Qualitative data collected from open-ended questions were analysed following content analysis approach. From the view of intercultural language teaching, I

classified teachers' responses into pre-determined clusters as previously mentioned. The responses not belonging to these clusters were re-examined and organized into new categories for further interpretation.

Results and discussions

Research Question 1
Participant teachers achieved high mean scores of intercultural integration beliefs (M = 4.31) and perceived practices (M = 3.84) (See Table 3 and 4). Mean scores of teachers' beliefs are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers' beliefs in intercultural integration

Items	Mean
Average mean score	*4.31*
A1 Culture should be an integral part of English lessons.	4.56
A2 Integrating culture motivates students to study a foreign language better.	4.24
A6 Integrating culture fosters students' knowledge of foreign cultures.	4.23
A8 Integrating culture fosters students' communicative competence with people coming from other cultures.	4.21

Item A1, expressing the importance of including culture in teaching EFL, gets the greatest mean score (M A1 = 4.56). The high level of teachers' awareness reveals that they approved the possibility of intercultural integration in language classrooms. The other three items, focusing on the objectives of intercultural teaching, also reached high-ranking status. The objective of teaching cultures for motivating students to study English was more approved (M A2 = 4.24) than developing students' intercultural knowledge (M A6 = 4.23) and building their ICC (M A8 = 4.21). As shown above, teachers agreed on the contribution of intercultural integration to students' language and culture learning.

Table 4. Teachers' perceived practices of intercultural integration

Items	Mean
Average mean score	*3,84*
A3 Culture should be integrated into foreign language lessons as early as possible regardless of students' language proficiency.	4.03
A5 Culture can be integrated into language lessons in form of skill activities.	4.00
A7 Integrating culture can be done in form of intra and extra curriculum activities.	3.92
A9 Integrating culture can be organized by using internet applications (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Zalo, etc.)	3.74
A10 Integrating culture should include proper activities to take students' home culture into account.	3.71
A11 Integrating culture should include students' home culture.	3.97
A12 Integrating culture should involve clearly stated lesson objectives.	3.52

As presented in Table 4, teachers' perceived practices achieves a fairly high mean score (M = 3.84). Interestingly and assuringly, the highest mean score of item A3, (M A3 = 4.03) means intercultural integration gained a great acceptance from the teachers regardless of students' language levels. Besides, the incorporation of culture to language skill activities was part of teachers' common perceived practices (M A5 = 4.0). Regarding the role of home culture, teachers were more assured of its positionality (M A11 = 3.97) than teaching strategies (M A10 = 3.71). Next, the utilisation of internet applications for interactive intercultural teaching was approved (M A9 = 3.74) but less than those of face-to-face activities (M A7 = 3.92). Similar to item A8, item A12 relating the recognition of intercultural objectives attains the lowest consent from the teachers (M A12 = 3.52). Obviously, the teachers had general understanding of intercultural integration in terms of objectivity and strategies for implementation.

Responses from six teachers to the open-ended question backed up quantitative reports. Though teachers least agreed with the intercultural objectives in the language lessons, they valued the teaching of intercultural knowledge about "their selveness" and "the otherness" to help students avoid culture shocks in intercultural communication (teachers T45, T55, and T57). In the same vein with questionnaire reports, it was found that two teachers (T4 and T23) agreed that culture should be added to motivate language learning. Strikingly, one teacher (T78) focused on developing intercultural attitudes towards foreign cultures by mentioning cultural relativity. It can be concluded that teachers appreciated the integration of culture to facilitate language learning and developing students' IC, of which intercultural knowledge and intercultural attitudes were focused.

This part of research findings can be discussed in alignment with those of Chau and Truong (2018), Gönen and Sağlam (2012), Hoang (2014), Nguyen (2013), Sercu et al. (2005), and Zhou (2011). In concurrence to Chau and Truong (2018), Gönen and Sağlam (2012), Sercu et al. (2005), and Zhou (2011), the participating teachers had good intercultural teaching awareness. In fact, they were ready for and receptive to intercultural teaching. Even so, their ICC teaching objectives were not focused. Given that reason, Hoang (2014) and Nguyen (2013) concurred that teachers lacked responsibility awareness to integrate culture into EFL teaching. Furthermore, Chau and Truong (2018) pinpointed that there existed a big gap between teachers' intercultural teaching perceptions and practices. Therefore, it was common that teachers acknowledged the importance of intercultural teaching but IC or ICC objectives were not obvious.

Research Question 2
Quantitative data from Table 5 shows that teachers were concerned about curriculum, teachers' intercultural instruction, learner aspects, and management aspects (M 1 = 3.62; M 2 = 3.13; M 3 = 3.43; M 4 = 3.68 respectively). Interestingly, possible negative influences of intercultural integration did not bother the teachers (M 5 = 2.57).

Table 5. Teachers' concerns about intercultural integration

Teachers' concerns	Mean
1. Curriculum aspect	*3.62*
B1. Cultural contents in English coursebooks are not rich enough.	3.65
B2. Coursebook activities are designed to practise language skills.	3.74
B3. Coursebook activities do not focus on developing students' ICC.	3.49

2. Teacher aspect	*3.13*
B4. Teachers are not confident with their intercultural knowledge and experience.	3.24
B5. Teachers are not confident with their teaching method of integrating culture into teaching English.	3.20
B6. Teachers do not accept the new workload in their teaching.	2.95
3. Learner aspect	*3.43*
B7. Students' language proficiency is not good enough to participate in intercultural language activities.	3.88
B8. Students lack motivation to participate in intercultural language activities because they have to focus on their language learning.	3.47
4. Management aspect	*3.68*
B9. Not meaningful intercultural resources and environment are available for practising intercultural skills.	4.25
B10. Integrating culture into teaching English requires more teaching time.	3.55
B11. Integrating culture into teaching English doesn't contribute to test scores.	2.68
B15. ICC testing can hardly be done.	3.24
5. Negative effects of intercultural teaching	*2.57*
B12. Intercultural teaching hinders students' linguistic accuracy such as grammar and pronunciation.	2.57
B13. Intercultural teaching causes bias, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and xenocentrism.	2.45
B14. Intercultural teaching contributes to student's loss of cultural identity.	2.12

As presented above, of the four aspects, management and curriculum concerned the teachers most (M 4 = 3.68 and M 1 = 3.62 respectively). Of the management aspects, the teachers were most worried about the lack of intercultural resources and environment (M B9 = 4.25). Also, busy teaching schedules hindered intercultural integration (M B10 = 3.55). In terms of intercultural testing, teachers had a rather ambivalent attitude towards the contribution of intercultural integration to students' English test scores (M B11 = 2.68) and the feasibility of IC testing (M B15 = 3.24). Additionally, the teachers expressed a great concern for curriculum (M 1 = 3.62). Specifically, the teachers were concerned about the lack of intercultural activities (M B2 = 3.74), insufficiency of intercultural content (M B1 = 3.65), and the scarcity of activities to develop students' ICC (M B3 = 3.49) in the coursebooks.

Of the two issues: teacher and learner constraints, the teachers were more concerned about learner aspect in regard to low language proficiency (M B7 = 3.88) and lack of motivation (M B8 = 3.47). Teachers were not sure whether they had problems with their intercultural competence (M B4 = 3.24) and their intercultural instruction (M B5 = 3.20). The neutral value of item B6 (M B6 = 2.95) means teachers were not ready to accept the new teaching burden of intercultural incorporation but they did not reject it as others' responsibility (Hoang, 2014; Nguyen, 2013). Furthermore, Nguyen (2013) confirmed that teachers did not have sufficient backgrounds of intercultural teaching pedagogy since it was not included in pre and in-service teacher training programmes. To conclude, the teachers' uncertain attitudes were attributed to the void of intercultural objective recognition and intercultural teaching support or guidance.

The last issue mentioned is the negative effects of intercultural teaching to students' language learning and IC building. Though intercultural integration in teachers' perspectives was still language-focused and inferior to language teaching, they did not think that it worked against

students' language development (M B12 = 2.57), intercultural identity development (M B13 = 2.45) or loss of home culture identity (M B14 = 2.12).

Responses to the open-ended question from eight teachers showed that they had difficulties with intercultural materials, intercultural instructions, learners' learning, and parents' expectations. First, for the curriculum and coursebooks, two teachers (T64 and T73, who used the current coursebooks) stated that they were not provided with any intercultural teaching materials. Second, in terms of pedagogy, one teacher (T101, who used the current coursebooks) could not define what culture to be taught. This report again confirmed teachers' uncertainty in assessing themselves as a constraint of intercultural teaching due to unconsciousness of their problems. Third, of learner constraints, three teachers (T6, T11, and T108) raised the issue of mixed-ability class, unfamiliarity of intercultural themes to the students' prior knowledge, and students' poor self-study habits. Finally, two teachers (T78 and T91) were worried about parents' disapproval of intercultural integration because they believed it did not contribute to the test scores and language learning of their children.

Teachers' positive attitudes to intercultural integration were reconfirmed by not approving the negative effects of intercultural integration. Four of the teachers' main concerns discussed in comparison with findings of previous studies (Ho, 2011; Karabinar & Guler, 2015; Lázár, 2007; Nguyen, 2013; Nilmanee & Soontornwipast, 2014; Zhou, 2011).

In alignment with Karabinar and Guler (2015), Lázár (2007), Nguyen (2013), and Zhou (2011), this research pinpointed that teachers were most concerned of management and curriculum factors, namely time constraint, exam pressure, lack of intercultural environment, and lack of intercultural content and activities in the coursebooks. In fact, teachers could hardly have time to add intercultural content, if it was not part of lessons in the coursebooks. In addition, the void of ICC teaching objectives required in EFL lessons created the deficiency of intercultural language activities.

As learner aspect, lack of motivation and limited language proficiency are common issues. While the former was also commonly proven in other research (Lázár, 2007; Nilmanee & Soontornwipast, 2014; Zhou, 2011), the latter was rather a local issue, which was found in Ho (2011) and Nguyen (2013). Generally, students disregarded culture learning due to the preoccupation of language exams (Lázár, 2007; Nilmanee & Soontornwipast, 2014) and overwhelming perspectives of language learning (Zhou, 2011). To clarify, exam pressure and language focus deprived students' interests for intercultural integration. Similar to the two studies in Vietnamese contexts (Ho, 2011; Nguyen, 2013), the participating teachers believed that students' poor language proficiency was one of the biggest problems. They contradicted themselves for both accepting (M A3 = 4.03) and disapproving (M B7 = 3.88) students' low language proficiency to the feasibility of intercultural learning. Their contradiction is attributed to the fact that teaching and learning EFL in general education are more accuracy focused for testing and exams. Therefore, at a deeper level, learners and their learning were driven by testing and teaching so not the learners, but the curriculum and teachers' intercultural teaching pedagogy should be the change first to orient, activate, and motivate them.

Research Question 3

The last research question assumed supportive factors to teachers' awareness and concerns about intercultural integration, namely international experience, teaching experience, and graduate education are measured by ANOVA and post hoc tests (if needed). The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Supportive factors to teachers' awareness and concerns about intercultural integration

Supportive factors	Variables	Mean square between groups	F	df	Sig.
Teaching experience	Awareness	.080	.496	1	*.483*￼
	Concerns	.332	1.933	1	*.167*￼
International experience	Awareness	.012	.075	1	*.785*￼
	Concerns	.420	2.457	1	*.120*￼
Graduate education	Awareness	.217	1.349	1	*.248*￼
	Concerns	.001	.004	1	*.951*￼

*Sig: >.05

It is proven in Table 6 that none of the three factors: international experience, teaching experience, and graduate education has a meaningful effect on teachers' awareness and concerns about intercultural integration. Since two aspects of teachers' concerns, curriculum and teachers' instruction, are likely to be affected by teachers' backgrounds, another One-way between-subject ANOVA test was applied with the results presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Supportive factors to teachers' concerns about curriculum and their instruction

Affective factors	Variables	Mean square between groups	F	df	Sig.
Teaching experience	Curriculum	1.560	4.580	1	*.034*￼**
	Teachers' instruction	.569	2,076	1	*.152*
International experience	Curriculum	.291	.827	1	365
	Teachers' instruction	.493	1.795	1	.183
Graduate education	Curriculum	.001	.003	1	.953
	Teachers' instruction	.082	.294	1	.589

**Sig: <.05

The inferential results from Table 7 confirm the positive effects of teachers' experience (coursebook teaching) on teachers' concerns in terms of curriculum (F =4.580, Sig =.034). As I expect, teachers who used the experimental coursebooks (M = 3.45) were less concerned about intercultural integration than those using the current version (M = 3.70). Curriculum is the only constraint that is affected by teachers' teaching experience, so it is not necessary to compute a post hoc test to analyse the degree of effects.

That teacher teachers using the experimental coursebooks were more confident with intercultural teaching than the other group is a successful signal of the experimental coursebook implementation and educational reformation.

Implications and conclusion

In summary, this research explores teachers' perceptions and concerns in terms of intercultural teaching. Responses from the teachers indicate that they strongly believed in the importance and feasibility of intercultural teaching. That is why they were not worried about the negative effects of intercultural teaching regarding the risks of language accuracy hindrance and cultural identity confusion. What is noticeable from teachers' awareness is that their beliefs in the roles of intercultural integration outweighed its perceived practices. This fact implies that they were more aware of the supporting function of intercultural integration to language teaching than

developing learners' ICC. From the analysis of teachers' concerns, it was shown that they identified great considerations for other aspects like management, curriculum and learner rather than their own intercultural instruction.

As discussed above, two main hindrances of intercultural integration come from curriculum and teachers' instruction. An effective application of intercultural curriculum involves many educational and managerial factors, from which this study has some recommendations to improve intercultural teaching. First, course descriptions should include explicit intercultural objectives and learning outcomes. Second, coursebooks should support intercultural integration with intercultural content and activities. Third, teachers should be oriented to adapt and conduct intercultural activities to fit linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To enable teachers to implement this, pre-service and in-service teachers' education should be added with IC education and intercultural teaching pedagogy. Therefore, from the investigation of teachers' intercultural teaching awareness and concerns, it is concluded that integrating culture into teaching EFL in Vietnam general education is feasible if the curriculum is "interculturalized" and teachers have opportunities for professional development to strengthen their intercultural instruction.

Limitations of the study

The present study is limited in two ways. First, the small amount of the teachers with international experiences, graduate education in TESOL, and teaching experiences of two coursebook versions in comparison to those of the other group negatively affected the inferential results in defining the supportive factors to teachers' intercultural teaching perceptions. Likewise, in spite of the similarity of socio-cultural backgrounds of Mekong Delta, Southern Vietnam, the research results cannot be a comprehensive representative of the whole area because the data collected from only one province. Second, teachers' uncertain attitudes to their own concerns required further research with other instruments namely observation and interview to get more insights of their perceptions. This study assumed teachers' complication of assessing their instructions was attributed to the void of intercultural objectives officially required in every EFL lesson and lack of training and support from professional and educational management. However, other contributory factors such as the the bias of self-assessment, lack of responsibility awareness, and inability to fix their contextual and pedagogical problems should be defined in further research utilizing other instruments.

About the Authors:

Chau Thi Hoang Hoa, is an EFL teacher of Tra Vinh university, Vietnam. Her research interests are teaching EFF in general education, teachers' education, and integrating cultures into teaching EFF. Now she is doing her PhD. thesis at University of Foreign Languages, Hue University, Vietnam on developing a model to integrate cultures into teaching English to upper secondary school students targeting for intercultural communicative competence.

Truong Vien is a senior English teacher of University of Foreign Languages, Hue University, Vietnam. He has a wide range of research interests in linguistics and language education, language and culture study. Many of his studies have been conducted in the fields of intercultural competence, sociolinguistics, pragmatics. His expertise in linguistics shapes his current studies in

language education areas: applications of a cognitive linguistics approach on students' syntax awareness, integration of cultures teaching on students' intercultural communicative competence.

References

Baker, W. (2015). Research into practice: Cultural and intercultural awareness. *Language Teaching, 48* (1), 130-141. doi:10.1017/S0261444814000287

Byram, M. (1997). Foreign language education and cultural studies. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, *1* (1), 15–31.

Chau, T. H. H & Truong, V. (2018). Developing intercultural competence for upper secondary students: Perspectives and practice. *Kỷ yếu Hội thảo Quốc gia "Nghiên cứu Liên ngành về Ngôn ngữ và Giảng dạy Ngôn ngữ lần thứ III"*, 227-239.

Crozet, C. Liddicoat, A. J. and Lo Bianco, J. (1999). Intercultural competence: From language policy to language education. In Lo Bianco, J., Liddicoat A. J.,   and Crozet C. (eds), *Striving for the Third Place: Intercultural Competence Through Language Education*. Canberra: Language Australia.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). The Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *10*(3), 241-266.

Fantini, A. E. (2006). *Exploring and assessing intercultural competence*. Retrieved from http://www.sit.edu/publications/docs/feil_research_report.pdf

Guest, M. (2002). A critical "checkbook" for culture teaching and learning. *ELT Journal, 56*(2), Oxford University Press

Gönen, S., & Sağlam, S. (2012). Teaching culture in the FL classroom: Teachers' perspectives. *International Journal of Global Education, 1*(3), 26-46.

Ho, S. T. K. (2011). *An investigation of intercultural teaching and learning in tertiary EFL classrooms in Vietnam.* (Unpublished PhD. Thesis). Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.

Hoang, N. T. T. (2014) Phân tích thái độ của giáo viên – học viên một số tỉnh miền núi phía Bắc về nội dung văn hoá trong giáo trình tiếng Anh, *Chiến lược Ngoại ngữ trong xu thế hội nhập*, Ha Noi University, 647-657.

Karabinar, S & Guler, C. Y. *(*2013). A review of intercultural competence from language teachers' perspectives. *Procedia - Social and Behavioual Sciences, 70* (2013), 1316-1328.

Lai, T. T. V. (2016). An evaluation of textbook English 10 - Volume 1 (experimental program) developed by Vietnamese Ministry of Education and training as seen from intercutural communicative EFL approach. Kỷ yếu Hội thảo Quốc gia 2016 *"Nghiên cứu và giảng dạy Ngoại ngữ, ngôn ngữ, và quốc tế học tại Việt Nam"*. 407-417.

Lázár, I. (2007). *Incorporating culture-related activities in foreign language teaching*. http://www. ecml.at/mtp2/lccinte/results/downloads/6-3-3.pdf (date of access: 21.3. 2018).

Liddicoat, A. J. & Crozet, C. (1997). Teaching culture as an integrated part of language teaching: An introduction. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, *Series S*, 1-22.

Liddicoat, A. J., Papademetre, L., Scarino, A., & Kohler, M. (2003). *Report on intercultural language learning*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Newton, J. (2016). Cultivating intercultural competence in tertiary EFL programs. *Crossing Borders in Language Teaching and Business Communication: Proceedings of the 11th ELT conference at AE CYUT. (pp. 1-22).* Chaoyang University of Technology, Chaoyang, Taiwan, 27 May 2016. ISBN978-986-5631-24-6

Newton, J., Yates, E., Shearn, S. & Nowitzki, W. (2010). *Intercultural communicative language teaching: Implications for effective* teaching *and learning*. Report to the Ministry of Education.

Nguyen, T. L. (2013). *Integrating culture into Vietnamese University EFL Teaching: A critical ethnography study*. (Unpublished PhD. Thesis) Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.

Nilmanee, M., & Soontornwipast, K. (2014). Exploring factors influencing the teaching of culture and its challenges: Teachers' perceptions. *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (LEARN) Journal, 7*(2), 1-18.

Sercu, E. Bandura, P. Castro, L. Davcheva, C. Laskaridou, U. Lundgren, G. M. del Carmen Méndes, & P. Ryan (2005). *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence. An international investigation*. Clevedon et al.: Multilingual Matters. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980500502321

Stiftung, B. & Cariplo, F. (2008). Intercultural competence – the key competence in the 21st century. http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin.

Van Ek, J. (1986). *Objectives for foreign language learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Zhou, Y. (2011). *A study of Chinese university EFL teachers and their intercultural competence teaching*. Doctoral dissertation. Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.