Beliefs and Practices Regarding Intercultural Competence among Chinese Teachers of English: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study aims to increase the understanding of how Chinese EFL teachers view intercultural competence (IC) and how their beliefs might influence their teaching practices. Qualitative methodology was employed to examine the class observation and interview data collected from a sample of 11 teachers working at a large public university in eastern China. The findings of this study suggest that the participating teachers' perceived IC as involving behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic aspects. Although most of the teachers recognize the importance of IC in their teaching, the intercultural dimensions of teaching have not yet become a regular focus in their actual classes.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, Chinese EFL teaching, teachers' beliefs and practices, case study

Introduction

The importance of intercultural competence (IC) development has been widely recognized and documented in foreign language (FL) education in Europe, Australia, and North America since the late 1980s (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Liddicoat, 2008; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, & Crozet, 1999; Sercu, 2006). Even though many countries' national curricula for language teaching have been following the intercultural shift in theory (Sercu, 2006), several researchers (e.g., Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Sercu, 2006) argue that teaching for IC has not yet yielded desired outcomes.

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China, many teachers and researchers have realized the important role that culture has in English language learning and some have addressed the need to integrate cultural teaching into EFL classes (Han, 2002; Pan, 2001; Xiao, 2007). However, cultural teaching mostly refers to helping students learn cultural knowledge and cultural teaching strategies accordingly revolve around teaching cultural knowledge (Zhong & Zhao, 2000). Chinese scholars have begun to identify the goal of FL learning as a means of achieving successful intercultural communication and some teaching pedagogies have been proposed for this purpose (Chen, 2001; Hu & Gao, 1997). Though a large body of literature has discussed IC from a theoretical and pedagogical perspective in China, the teaching and learning of IC have not been sufficiently researched through empirical studies (Li & Wang, 2007). Are Chinese EFL teachers aware of the development of IC in their teaching practice? 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? Are the ideas of IC developed mostly in the western context, also applicable to the Chinese context, more specifically, the Chinese EFL teachers? Unfortunately, limited empirical research has been found to answer these questions. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature. Before reporting on the present study, I will first review research on teacher cognition and teacher behavior and research on the components and dimensions of IC.

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Teacher Cognition and Teacher Behavior

Teacher cognition is considered a critical impetus for 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 between these mental constructs and what teachers do in a language classroom. It further refers to teachers' beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, knowledge, and principles relating to teaching, as well as judgments and reflections on teaching practice. The most frequently used methods in data collection in teacher cognition studies have been self-report, oral commentary, observation, and reflective writing (Borg, 2003).

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 IC development in FL education and the reasons underlying their actual practices.

However, research into Chinese teachers' perceptions of IC is still inadequate (Liu, 2010). For example, Xu (2000) 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. This study therefore intends to increase the understanding of how Chinese EFL teachers view IC and how their beliefs might influence their teaching practices.

Intercultural Competence Dimensions

Studies conducted within the last several 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. Literature 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 viewpoints; 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).

Kramsch (2011) has argued for adding a *symbolic* dimension to the concept of IC. While communicative competence development focused on the negotiation of intended meanings in authentic contexts of language use, IC dealt with the circulation of values and identities across cultures (Kramsch, 2011). Culture in this view was understood through investigating people's beliefs, values, and reasoning systems. The symbolic dimension of IC is, in fact, not a brand-new concept in language education. For example, Jokikokko (2005) argued that IC should include "an ethical orientation in which certain morally right ways of being, thinking and acting are emphasized" (p. 79). Jokikokko's finding was echoed by Parmenter (2006), who compared the European and East Asian approaches of teaching and learning. Parmenter found that in East Asia, the relationship between teacher and learner was more important than content. It was the teacher's responsibility to support the moral and humanistic development of the students, which was not always acknowledged in the European context. This area of research, which came up in the first decade of the 21st century, has not been furthered in the IC domain.

This study will highlight the above four dimensions of IC, namely, the behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic dimensions.. With respect to the cognitive and affective dimensions, I will examine the intercultural mindsets and attitudes respectively among Chinese teachers in their teaching of English in China. Regarding the behavioral components, I will explore whether English teachers in China are able to act upon their intercultural mindsets and attitudes. Finally, for the symbolic dimension, given the Chinese context, I will focus on Chinese perspectives on IC in English teaching.

Research Questions

This paper investigates how Chinese EFL teachers in a Chinese university interpret the ideas of IC, how they specify their IC objectives, and how they try to achieve these objectives. The following two research questions inform this study:

- How do Chinese EFL teachers in China perceive IC in their teaching?
- How do their IC beliefs inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?

Method

Since this study aimed to provide a contextual analysis of IC perceptions and practices, it employed a qualitative methodology to examine the class observation and interview data collected from a sample of 11 teachers in a large public university in eastern China. To ensure that the participants maximally represented their respective groups, varying factors such as age, gender, educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, overseas experiences, and years in teaching were taken into consideration. As shown in Appendix A, among the 11 interviewed participants, seven were female and four male. Two teachers were in their 20s, three in their 30s, four in their 40s, and two above the age of 50. Regarding educational levels, two teachers held a PhD, 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 teaching experience ranged from two to 35 years.

Data were collected from two principle data sources: class observations and one-on-one interviews. 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.

The interviews with the 11 teachers 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 B) 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 fuller responses, as well as ease their anxiety, especially when they were trying to explain complicated ideas, values and opinions.

In addition to the interviews, seven teachers' classes were observed, 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 the observation field notes were coded and the codes interconnected, four themes emerged regarding the instructional features for IC development among the teachers.

Qualitative analysis of the data included coding the evidence of IC beliefs for emergent themes and practices, and interconnecting these themes to display the thought processes of the Chinese teachers (Maxwell, 2005).

Findings and Discussion

The Teachers' Perceptions about IC

When asked about how they would define IC during the interviews, rather than providing a direct response to the question, all participants addressed the question in a more indirect manner through statements of teaching goals or objectives. Their statements appeared to revolve around cultural practices and products, and the meanings attached to these practices and products, as well as cultural perspectives in terms of how language learners view the world. Four teachers referred to IC as the fostering of cultural empathy through cultural comparison. For example, Mr. Ge stated 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" (Interview, September 25, 2012). Ms. Liao also indicated that "if the students were able to think in others' shoes, they would be less surprised to see things happening in other countries" (Interview, September 27, 2012). Another three teachers described IC as an 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. 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" (Interview, October 10, 2012). Ms. Gong provided an alternative interpretation that focused on how the nature and structure of a language could provide insights into a 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"(Interview, October 9, 2012).

Classroom Practices Related to IC

Cultural Content Covered

Language first, culture second. The development of language proficiency was given priority in the observed classes; culture was rarely specifically mentioned or discussed. During the classes, 80 percent of the questions the teachers asked were: *What is the meaning of this word?, What is the difference between this word and that word?,* and *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, about 80% of classroom time was spent on the elaborate explanation of language points, with the students listening or taking notes. In addition, translation from either English to Chinese or Chinese to English was used about 30% of the time in the classroom and seen as a reliable way of testing and measuring the students' mastery of the language and understanding of the text.

The data also suggest that cultural topics appeared at an average of five times in a 50-minute class period and were included as part of a class as more of a *seize-the-opportunity* or a *by-the-way* insert than a purposeful design. When a cultural topic came up in the text, 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 illustrates Mr. Deng's *seize-the-opportunity* way of introducing the use of personal checks in the United States:

> 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 *shengrihongbao* (Chinese, 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. (Field notes, October 17, 2012)

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,* the discussion was extended to the word *gate*, then to *water gate*, next to a discussion of President Nixon and his contribution to the Sino-US relationship, and finally to an anecdote on the research site related to Nixon's first visit to China.

Culture as facts. Culture was taught in the observed classes about 90% of the time as factual information for learners to remember. The main body of cultural content was composed of cultural products,

practices, and perspectives. Teachers used questioning as a primary teaching technique for at least five times in a class. 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' opinions. Seventy percent of the 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 American table manners for 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, *miannanweizun* (Chinese, 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 United States. (Field notes, October 10, 2012)

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. In the classroom, when a cultural discussion opportunity arose, seven out of ten times the teachers would ask learners to recall their own culture and compare different cultures. However, 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. Fifty percent of cultural comparison was associated with English-Chinese translation. According to Xiao (2007), 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* (Chinese, meaning *sick leave*).
Y: She is on sick leave. *Shijia ne*? (Chinese, 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*. 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. (Field notes, October 15, 2012)

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 to be mainly inferred from 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 90% teacher-directed in terms of content and instructional delivery. Teachers appeared in the classroom mainly as knowledge providers. Consistent with the *seize-the-opportunity* or *by-the-way* comment insertion mentioned above, the cultural content that teachers provided mainly comprised of cultural topics in the textbooks and a wide range of topics and issues potentially of interest and relevance to the students. 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.

During the discussion of these cultural topics, the teachers controlled the pace and flow of communication. It appeared that they spent at least 80% of the cultural discussion time introduced, told, or informed students about cultural knowledge and provided their own understandings and interpretation of cultural issues. The main strategies of teaching culture were either commenting or elaborating on cultural topics. They asked questions, but the questions were generally meant to find out whether students understood and what they knew. Occasionally, some teachers engaged students in pair work or group activities to exchange ideas on certain cultural topics, but these activities were usually very brief.

This finding from the observations seemed to echo what teachers said during their interviews about students' low engagement in the classroom. Mr. Yao described their concerns of student participation in the classroom: "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" (Interview, October 15, 2012). 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"(Interview, September 27, 2012).

The Teachers' Approaches to Teaching IC

By connecting the class observations and interviews, the researcher identified three major patterns of teaching practices regarding IC development that embodied teachers' diversified IC beliefs. These patterns were labeled as *the utilitarian pattern*, *the traditional pattern*, and *the humanist pattern*. The discussion of each pattern will start with a quote from a representative teacher of this pattern.

The Utilitarian Approach.

> 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, Interview, October 15, 2012)

The term *utilitarian* is used to reflect the instrumentality of language and culture presented in Mr. Yao's class. Viewing both language and culture as tools, Mr. Yao seemed to care less about implementing a structured approach to teaching. When teaching, the emphasis was on the connections of language and culture with real life. Students were asked to "connect what you are learning with something you already know" (field notes, October 15, 2012). Therefore, students were taught how to say certain Chinese buzzwords in English; how to use the words in students' disciplines; and how to describe 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 observed, such connections with life appeared mainly in the classes of teachers in their 20s or 30s; this aspect was not observed in the classes of teachers in the higher age groups.

The primary activity in Mr. Yao's class was Chinese-English translation. The students were given words, phrases, or short sentences in Chinese and asked 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 increases the instructional pace and, as a result, excites the learners, but it also helps students make effective cross-lingual and cross-cultural comparisons. When making cultural comparisons, Mr. Yao adopted an approach that seemed to flash by without addressing much of the contrastive thought patterns behind such differences. The reason might be that the teacher wanted to maintain a level of complexity that would hold students' interest.

The Traditional Approach.

> 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, Interview, October 17, 2012)

The term *traditional* was assigned 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. Mr. Deng's classroom focused on language learning with very few forays into culture. The textbook supplied most culture learning opportunities. The teacher's 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 words *Salvation Army* appeared in the text, the teacher first provided the translation as *jiushijun* and then a definition of it as *a charitable organization*. Perhaps because of the perceived obstacles for going beyond the textbook, the teacher appeared to struggle with the introduction of more cultural topics in the class. Also, in the *Salvation Army* example, after providing a translation and definition, the teacher simply asked the students to Google additional information on their own if interested without further explanation or discussion.

During the interview, Mr. Deng associated IC 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 experiencing them in another country. This belief functioned as a limitation to what could be done in the classroom. In addition, Mr. Deng shared an opinion in the interview that only when culture and IC were reflected in various English tests in China would it be more likely for the English teachers in the traditional category to integrate culture into their classroom teaching.

The Humanist Approach.

> 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, Interview, October 10, 2012)

Ms. Zhao emphasized the inclusion of humanism in language education. During the interview, she talked about her care of 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, in her class, students were encouraged to explore the viability of various perspectives on east-west cultural conflicts, rather than searching for a definite and correct answer.

Though also practicing direct instruction most of the time, she modeled the language by conducting the class entirely in English and engaging students with the target language, rather than merely telling them to do exercises or repeat phrases out of context. Her view of culture went beyond the traditional *Big C* that refers to history, geography, artifacts, technology, literature, art, music, and ways of life, and the *Little c* that refers to the culturally influenced beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors, such as customs, habits, dress, foods, leisure, and so forth (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). Instead, she focused more on the ideological view of culture that refers to how culture can be understood through investigating people's beliefs, values, and reasoning systems, which the symbolic dimension of intercultural competence aims to examine.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study investigated the beliefs of Chinese EFL teachers regarding IC development in their FL education classes and to explore the extent to which they incorporate their beliefs into their classroom practices.

The Chinese EFL teachers in this case study addressed the concept of IC in tentative ways and mostly through statements of goals rather than direct definitions, which supports Xu's (2000) argument on the vague perceptions of IC among Chinese teachers. Interview and class observation results suggested both congruence and incongruence between teacher cognition and behavior, or beliefs and practices. As for the dimensions of IC, the teachers perceived IC both in terms of knowledge and attitude and in consideration of perspectives, values, and beliefs.

The most commonly shared goal of IC in EFL teaching among these teachers was to promote the acquisition of a body of cultural knowledge. While some teachers stressed the need to foster students' abilities 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. Another important goal that the Chinese teachers of English articulated regarding IC development was to develop students' curiosity, understanding, and open attitudes towards foreign cultures. However, in the classroom, they generally chose to arouse the students' interest in and positive attitudes towards cultural learning by exposing students to cultural information rather than engaging students in seeking out cultural information from various sources and reflecting critically on it, which is the same as Sercu's (2006) findings in her study involving European foreign language teachers. Teachers in this study also viewed the goal of IC from the perspective of developing their students as social beings, which could be considered as an important addition to the symbolic dimension of IC as elaborated upon in the literature review (i.e., Jokikokko, 2005; Parmenter, 2006).Therefore, these teachers took it as their responsibility to prepare students for life by teaching good values, moral standards, and worldviews.

Teachers' beliefs regarding IC were found mostly transferred to their classroom practices. Three distinctive patterns emerged among the teachers which the researcher labeled as *a utilitarian approach*, *a traditional approach*, and *a humanist approach*. These three approaches 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 behave), 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 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. Second, although the teachers talked about fostering students' intercultural awareness and attitudes, they tended to over-generalize cultures and transmit to their students observable and surface features of culture.

This study has several limitations, such as limited data sample, reliance on field notes instead of class recording, and possible researcher bias in interview translation, data coding, and data interpretation. To minimize the influence of these limitations, I practiced 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) to the best of my ability. I also 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. In addition, I sought member checking for accuracy and credibility of translation.

Nonetheless, the study has provided insight into how Chinese EFL teachers at a large public university in China perceive the intercultural dimension of English teaching and how they are incorporating their perceptions into their practices. It has contributed new understanding and insights about the complex concept of IC in the Chinese context. As indicated in Sercu's (2005) 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 students with various backgrounds? How might the teachers' intercultural thinking and teaching change over time?

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Appendix A
Participants' Profiles

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

Appendix B
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?

About the Author:
Jie Tian is an English lecturer in Donghua University, PRC. She received her PhD in Education from George Mason University, USA in 2013. Her fields of study include intercultural communication and EFL teaching and teacher education.