

# A Prisma-Guided Systematic Review of ICC Development for English Majors in China: Trends, Gaps, and Recommendations for a Specialized Training Program

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## Abstract

This PRISMA-guided systematic review explores the development of intercultural communication competence (ICC) in English majors in Jingdezhen, China, for sectors such as tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation. The study adopts the methodology of a systematic literature review, analyzing 22 papers between 2014 and 2024. The review finds students' fundamental ICC, including cultural awareness, communication skills, language skills, and practical experience. It also finds lags in digital literacy, intercultural responsibility, and global citizenship, which are increasingly at the heart of effective international engagement. Research states it would better prepare students for worldwide participation by making ICC training work through experiential learning, information technologies, and intercultural obligations. Research provides stimulating details about flaws within current ICC courses. It emphasizes the need to create a professional training system to render Jingdezhen's English majors more interculturally flexible and internationally competitive, in line with the city's growing global cultural and economic impact.

**Keywords:** cultural knowledge, cultural tourism, digital tools, experiential learning, intercultural communication competence, language proficiency, practical engagement.

## 1. Introduction

As globalization continues transforming industries, cultural interactions, and workforce expectations, ICC has become a crucial skill for individuals working in multicultural settings (Baker & Fang, 2020; Ou & Gu, 2018). As China continues expanding its global economic influence, initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative highlight the need for more substantial intercultural competencies to facilitate international cooperation (Ge & Ho, 2022). However, despite the growing international engagement of Chinese professionals, higher education institutions (HEI) still emphasize theoretical language instruction over practical intercultural training, leaving graduates unprepared for effective communication in multicultural settings (Drulis et al., 2021; González-Pérez & Ramirez-Montoya, 2022). Without sufficient ICC, individuals face misinterpretation, communication barriers, and limited opportunities in global industries (Zhang, 2018).

Jingdezhen, known as China's porcelain capital, exemplifies the opportunities and challenges of globalization. With its deep-rooted ceramic heritage, the city has become a hub for international visitors, artists, and businesses, experiencing a 166.41% increase in international tourism from 2012 to 2021 (Wang et al., 2023). Recent statistics indicate that 2.9 million foreigners visited China between January and November 2024, with a 123.3% increase in visa-free travelers compared to the previous year (National Immigration Administration, 2024). Despite this growing international presence, graduates from local HEIs, particularly English majors, often lack the practical intercultural skills needed for tourism, cultural marketing, and international trade (Shao, 2024). Although educators and institutions have worked to modernize education through industry collaborations, many programs still prioritize theoretical knowledge over hands-on experience (Li & Wang, 2024). As Jingdezhen continues expanding its global reach, enhancing ICC is essential to support the city's evolving cultural and economic landscape.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Jingdezhen's international contact and cultural tourism have grown fast, considering China's policy of visa-free

transit (Jiangxi Daily, 2024). However, a lack of ICC among local employees, mainly English majors, limits the city's capacity to maximize these opportunities. Despite their expected role as cultural mediators, students graduate with minimal intercultural exposure and practical communication skills, restricting their impact in tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation industries.

HEIs' focus on theory and memorization exacerbates this issue, leaving students unprepared for real-world intercultural scenarios (Borghetti & Qin, 2022; Guan & Scott, 2024). Wu (2024) notes that many English majors lack ceramic-specific terminology, reducing their competitiveness in tourism and translation. Systemic issues, including the "dumb English" phenomenon favoring reading and writing over spoken fluency (Scott & Guan, 2022), further weaken their ability to engage with international visitors and investors. Businesses struggle to find qualified professionals, with English-speaking tour guides in high demand and translators scarce (Jingdezhen China Ceramics Museum, 2024). Without targeted intercultural communication training, this gap between education and labor market needs will persist, hindering Jingdezhen's global ambitions.

### 1.2 Research Questions

To ensure conceptual clarity and establish a structured foundation for ICC training, this study addresses the following research questions in Table 1.

Table 1. Research questions of this study

Research Questions	Type of response sought
What research designs are used in the studies on ICC development among English majors?	Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed
What intercultural competencies are explored in the studies on ICC development for English majors?	Communication, Sensitivity, Responsibility, Adaptability
What trends and themes are explored in the studies on ICC development for English majors?	Training Methods, Global Competence, Intercultural Understanding, Professional Competencies

## 2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative study design and uses thematic qualitative content analysis, adhering to the PRISMA 2020 guideline, to analyze existing literature on ICC among English majors in Jingdezhen. The study aims to determine primary gaps in ICC development in tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation. PRISMA provides a systematic, step-by-step method for in-depth content analysis, whereby the selected studies are carefully assessed and analyzed transparently and reproducibly.

The research has three main stages: Planning, Conducting, and Reporting. During the Planning stage, the research question, objectives, and inclusion criteria for selecting the pertinent studies are established. In the Conducting stage, an extensive search in four large databases (Google Scholar, Baidu Scholar, ERIC, and CNKI) is conducted to search for research published from 2014 to 2024. The abstracted research is evaluated for quality, and duplicates are excluded according to PRISMA guidelines. Finally, in the Reporting stage, result interpretation, finding verification, and conclusion drawing are done according to the identified gaps in ICC training programs.

Thematic qualitative content analysis codes and interprets the selected studies' themes concerning primary ICC competencies such as communication skills, cultural awareness, and hands-on experience. The research aims to integrate past work on how ICC is cultivated through this method and guide the design of future English major training in Jingdezhen, specifically that requiring challenging ICC skills.

Table 2. Process of this review

Stage	Actions
Planning	Definition of the objectives Definition of the research questions Definition of categories for the answers sought Definition of the inclusion criteria
Conducting	Primary selection of the studies Quality evaluation of the studies Data extraction Organization of the database
Reporting	Interpretation of the results Description of the results Validation of the report Conclusions about the report

### 2.1 Planning

The first stage of this systematic review focuses on structuring the study to analyze ICC development among English majors in Jingdezhen, China, specifically targeting industries like tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation. The review aims to identify gaps in ICC conceptualizations and practical training approaches. Specific research questions were formulated, and the kinds of responses being sought are indicated in Table 1. Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to include only relevant, high-quality studies, as described in Table 3. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the search was conducted across four significant databases: Google Scholar, Baidu Scholar, Institute of Education Sciences (ERIC), and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), including studies published between 2014 and 2024 to ensure the review's relevance and timeliness. The expected outcomes of the review are to promote the creation of an ICC training system that strengthens students' cultural adaptability and readiness for foreign employment, positioning Jingdezhen as an international cooperation and cultural exchange center.

Table 3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria of this study

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	University students (undergraduate English majors) Chinese students, specifically in Jingdezhen	Non-university populations (e.g., high school students, professionals) Students outside China or unrelated to the Chinese context
Intervention	Training/educational programs aimed at enhancing intercultural competence Curriculum/professional development programs related to intercultural competencies	Non-intervention studies or those not related to intercultural competence Studies focused on unrelated skills (e.g., technical skills)
Outcome	Assessment of intercultural competence, cultural awareness, or related competencies Effectiveness of interventions in developing intercultural competencies	Studies without outcomes related to intercultural competence Outcomes irrelevant to intercultural competencies (e.g., general language proficiency)
Study Type	Peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, theses, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method studies Studies published in academic journals, conferences, or recognized educational publications	Opinion pieces, editorials, non-peer-reviewed sources Methodologically flawed studies or those not in English
Geographical Focus	Studies conducted in China, especially Jingdezhen	Studies conducted outside China without relevance to the Chinese context
Time Frame	Studies published within the last 5 years	Studies older than 5 years unless foundational

## 2.2 Conducting

In the second stage of this study, the literature search followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure transparency and rigor. The search was performed across four databases: Google Scholar, Baidu Scholar, ERIC, and CNKI, which were selected to capture international and Chinese perspectives on ICC development among English majors in Jingdezhen, China.

Specific search terms were derived from the Systematic Review Search String outlined in Table 4 to capture studies related to ICC development, focusing on university students in China, with a particular emphasis on industries such as tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation. These search strings were designed to ensure a consistent and thorough search. The search was refined to include only studies published between 2014 and 2024 and was limited to articles in English and Chinese, as detailed in the Planning Stage.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria established during the Planning Stage were employed while searching for the articles to shortlist the same. These ensured that relevant, good-quality studies were retrieved for screening at a later stage. The retrieved articles were sorted out and organized using Excel and Scribber for future use. Duplicates found across the databases were removed following the PRISMA procedure, as shown in Figure 1. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 22 articles met the requirements for further analysis.

Table 4. Systematic Review Search String

Search String	Focus
"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND China	General search on intercultural competence in Chinese university students.
"Cultural Intelligence" AND "Training Program" AND "University Student" AND China	Focus on training programs enhancing cultural intelligence among Chinese university students.
"Cross-Cultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	Specific to cross-cultural competence in Jingdezhen's university students.
"Competence Development" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Ceramic Industry"	Linking competence development with the ceramic industry in China.
"Intercultural Communication" AND "University Student" AND "Educational Program" AND China	Searching for educational programs aimed at improving intercultural communication in Chinese university students.
"Cultural Perspective" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	Focused on cultural perspective-taking among university students in Jingdezhen, China.
"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Skill Development"	General competence and skill development among Chinese university students.
"Training Intervention" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Cultural Awareness"	Emphasis on training interventions to enhance cultural awareness in Chinese university students.
"Cultural Openness" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China AND "Competency Enhancement"	Focus on enhancing cultural openness and competence in Jingdezhen's university students.
"Cultural Self-Awareness" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Educational Development"	Searching for educational development programs that enhance cultural self-awareness in Chinese university students.

## 2.3 Reporting

In the third stage of this study, the systematic literature search resulted in 302 records from four databases: Google Scholar, Baidu Scholar, ERIC, and CNKI, with Google Scholar yielding the most significant number of relevant studies (203 articles) and ERIC returning the fewest (1 article). After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 22 articles remained for further analysis. The Systematic Review Search String Results (Appendix A) demonstrated varying outcomes across the databases, reflecting their different coverage of ICC development, especially within industries like tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation. The search process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, and duplicate articles were removed, as shown in Figure 1, ensuring the final set of studies was relevant, peer-reviewed, and aligned with the research objectives. These 22 studies will be further analyzed in the next section to explore the key intercultural competencies and trends in ICC development for English majors.

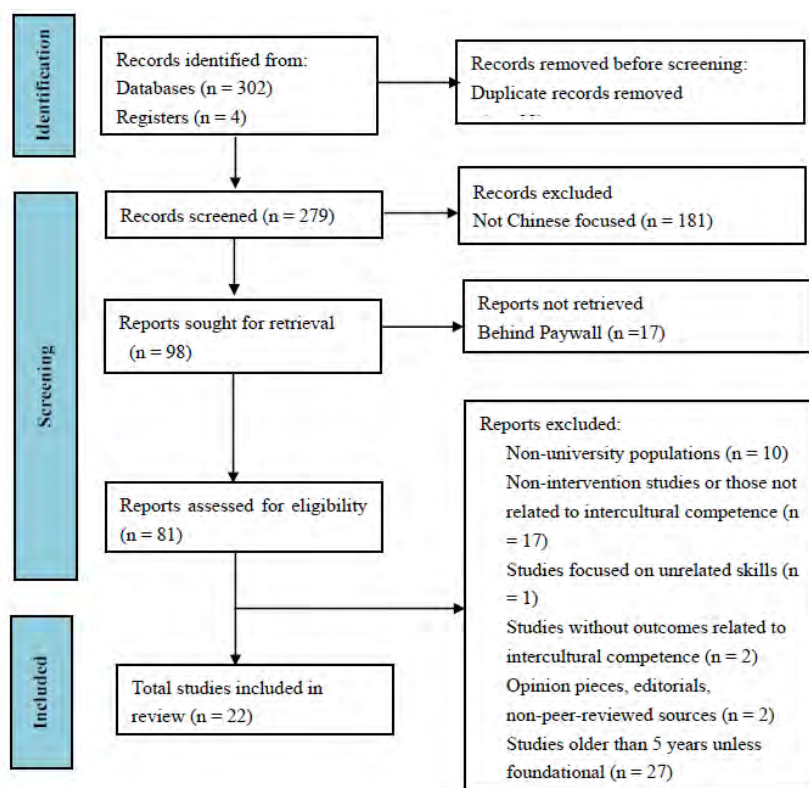


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for systematic review

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 RQ1: What Research Designs are Used in the Studies on ICC Development among English Majors?

I reviewed 22 articles on ICC development among English majors in China in this study. The studies were classified into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs, as shown in Table 5. Most studies (10 articles, 45%) used qualitative methods, including action research (2), case study (1), and content Analysis (1). Many studies also integrated methods like interviews, focus group interviews, literature reviews, and curriculum development to explore teaching strategies for ICC enhancement. The most common design was action research, focusing on refining teaching approaches based on feedback. Quantitative methods were used in 7 studies (32%), mainly survey designs (2) and experimental designs (2). These studies aimed to assess ICC levels or the effectiveness of interventions like studying abroad. For example, Lv (2019) used an experimental design to study the impact of overseas experiences on ICC. 5 studies (23%) employed mixed methods, particularly concurrent triangulation (4), combining both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive view. In summary, the studies predominantly used qualitative methods, with a focus on action research, followed by quantitative surveys and mixed methods approaches for deeper insights.

Table 5. Research design of the studies

<b>Qualitative research studies</b>	<b>10</b>
Action research design	2
Case studies design	1
Content analysis design	1
Curriculum design & action research design	1
Interviews & focus group interviews design	1
Interviews & thematic analysis design	1
Literature review & curriculum development design	1
Literature review & teaching methodology development design	1
Textual analysis & thematic analysis design	1
<b>Quantitative research studies</b>	<b>7</b>
Experimental design	2
Survey design	2
Survey & correlation analysis design	1
Survey & factor analysis design	2
<b>Mixed methods research studies</b>	<b>5</b>
Concurrent triangulation design	4
Survey & interviews design	1

### 3.2 RQ2: What Intercultural Competencies are Identified in the Studies?

After analyzing the 119 keywords from the systematic review, I refined them to 92 unique keywords. The most frequently explored intercultural competencies included cross-cultural communication skills (5 articles), cultural knowledge (4 articles), and language proficiency (4 articles). These abilities were central to ICC development for English majors, focusing on building communication, language proficiency, and cross-cultural competence. Keywords related to experiential involvement and related practical engagement, and cross-cultural competence. Keywords related to experiential involvement and related practical engagement, such as cross-cultural interactions, extracurricular practice, and study abroad, emphasized the growing importance of experiential learning in developing ICC. Emerging competencies, such as digital literacy and technological integration, were also emphasized. Keywords like social media pathways and media integration suggest a shift towards using digital tools to facilitate intercultural learning. Although explored less frequently, intercultural responsibility and global attitude are gaining attention, focusing on the ethical dimensions of intercultural interactions and global citizenship. Overall, the analysis of the 92 keywords reflects a focus on communication, cultural sensitivity, and experiential application, with future directions of emergent trends in digital approaches and ethical responsibility informing ICC construction.

### 3.3 RQ3: What Themes are Explored in the Studies on ICC Development for English Majors?

In analyzing the studies on ICC development for English majors, the 92 keywords identified in the literature were grouped into eight main themes, highlighting the key focus areas in the field. The most prominent theme was Cultural Knowledge and Confidence, addressed in 14 studies, emphasizing how knowledge of different cultural contexts and gaining confidence in intercultural situations enhance communication. As mentioned in 13 studies, attitudes toward Cultural Differences also play a critical role in shaping students' engagement in intercultural interactions. Communication and Language Skills, mentioned in 12 studies, emphasize how language skills play a vital role in competent intercultural communication. Critical Thinking and Cognitive Competence, found in 7 studies, reflect the need for cognitive skills in navigating intercultural contexts. Practical Engagement and Cross-Cultural Experience, highlighted by 10 studies, focuses on the significance of experiential learning, such as study abroad. Other themes related to the paper are Teaching Methods and Curriculum Design (8 studies), focusing on pedagogical impact, and Emotional and Behavioral Adaptability (4 studies), addressing students' coping ability in intercultural settings. Lastly, Social and Environmental Factors, identified in 3 studies, examine how external influences like family and community shape ICC development. The distribution of these themes is visually represented in Figure 2, which illustrates the frequency of each theme across the studies. Overall, the analysis of the 92 keywords into these eight main themes reveals a strong focus on cultural knowledge, communication skills, and attitudes toward cultural differences while highlighting emerging trends in practical engagement and the influence of teaching methods on ICC development, providing a foundation for future research.

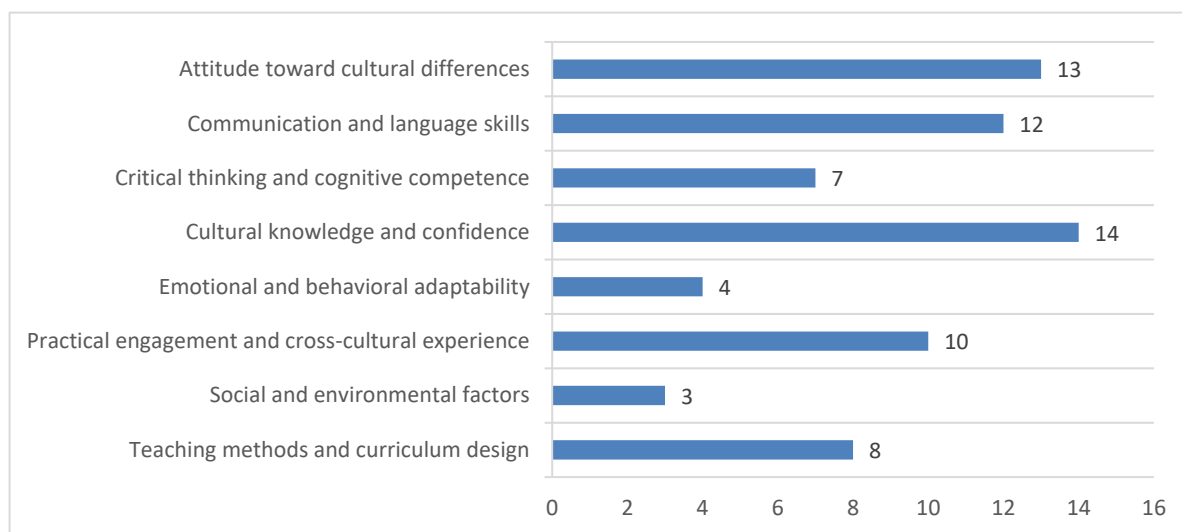


Figure 2. Distribution of ICC themes across studies

### 3. Discussion and Conclusions

This study investigated ICC development among English majors in Jingdezhen based on a review of 22 studies and the identification of key competencies and trends. The most prominent competencies were cross-cultural communication skills, cultural knowledge, and language proficiency, which are crucial for navigating intercultural contexts. Ai (2020) and Zhou & Xia (2020) emphasize how experiential learning and self-awareness build these competencies, while Practical Engagement and Cross-Cultural Experience, discussed in 10 studies, highlight the importance of study abroad and internships in ICC development (Li, 2023; Yan & Yang, 2020).

The study demonstrates that Jingdezhen requires students to obtain training in communication skills and culture because of its evolving cultural demands in the expanding international market. An organized ICC training system needs to be established in Jingdezhen to close the knowledge gap between academic teachings and the industrial needs of tourism marketing, ceramic interpretation, and cultural promotion. Given Jingdezhen's status as China's porcelain capital and growing international engagement, strengthening these competencies will enable local English majors to function effectively as cultural mediators in tourism, cultural marketing, and ceramic translation. Furthermore, incorporating digital literacy and technology integration into ICC education aligns with global industry trends and reinforces Jingdezhen's position in the worldwide cultural exchange network.

Most studies employed qualitative methodologies, with case studies and interviews being the most common approaches. Fewer studies employed mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative data to offer a more comprehensive understanding. This approach is valuable for exploring ICC development in greater depth.

The research also emphasizes the importance of language learning and intercultural communication competence, as studies show that communication skills and cultural flexibility are essential for effective ICC (Wang & Gu, 2019; Tang & Lin, 2023). The growing emphasis on collaborative learning in intercultural environments also indicates the need for education curricula that foster team spirit and cultural adaptability.

In conclusion, although much progress has been made in ICC research, additional research is required on intercultural responsibility and the application of digital technologies in ICC training. Future studies should focus on mixed methods to better understand how ICC is applied in real-world settings. As digital platforms and globalization continue to shape the future of education, integrating technology into ICC training will better prepare students for global challenges.

### 4. Implications

This systematic review presents a critical analysis of ICC development among English students in Jingdezhen, China, analyzing 22 studies to identify key competencies such as cultural knowledge, communication skills, and attitudes toward cultural differences, all essential for global engagement. The review also highlights emerging digital literacy and experiential learning trends while identifying research gaps, particularly in intercultural responsibility and global citizenship. It highlights the importance of teaching methods incorporating digital technologies, encouraging collaborative learning, and offering real-world experiences in helping students

develop their ICC. These practices are essential in preparing students to respond to global challenges and increase their ability to work effectively in multicultural, international environments. Ultimately, this study adds to the growing body of ICC research by suggesting areas for future exploration and offering valuable advice to educators and institutions on shaping curricula that better prepare students with the skills they need for successful cross-cultural communication and teamwork in today's interconnected world.

### **5. Limitations and Recommendations**

One limitation of this study is that it is based only on articles published between 2014 and 2024. While this period captures contemporary trends in ICC, it excludes earlier studies that can provide background and illustrate how ICC has evolved. The research was also limited to Chinese-language articles, which may have narrowed the scope and left out important international outlooks. For future research, extending the review to include studies over a broader period and in more languages would yield a more comprehensive view of ICC development.

The current research proposes setting up a professional ICC training program for English majors in Jingdezhen. The program would involve interactive teaching, multimedia, and virtual cross-cultural exchange, giving students hands-on skill experience in real intercultural contexts. In addition, regular assessment and reflective activities must be incorporated to track student development and continuously optimize the training processes to ensure that they are still effective.

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### **Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### **Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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## Appendix A

### Systematic Review Search String Results

Database	Search String	Number of Results
Baidu Scholar	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jiangxi	87
	"Cultural Intelligence" AND "Training Program" AND "University Student" AND China	0
	"Cross-Cultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	3
	"Competence Development" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Ceramic Industry"	0
	"Intercultural Communication" AND "University Student" AND "Educational Program" AND China	0
	"Cultural Perspective-Taking" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	0
	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Skill Development"	4
	"Training Intervention" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Cultural Awareness"	0
	"Cultural Openness" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China AND "Competency Enhancement"	0
	"Cultural Self-Awareness" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Educational Development"	0
CNKI	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jiangxi	1
	"Cultural Intelligence" AND "Training Program" AND "University Student" AND China	0
	"Cross-Cultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	0
	"Competence Development" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Ceramic Industry"	0
	"Intercultural Communication" AND "University Student" AND "Educational Program" AND China	1
	"Cultural Perspective-Taking" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	0
	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Skill Development"	2
	"Training Intervention" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Cultural Awareness"	0
	"Cultural Openness" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China AND "Competency Enhancement"	0
	"Cultural Self-Awareness" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Educational Development"	0
ERIC	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jiangxi	0
	"Cultural Intelligence" AND "Training Program" AND "University Student" AND China	0

Database	Search String	Number of Results
Google Scholar	"Cross-Cultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	0
	"Competence Development" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Ceramic Industry"	0
	"Intercultural Communication" AND "University Student" AND "Educational Program" AND China	1
	"Cultural Perspective-Taking" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	0
	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Skill Development"	0
	"Training Intervention" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Cultural Awareness"	0
	"Cultural Openness" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China AND "Competency Enhancement"	0
	"Cultural Self-Awareness" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Educational Development"	0
	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jiangxi	8
	"Cultural Intelligence" AND "Training Program" AND "University Student" AND China	41
	"Cross-Cultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND Jiangxi	0
	"Competence Development" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Ceramic Industry"	0
	"Intercultural Communication" AND "University Student" AND "Educational Program" AND China	79
	"Cultural Perspective-Taking" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China	0
	"Intercultural Competence" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Skill Development"	66
	"Training Intervention" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Cultural Awareness"	4
	"Cultural Openness" AND "University Student" AND Jingdezhen AND China AND "Competency Enhancement"	0
	"Cultural Self-Awareness" AND "University Student" AND China AND "Educational Development"	5
Baidu Scholar	Total Documents Found	94
CNKI	Total Documents Found	4
ERIC	Total Documents Found	1
Google Scholar	Total Documents Found	203
	Total Records Identified	302