

## **A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF TAIWANESE NNETS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the context of globalisation, intercultural teaching has been suggested as an objective in English as lingua franca (ELF) education, which has challenged English teachers in acquiring the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in English language teaching (ELT). However, empirical research exploring the intercultural capabilities and practices of nonnative English teachers (NNETs) teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Asian contexts remains scant. This study was a preliminary exploration of Taiwanese NNETs' ICC in ELT, namely their affective orientations regarding intercultural communication, personal capabilities of intercultural communication, perspectives of ELT, and practices related to the intercultural dimensions of ELT. A self-assessment inventory of ICC in ELT was used in combination with follow-up interviews to collect data from Taiwanese NNETs in different institutional contexts. An analysis of the data revealed inconsistencies between the NNETs' self-reported ICC (e.g., personal capabilities) and ICC-oriented teaching practices (e.g., teaching objectives and strategies). Personal (e.g., interests and life experience) and sociocultural factors (e.g., entrance exams and social norms) identified in the interview data were applied to interpret the survey results. This paper addresses the importance of developing NNETs' ICC in ELT, particularly their awareness and practices of various Englishes and cultures to help EFL learners communicate effectively with the increasing number of nonnative English speakers. Some suggestions for Taiwanese English educational policy and future studies on the topic of developing NNETs' ICC in ELT are provided.

**Key Words:** English as lingua franca (ELF), nonnative English teachers (NNETs), intercultural communicative competence (ICC), English language teaching (ELT)

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, intercultural contact and interchange have grown because of globalisation and internationalisation. Numerous scholars in the field of applied linguistics (Alptekin, 2002; Baker, 2012; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000, 2007; Matsuda, 2002; Sercu et al., 2005) have emphasised the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in foreign or second language education. ICC, building on communicative competence and expanding it to include intercultural competence, involves the following four interconnected dimensions: (a) affect (e.g., attitudes and disposition); (b) cognition (e.g., knowledge); (c) metacognition (e.g., planning and awareness), and (d) behaviour (e.g., skills and abilities). Byram (1997) and Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) have suggested that ICC be adequately developed to ensure that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can interact appropriately and effectively with each other. Rather than merely focusing on language teaching, several previous studies have suggested that intercultural teaching as an objective in English as lingua franca (ELF) or English as an international language (EIL) education, which has challenged English language teachers in acquiring a new professional identity (Han & Song, 2011; Luk, 2012; Sercu, 2006). For English teachers who have been encouraged to integrate an intercultural dimension into English language teaching (ELT) to assist English learners with becoming linguistically and interculturally competent, previous studies have recommended fostering English learners' awareness of hybrid cultures (Pennycook, 2007), acquiring knowledge on the linguistic varieties of English (Jung, 2010), increasing students' intercultural knowledge, as well as assisting them with developing the skills of negotiation and accommodation in intercultural contexts (Baker, 2009; Holliday, 2013). Because English language teachers are expected to effectively act as cultural facilitators (Luk, 2012) or cultural mediators (Sercu, Méndez García, & Castro Prieto, 2004) to promote the learner aim of becoming an intercultural speaker rather than a native speaker (Young & Sachdev, 2011), their competence in intercultural teaching should be recognised and appropriately developed. Thus far, empirical research on exploring intercultural capabilities and intercultural teaching practices of nonnative English teachers (NNETs) teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Asian contexts remains scant, so relevant studies are necessary to address this research gap. The current study was thereby conducted to collect Taiwanese NNETs' perspectives of their

ICC in English language teaching (ELT) through a self-assessment inventory and follow-up interviews, including four dimensions<sup>1</sup>: (a) affective orientations to intercultural communication; (b) capabilities for intercultural communication; (c) perspectives on ELT; and (d) employment of intercultural strategies in ELT.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### English Language Teaching in the ELF Paradigm

Because of the prestigious position of English in the context of globalisation as an international lingua franca extensively used among people of different linguistic or cultural backgrounds in intercultural contexts, previous ELT studies have discussed the pedagogical models, materials, and activities related to ELF.

Regarding ELT models, a native speaker model might not be an appropriate choice in contexts where effective communication rather than behaving like a native English speaker is the goal (Kachru & Smith, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2007). According to Kirkpatrick (2006), potential pedagogic models of English in East Asia include a native speaker model, nativised model (e.g., Indian English in India and Singaporean English in Singapore), and a lingua franca model. Although the lingua franca one appears to be the most appropriate model for Asian contexts, a complete description of any kind has not been proposed so far (He & Zhang, 2010). When few published learning materials (e.g., adequately codified features of the Englishes of India, Singapore, and China) are available in a lingua franca model, teaching “World Englishes” (i.e., the norms that include various forms of English) has become a difficult task. Consequently, Kirkpatrick (2007) argued that local contexts and learner

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<sup>1</sup> Drawing upon the implications of existing ICC and ELF/EIL literature, as well as the results of focus group interviews with local experienced EFL teachers and intercultural experts, five dimensions were originally developed as the basic themes of a self-assessment ICC inventory for EFL teachers (Chao, 2012). After item pool generation, data collection, processing and analysis (i.e., item analysis, factor analysis and reliability analysis), a 24-item inventory, categorized under four factors, was finally generated. Here, the four dimensions refer to the four factors in the inventory, which was the main survey tool used in this study (Chao, 2013a).

needs should decide the target model taught in classrooms. By contrast, Kuo (2006) insisted on choosing a native speaker model for instruction because it “serves as a complete and convenient starting point, particularly with its social-cultural richness” (p. 220). However, regardless of which standard English is taught, English teachers should offer EFL learners opportunities by providing various resources (e.g., the Internet and films) that can assist them with hearing and understanding the varieties of English in order to improve their intelligibility (words) and comprehensibility (meaning) in using ELF (Harmer, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Kachru & Smith, 2008). Moreover, Alptekin (2002) suggested that materials and activities related to ELT should involve local and international contexts that are relevant to the lives of ELF users, contain suitable native–nonnative and nonnative–nonnative discourse samples, and be based on the insights and knowledge of competent intercultural speakers as pedagogical models. Similarly, Saraceni (2009) argued that classroom practices should faithfully reflect the complex reality of English worldwide, such as the process of acculturation of English occurring globally.

#### **Culture Teaching in the ELF Paradigm**

English teachers are reminded that cultural teaching is as crucial as the linguistic dimension of ELF education (Baker, 2009; Chao, 2013b; McKay, 2002; Nault, 2006). With developments in globalisation and internationalisation, English teachers are compelled to shift from target culture teaching (e.g., the United States and Great Britain) to intercultural teaching. Sercu (2006) advised devoting effort and time to employing inclusive content and adopting multiple strategies for improving the intercultural competence of English learners. McKay (2002) suggested that the three types of cultures (i.e., target, local, and international) should be integrated into teaching materials to reflect the status of ELF and satisfy the practical needs of ELF users in intercultural contexts. Baker (2012) proposed an intercultural awareness model and emphasised the importance of regarding cultures as dynamic, diverse, and emergent resources rather than considering them based on ethnic, national, or international differences. Holliday (2013) provided a practical framework (i.e., “the grammar of culture”) for English learners to explore cultures on nonessentialist perspectives through reflective activities.

### **Textbooks in the ELF Paradigm**

Textbooks have played a critical role in the process of English learning for EFL learners. Nevertheless, many internationally published and widely used textbooks mainly represent the Western understanding of language, culture, communication, and learning. Canagarajah (2003) indicated that English learning materials, mostly edited by Western scholars, deliver many messages that are culturally inappropriate for international learners. Similarly, Zacharias (2005) stated that the cultural content of many English textbooks is not practical for students. Therefore, Yuen (2011) addressed the importance of selecting appropriate English textbooks containing varied cultural content and reflecting the status of ELF. After examining the cultural content and hidden curriculum of a popular internationally published textbook, Chao (2011) argued for the need to consider whether English textbooks written by English native speakers are implicitly of higher quality and to mitigate the negative impacts of the values, norms, attitudes, and manners of English-speaking countries portrayed in such textbooks on the development of EFL learners' identities, behaviours, and social expectations. Furthermore, Shinm Eslami, and Chen (2011) indicated the deficiencies of internationally distributed ELT textbooks, such as the domination of inner circle cultural content and knowledge-oriented level of cultural presentation. They recommended that textbook developers integrate local and global culture, design cultural responsive activities, and use English learners' experiences to promote their cultural awareness.

### **Intercultural Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Teaching: A Review of Related Models and Assessment Tools**

The concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is so complex that there is no consensus on the terminology and it tends to be interpreted according to the goals and interests from scholars of diverse disciplines (Deardorff, 2006; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). As emphasized by Fantini (2009), the definition or framework of ICC in a particular field is essential before proceeding with further assessment approaches. Generally, assessment approaches can be categorized into three groups: direct (e.g., interviews, observation and portfolios), indirect (e.g., personality tests, questionnaires, sensitivity instruments, and awareness tests) and blended methods. The purposes of these assessment

methods are employed to (1) explain failure in intercultural communication, (2) to predict success in intercultural communication, (3) to develop personal intercultural strategies and (4) to design, implement and test intercultural training programs (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007).

In this section, a brief review of related models or definitions on ICC and their methods or tools for assessment in the contexts of general education, study abroad programs, intercultural management or communication, and foreign language teacher education are provided as reference to teacher education trainers as they seek to recognize and improve the ICC of pre- or in-service foreign language teachers.

**Byram's ICC model and assessment methods.** The most influential ICC model in foreign language education is that of Michael Byram (1997). Drawing upon the previous works of Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence, and Van Ek's (1986) communicative ability, Byram (1997) emphasized an interwoven link between communicative competence of the foreign/target language (i.e., linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse) and intercultural competence (i.e., attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpretation and relating, skills of discovering and interacting, and critical cultural awareness). Moreover, Byram was involved in the Intercultural Competence Assessment project (INCA) in the European context. He and researchers in the INCA project combined existing ICC theories and built up an ICC framework of six components (including tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy) and three levels (including basic, intermediate and full). A blended approach (e.g., questionnaires, role plays and portfolios) has been employed in this project to assess the affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of an individual's ICC (Prechtel & Davidson-Lund, 2007). Clearly, Byram (2008, 2014) has approached the goals of foreign language teaching through intercultural views, particularly stressing the importance of becoming an intercultural speaker through English (foreign) language education.

**The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and its inventory.** Milton J. Bennett (1993) developed the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) to explain the reported and observed experiences of individuals in intercultural contexts for understanding their increasing sensitivity to cultural differences over time. This model has been widely discussed and researched in the North American context

(Hammer, Bennet, & Wiseman, 2003). It consists of six stages. The first three are *ethnocentric* (i.e., denial, defense and minimization), implying a person tends to use his/her worldview to judge all people. The second three stages are *ethnorelative* (i.e., acceptance, adaptation and integration), meaning a person recognizes and adapts to equally valid worldviews. Grounded in the theoretical constructs of DMIS, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was invented by Milton J. Bennet and Mitchell Hammer. The creators asserted that the IDI, a 50-item questionnaire, is a valid tool for evaluating the effectiveness of ICC training programs and the needs of trainees in various contexts (Hammer et al., 2003).

**Cultural Intelligence and its scale.** With the growing globalization of organizations and the diversity of workforces, Cultural Intelligence (CQ) has gained increasing attention in the areas of intercultural management (Van Dyne et al., 2012). The concept of CQ, introduced by Earley and Ang (2003), is defined as an individual's capabilities in coping with cultural diversity and in functioning effectively in intercultural interactions. Accordingly, CQ is described as a four-factor construct that entails metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Drawing upon the CQ model, Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh (2008) developed the 20-item CQ scale (CQS) to measure the four primary factors of CQ. Recent CQ research has focused on providing an expanded concept of CQ that describes sub-dimensions for each of the four factors (Van Dyne et al., 2012).

**Intercultural Communication Apprehension and its scale.** Communication apprehension (CA), defined by McCroskey (1977) as an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated interaction with others, has received much attention in communication research. The original concept of CA focused on general oral communication without mentioning situational features of the communication context. With the increasing opportunities of intercultural encounters in a globalized world, a high level of uncertainty and strangeness exists during intercultural communication which leads to anxiety (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). This type of communication anxiety is called Intercultural Communication Anxiety (ICA), the fear or anxiety that people experience when interacting with others of culturally or ethnically diverse groups. Based on this concept, the 14-item Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA-14), a derivative of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) (McCroskey, 1982),

was developed to measure the intercultural aspects of communication apprehension (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). PRCA-24 has been a widely used instrument in various contexts to measure apprehension in different communication situations, such as group discussions and public speaking (Renshaw, 2010). However, PRICA-14, presumed to be better than the PRCA-24 for intercultural settings filled with novelty, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity, and uncertainty (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997), has been particularly employed to assess people's feelings about intercultural communication (Lin, 2012).

**Fantini's ICC model and its checklist of cultural and intercultural teacher.** Fantini (2000, 2007) addressed the values of ICC in English language education and claimed that the construct of ICC includes different dimensions of intercultural competence (i.e., knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness) as well as proficiency in the host language. He suggested a process approach for English language course development, in which intercultural exploration is one of the seven stages (Fantini, 1997b). Moreover, he emphasized the importance of assessing the ICC of language teachers in ELT and designed a checklist of cultural and intercultural teacher competencies (Fantini, 1997a). This checklist consists of four themes describing specific teacher competencies in culture and intercultural dimensions of their teaching: (1) inclusion of the sociocultural dimension in the lessons, (2) presence of a cultural dimension in classroom dynamics, (3) inclusion of an intercultural dimension, and (4) awareness of/sensitive and responsive to intercultural challenges of the teaching situation. This checklist has been used as a monitoring and reflective tool to help pre- and in-service English teachers evaluate their ICC in their work (Fantini, 1997a).

**Sercu's foreign language and intercultural competence teacher and its questionnaire.** Sercu (2006) also stressed the importance of viewing foreign language education from an intercultural perspective. She coined the term *foreign language and intercultural competence teacher* (FL & IC teacher) to represent the new professional identity that foreign language teachers are expected to acquire so as to effectively promote the acquisition of ICC in their learners. Sercu et al. (2005) conducted an international research project involving teachers from Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Mexico, Poland, Spain and Sweden to investigate their knowledge and perceptions regarding ICC teaching in foreign language classrooms, and how their teaching practices related to the envisaged profile of an FL&IC teacher. The project questionnaire, characterizing



the knowledge, attitudes and skills of an FL&IC teacher, inquired into teachers' self-concepts of being an intercultural foreign language teacher, their perceptions of the objectives, contents and approaches concerning culture teaching in foreign language education, and their willingness and strategies to interculturalize foreign language education. Sercu et al. (2005) suggested that these findings could help us understand how foreign language teachers perceive culture teaching/intercultural education, and the reasons why they are hesitant or willing to change their instructional behaviours in foreign language classrooms. The results can serve as a guide for teacher educators to design appropriate pre- or in-service teacher training programs to facilitate trainees' acquisition of ICC in foreign language teaching.

#### **Intercultural Education in Foreign Language Teaching: Language Teachers' Perspectives and Practices**

Language teachers' perceptions of ICC and related practices play a critical role in realising intercultural education in foreign language teaching (Young & Sachdev, 2011) and are recognised as significant indicators of their professional identity (Sercu, 2006; Sercu et al., 2005). Most relevant studies exploring the perspectives and practices of foreign language teachers have been conducted in Western contexts. Aleksandrowicz-Pedich, Draghicescu, Issaiass, and Sabec (2003) investigated the views of foreign language (English and French) teachers in a European context and showed that most of the teachers realised the importance of ICC, but few of them clearly knew how to integrate ICC into foreign language teaching. Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003) reported similar results from a study of intercultural language teaching in Australia, in which many language teachers had vague perceptions of ICC and an obscure curricular framework of intercultural education in foreign language programs. In an international investigation, Sercu et al. (2005) focused on language teachers' views of ICC in foreign language education and how their teaching practices were related to the professional identity of foreign language and intercultural competence (FL&IC) teachers. The results revealed no clear relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the integration of ICC in foreign language education, and their ICC profiles in attitudes, knowledge, and skills were highly inconsistent with the expectations of FL&IC teachers. Furthermore, Young and Sachdev (2011) explored the

beliefs and practices of experienced English language teachers in the United States, United Kingdom, and France regarding applying an ICC model to English language programs. They showed that most teachers had inconsistent attitudes and beliefs regarding ICC and applying such models in language classrooms.

Recently, a few similar surveys have been conducted in Asian contexts. Han and Song (2011) reported their study on teacher cognition of ICC in the Chinese ELT context. The results revealed that even though language teachers were willing to help students develop ICC, they had a vague concept of ICC and its connection to ELT. They also showed strong doubt to the possibility of teaching and acquiring ICC skills in school contexts. Luk (2012) investigated the perceptions and practices of native and nonnative English teachers in Hong Kong regarding integrating culture into EFL teaching. The results of that study indicated that many teachers had positive attitudes toward integrating culture into language teaching, but they expressed contradictory feelings regarding how culture should be positioned in EFL teaching because of unclear curriculum aims related to promoting intercultural awareness through cultural content, uncertainty regarding which cultural resources should be deployed, a lack of assessable learning outcomes, and the low English proficiency of many EFL learners. Moreover, Cheng (2012) explored five Taiwanese EFL teachers' understanding of ICC in university EFL education and how their beliefs affected the self-reported pedagogical practices. The findings revealed that participating teachers did not have clear theoretical frameworks of IC teaching, intercultural issues did not appear in their teaching, the importance of cultural self-awareness was not recognized, and their understanding of IC seemed to remain at a surface level.

The aforementioned studies improved the understanding of the emergent field of inquiry into foreign language teacher perspectives and the practices of intercultural education in language classrooms. Those findings suggested that many foreign language teachers around the world have not been ready to incorporate the content of ICC into their classroom pedagogical practices.

With the increased demand for NNET professionals to meet the needs from globalisation and internationalisation in Asian contexts (Braine, 2010), the development of NNETs' ICC in ELT has become urgent and important. Extensive studies are needed to explore and elucidate the ICC perceptions and practices of Asian NNETs in different

institutional contexts, along with the factors that shape and influence their motivation, attitudes and instructional behaviours of ICC in ELT.

### STUDY DESIGN

This study was conducted to investigate Taiwanese NNETs' ICC in ELT, namely their perspectives of personal ICC as well as their attitudes toward and practices in the intercultural dimensions of ELT through a self-assessment inventory and follow-up interviews (Chao, 2012, 2013a, 2015). To achieve the aims, local NNETs were invited to participate. All data were collected with the purpose of answering the following research questions:

1. How do Taiwanese NNETs self-assess their affective orientations regarding intercultural communication?
2. In which areas of intercultural communication competence do Taiwanese NNETs feel the least and most competent?
3. How do Taiwanese NNETs perceive the goals, models, and materials of ELT? What are the reasons behind their priorities?
4. How frequently do Taiwanese NNETs apply intercultural strategies<sup>2</sup> to ELT? What are the reasons underlying the frequency with which such strategies are applied?

### Participants

Local full-time NNETs were initially approached by placing telephone calls and sending e-mails. With the assistance of colleagues and students, many NNETs were invited to participate in the project by a snowball sampling method. In order to get holistic data for study, the NNETs were recruited from various areas of Taiwan in a wide range of institutional contexts, from kindergartens to universities. A total of 455 teachers were contacted to complete a 24-item self-assessment inventory

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<sup>2</sup> The spectrum of intercultural strategies is very broad, including various aspects and activities of intercultural education (Sercu, Méndez García, & Castro Prieto, 2004); however, the intercultural strategies in ELT of the self-assessment inventory used in this study only focused on the selection of textbooks, teaching content and the familiarity with ICC theories, three of the most popular issues in relevant literature after the process of validation of all potential items (Chao, 2012, 2013a).

of ICC in ELT (Chao, 2015), which was distributed either via e-mail or by regular postal services. Finally, 356 valid self-assessment inventories (i.e., no missing answers to all inventory items) were collected and analysed. Subsequently, 22 volunteer NNETs were interviewed to clarify relevant findings from the survey analysis. Table 1 presents the institutional contexts of the NNETs<sup>3</sup>.

Table 1

*Institutional Contexts of the Study Participants*

Institutional contexts (Code)	Survey: N (%)	Interview: N (%)
Kindergarten (K)	45 (13%)	3 (14%)
Elementary school (ES)	48 (14%)	3 (14%)
Junior high school (JHS)	69 (19%)	4 (17%)
Senior high school (SHS)	54 (15%)	3 (14%)
Vocational school (VS)	27 (8%)	2 (9%)
Regular university (RU)	25 (7%)	2 (9%)
Technological university (TU)	44 (12%)	2 (9%)
Cram school (CS)	44 (12%)	3 (14%)
Total	356 (100%)	22 (100%)

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The main tool employed in the study was a self-assessment inventory of ICC in ELT (Chao, 2012, 2013a, 2015). This tool, a preliminary exploration for the potential ICC qualifications in ELT of EFL teachers, was developed on the basis of relevant literature (Alptekin, 2002; Bennett, 1993; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000, 2007; Sercu, 2006; Van Dyne et al., 2012) as well as the suggestions of local university English professors and intercultural communication scholars to ensure that the content was relevant to the EFL context in Taiwan (Chao, 2015). After factor and reliability analyses were conducted, the inventory was validated to include 24 items categorized under four factors with high reliability ( $\alpha = .932$ ), and an ICC in ELT model for EFL teachers was

<sup>3</sup> Since the demographical information (e.g., age, gender and years of experience) of participating teachers in this study was incomplete (some data were missing), the author/researcher decided not to discuss this part in this paper.

proposed (Figure 1). The four dimensions of ICC in ELT are listed as follows (Chao, 2012, 2013a, 2015): (a) affective orientations to intercultural communication which particularly refers to personal interest, self-confidence and desire/enthusiasm during intercultural encounters; (b) capabilities for intercultural communication; (c) perspectives on ELT; and (d) employment of intercultural strategies in ELT. A 6-point scale (1~6) was used in the inventory. All respondents rated their level of agreement (Q1–Q18) or frequency of employment (Q19–Q24) with regard to the 24 items. Descriptive statistics were computed to obtain the mean score and standard deviation of all items to explore the ICC of Taiwanese NNETs (Research Questions 1 and 2); the self-rated priorities of their English teaching goals, models, and materials (Research Question 3); and the frequency at which they applied intercultural strategies to ELT (Research Question 4).

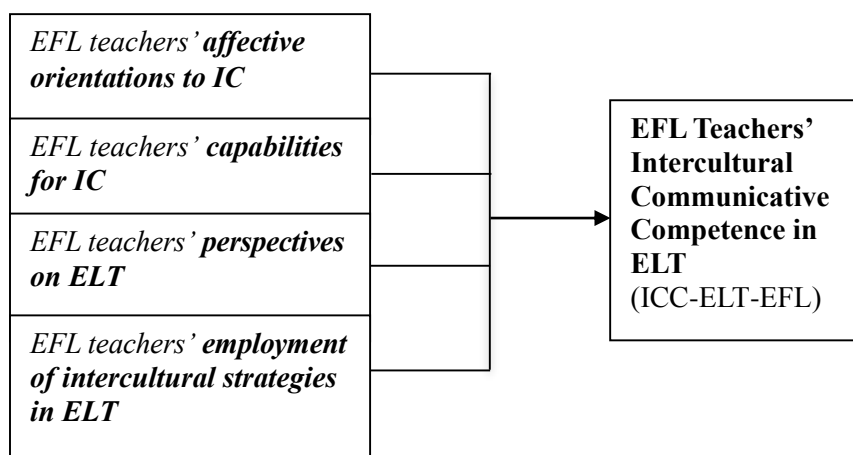


Figure 1. ICC in ELT model for EFL teachers

Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted by the author and her colleagues to collect qualitative data for clarification and elaboration. Each interview began with several biographical questions, followed by those on attitudes and perceptions toward intercultural communication, English language teaching, culture teaching and intercultural strategies. The interviews with 22 volunteer NNETs were audiotaped. The recorded data were analysed independently by the author and two colleagues through pattern coding to reduce the “large amounts of data into a

smaller number of analytic units” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). After initial analyses, the coded units were continuously negotiated among data coders. Finally, the coded units were subsequently grouped by the agreed-on categories to interpret the quantitative findings according to the research questions and, thus, provide a detailed description of and explanation for the attitudes, ideas, and behaviours of the study participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the preliminary results from 356 NNETs in eight institutional contexts according to the research questions. Relevant comments and explanations from the interviewees are integrated into the discussion.

### NNETs’ Affective Orientations Regarding Intercultural Communication

The purpose of the first research question was to explore NNETs’ interest, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for intercultural communication. Table 2 shows that the survey results (Items 1–3) were positive, because the mean score of each item was close to five. Many NNETs indicated that they were interested in contacting people from other cultural backgrounds (Q1,  $M = 4.51$ ), felt confident in interacting appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds (Q2,  $M = 4.86$ ), and were actively learning about other cultures (Q3,  $M = 4.63$ ).

All interviewees provided similar responses. Some of them (10/22: 45%) mentioned that personality was a critical factor influencing their attitudes toward intercultural communication, as demonstrated in the following statement:

1. You know, most of the time, those [people who] have chosen [to be an] English teacher as their career are optimistic and adventurous people. . . . They enjoy knowing foreign people, traveling and seeing bizarre things. . . . Their personalities affect their attitudes toward intercultural communication. (ES 1)

Many (14/22: 64%) NNETs indicated that their experiences in English-speaking countries facilitated the learning and development of their ability to communicate appropriately with foreigners.

Table 2

*Descriptive Analysis of the Affective Orientation Items*

Factor/ Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Frequency (%)					
			SD	D	SID	PA	A	SA
AO/Q1 I enjoy interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds.	4.51	.72	0	0	13 (3.7)	184 (51.7)	124 (34.8)	35 (9.8)
AO/Q2 I believe I can interact appropriately with people of different cultural backgrounds.	4.86	.83	2 (0.7)	1 (0.4)	3 (0.8)	115 (32.3)	154 (43.3)	81 (22.8)
AO/Q3 I'm an active learner in understanding different cultures in the world.	4.63	.93	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	16 (4.5)	179 (50.3)	71 (19.9)	88 (24.7)

*Note.* AO = affective orientations; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; SID = slightly disagree; PA = partly agree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree.

2. In Taiwan, people always believe that a qualified local English teacher should have learning experiences in English-speaking countries. . . at least [having] lived in English-speaking countries for years. . . . Many Taiwanese English teachers choose to get a Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) degree in the United States, United Kingdom, or Australia to promote themselves. . . . Because of [their] personal experiences, they certainly know better than others on how to interact with foreign people properly in intercultural communication. (TU 2)

Several (7/22: 32%) interviewees also indicated their enthusiasm regarding learning new things about foreign cultures (nations).

3. I took a trip this summer to New Zealand to experience [the local culture]. (JHS 3)

4. I like to watch TV travel programs. . . . It is a good way to learn English and new things [about] foreign cultures. (VS 1)

5. I went to America and joined a summer camp for English teachers last year. . . . I learned [something about the culture] from local people—[it was] very interesting. (RU 2)

According to the information mentioned above, it was found that most participating NNETs had positive attitudes (e.g., curiosity and open-mindedness) to intercultural communication, similar to the ability to relativize one's self and value others (i.e. attitude factor) in Byram's ICC model (Byram, 1997). However, the "others" they meant often refer to the cultures of English-speaking countries, and their intercultural learning experiences mainly focused on the acquisition of knowledge, such as knowing social groups and practices in English-speaking countries.

#### **NNETs' Capabilities for Intercultural Communication**

Table 3 shows the results of the most and least competent intercultural capabilities of NNETs. Most participants felt relatively self-assured regarding the appropriateness of their behaviour in intercultural communication, such as building amiable relationships with foreigners (Q11,  $M = 4.74$ ) and effectively initiating and ending a conversation (Q10,  $M = 4.58$ ). However, 117 participants (32.9%) considered themselves as lacking competence in the nonverbal communication norms of other cultures (Q6,  $M = 3.98$ ). In general, most of the NNETs were in agreement that they were skilful intercultural communicators in some way, as indicated by the mean scores of the items for this aspect, most of which were higher than 4.



Table 3

*Descriptive Analysis of the IC Items*

Factor/ Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Frequency (%)					
			SD	D	SID	PA	A	SA
IC/Q4	I know the religious beliefs, social norms and values of other cultures.							
	4.21	.78	0	0	51 (14.3)	206 (57.9)	71 (19.9)	28 (7.9)
IC/Q5	I know the tangible products of other cultures (e.g., architecture, music, arts and literature).							
	4.18	.82	0	0	55 (15)	219 (61.5)	45 (12.6)	37 (10.4)
IC/Q6	I know the nonverbal communication rules of other cultures.							
	3.98	.92	0	0	117 (32.9)	166 (46.6)	37 (10.4)	36 (10.1)
IC/Q7	I am conscious of the appropriateness of the cultural knowledge I have applied to intercultural communication.							
	4.12	.77	0	0	64 (18)	205 (57.6)	66 (18.5)	21 (5.9)
IC/Q8	I know how to change my ways of communicating in English to fit the situational need of intercultural communication.							
	4.30	.76	5 (1.3)	0	13 (3.7)	225 (63.2)	90 (25.3)	23 (6.5)
IC/Q9	I can resolve conflicts or settle misunderstandings during intercultural communication.							
	4.33	.75	0	0	28 (7.9)	212 (59.6)	85 (23.9)	31 (8.7)
IC/Q10	I can effectively open and end a conversation during intercultural communication.							
	4.58	.68	0	0	0	188 (52.8)	129 (36.2)	39 (11)
IC/Q11	I can build a good relationship with foreign friends during intercultural contacts.							
	4.74	.69	0	0	0	142 (39.9)	163 (45.8)	51 (14.3)

*Note.* IC = intercultural communication; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; SID = slightly disagree; PA = partly agree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree.

Moreover, an analysis of interview data revealed that some of these participating NNETs (8/22: 36%) preferred exposure to those cultures (e.g., arts and daily routines) of English-speaking countries through various approaches (e.g., traveling, reading, and taking courses) which could assist them with developing their intercultural communication capabilities. Obviously, they easily associated competent intercultural communicators with English native speakers. It seemed that what they believed and felt confident during intercultural communication were mainly due to their various experiences and learning with the cultures (e.g., people and activities) of English speaking countries.

6. I like traveling. . . [It] is an effective way to empower my intercultural capabilities. . . I have visited Australia several times. . . I can experience the beauty of their cultures, such as arts and architecture. ( JHS 2 )
7. Learning British and American literature is an effective way to understand English cultures. . . It is easier to generate discussion topics with my British friends. . . to show [that] I am well educated. (RU 1)
8. I have taken many courses to improve my English communication skills with native speakers. . . To resolve intercultural conflicts, I think we should firstly understand the differences of communication styles between American and Taiwanese [people]. (K 3 )

Regarding the unfamiliarity of nonverbal communication norms (Q6), the potential explanations proposed by several teachers (9/22:41%) during interviews included a lack of relevant learning materials and limited experience living in a foreign country. However, three teachers (two from regular universities and one from an elementary school) didn't think this was a big issue, for example, one teacher said:

9. I think sensitive observation and active enquiry can help us understand those unfamiliar nonverbal messages when [we are] in a new context. . . We need to teach our students how to be a sensitive observer and active learner during intercultural communication. (RU 2)

#### **NNETs' Perspectives About the Goals, Models, and Materials of ELT**

Regarding the NNETs' perspectives on ELT, the responses to the related items (Q12–Q18) indicated that many NNETs were not sensitive to ELF- or EIL-related topics that reflect the needs of globalisation and

internalisation.<sup>4</sup> As shown in Table 4, numerous participants agreed that the main goal of English education in Taiwan was to assist students with developing their English knowledge and skills (Q12,  $M = 5.02$ ), and the main purpose of school English courses in Taiwan was to pass internationally recognised English tests with high scores (Q16,  $M = 4.32$ ). The pedagogical model for English learning that they preferred was the standard Englishes of native speakers (Q14,  $M = 5.00$ ). Approximately 57% of the NNETs moderately agreed that helping students with comprehending the variety of Englishes was necessary in English education (Q18,  $M = 3.37$ ); however, 22.45% did not agree that this issue was critical. For many of them, culture learning in language education was not as crucial as acquiring language ability (Q12, Q15, and Q16). When culture was taught in English education, many participants preferred the cultures of English native speakers over other cultures (Q13,  $M = 4.73$ ). Many EFL teachers also considered the teaching materials developed by English native speakers as a more favourable choice because of the accuracy of the content and professionalism with which it was produced (Q17,  $M = 4.79$ ).

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<sup>4</sup> In the survey, Q12–Q17 were designed to address the opposite aspect of the target concepts proposed in the ELF/EIL and ICC-related literature; therefore, higher scores indicate less awareness regarding integrating intercultural and ELF/EIL perspectives into ELT.

Table 4

*Descriptive Analysis of the Items Related to the NNETs' Perspectives of ELT*

Factor/ Item	M	SD	Frequency (%)					
			SD	D	SID	PA	A	SA
P/Q12								
	The mastery of English language knowledge and English fluency is the main goal of English teaching and learning in Taiwan.							
	5.02	4.9	0	7 (2)	21 (5.9)	48 (13.5)	161 (45.2)	119 (33.4)
P/Q13								
	English native speakers' cultures (e.g., USA and UK) should be the main focus of culture learning when teaching English.							
	4.73	1.16	0	32 (9)	29 (8.1)	22 (6.2)	192 (53.9)	81 (22.8)
P/Q14								
	The Standard Englishes used by native speakers should be the best model(s) for EIL/ELF users.							
	5	1	0	0	33 (9.3)	80 (22.5)	97 (27.2)	146 (41)
P/Q15								
	Students with fluent English abilities can face all future challenges in different situations of intercultural communication (e.g., job and education).							
	4.95	1.15	0	17 (4.8)	29 (8.1)	57 (16)	106 (29.8)	147 (41.3)
P/Q16								
	One of the main purposes of school English courses is to help EFL learners pass internationally recognized English tests with high scores to get English language certificates.							
	4.32	1.18	0	40 (11.2)	50 (14)	58 (16.3)	171 (48)	37 (10.4)
P/Q17								
	The English textbooks edited by native speakers are more accurate and professional.							
	4.79	1.30	5 (1.4)	21 (5.9)	25 (7)	80 (22.5)	86 (24.2)	139 (39)
P/Q18								
	It is necessary to help students comprehend the variety of Englishes (e.g., the accent and grammar of Indian English and Singaporean English).							
	3.37	.99	19 (5.3)	61 (17.1)	60 (16.9)	203 (57)	13 (3.7)	0

Note. P = perspectives; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; SID = slightly disagree; PA = partly agree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree.

Many interviewees (19/22: 86%) discussed how factors had affected their priorities in local ELT, such as the pressure from schools, parents, and English proficiency tests (Excerpt 10); social norms<sup>5</sup> (Excerpt 11); the shortage of ELF-related materials for intercultural teaching and lack of intercultural training in teacher education (Excerpt 12); and the uncertainty of personal abilities in formal intercultural settings (Excerpt 13). Related excerpts are presented as follows:

10. If students want to apply for a good university, English is an important indicator. . . . It is our responsibility to help students get high English scores in GEPT or TOEIC. . . .Most internationally recognized English proficiency tests are developed by English native speakers. . . . Parents and [the] school will evaluate teacher performance according to students' scores. . . . We should face the reality [score is everything]....We should teach Standard English. (JHS 4)
11. English has been considered as a fundamental tool for advancing socioeconomic status. . . . If students want to apply for job positions in some well-known companies, high TOEIC scores are one of the basic requirements. . . . English teachers should help students achieve a certain level [of English proficiency] to prove their English abilities. (TU 1)
12. Few useful ELF-related learning materials have been published for Taiwanese English learners, it seems impossible for me to design decent lesson plans. . . . I am not really familiar with other Englishes and cultures. . . . I only know American English, the standard one. . . . [To] be honest, I have not [received] any training about intercultural teaching. . . . The courses I took in pre-service teacher education focused [only] on the four-skill teaching of standard American English. (CS 1)
13. I enjoy travelling and making foreign friends, but I am not sure if can do well in formal intercultural settings, like business negotiation and academic exchanges. . . . I have no idea about Indian English and Japanese English. . . . I do not know how to teach the varieties of English and appropriately integrate their cultures into classroom English learning. (SHS 3)

In addition, five interviewees (teachers in high school levels), expressed their marginality as nonnative English teachers, although they

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<sup>5</sup> Social norms mean social expectations /requirements for a person's English proficiency (e.g., the score of TOEIC or GEPT) in particular fields (e.g., job or education).

appreciated the concept of World English. They reported difficulty regarding possessing a real sense of “owning” English. Because they had already formed perceptions of “good” models for teaching English, they preferred the native speaker model in language and culture teaching for reasons of familiarity, convenience, accuracy, and being well-educated.

14. I think World English is a positive idea but a little bit unrealistic. . . . Only researchers are interested in that issue. . . . For me, I enjoy teaching English, but English is still a foreign language. . . . English will not “belong to me” like my mother tongue. . . . I have been informed that English native speaker models are the best models for me to follow since childhood. . . . I believe most local NNETs prefer [the] American model. . . . For many of us, [the] American model is the most convenient and familiar one. . . . How can we [as] language teachers [justify using] a non-standardised model to teach our students inaccurate English? (SHS 2)

These data revealed that previous learning experiences (e.g., standard American English is the best model) and social expectations (e.g., good performance in English proficiency test is what society expects) have deeply affected participating NNETs’ perspectives about the goals, models, and materials of ELT, which may have led to their lack of awareness of and exposure to different Englishes and cultures. Therefore, they could not be sensitive to the issue regarding integrating intercultural and ELF/EIL perspectives into ELT.

#### **NNETs’ Employment of Intercultural Strategies in ELT**

Table 5 shows that all scores regarding the intercultural strategies employed by the NNETs in ELT (Q19–Q24) were below four. The choice “sometimes do this” was a common choice among many of the participating teachers regarding their approach to incorporating intercultural methods into teaching. Specifically, the results regarding textbook selection (Q19, Q21, and Q22) were consistent with the findings of other previous studies regarding the presentation of content in textbooks (Shin et al., 2011; Yuen, 2011). When selecting textbooks, some participating teachers tended to consider neither domestic and world cultures nor the various English accents. Many participants were unfamiliar with intercultural theories and practices (Q23) and did not spend a considerable length of time guiding students to discover various explanations for communication breakdown in intercultural settings (Q20 and Q24).

Table 5

*Descriptive Analysis of the Items Regarding Employing Intercultural Strategies in ELT*

Factor/ Item	M	SD	Frequency (%)					
			NDT	SDT	SoDT	ODT	UDT	ADT
IS/Q19								
			When selecting English material(s)/textbook(s), I take the allocation of world cultures into consideration.					
			7		133	116	88	12
	3.88	.96	(2)	0	(37.3)	(32.6)	(24.7)	(3.4)
IS/Q20								
			I guide students to explore and understand those cultural factors that may cause the breakdown of intercultural communication.					
			5	14	167	81	68	21
	3.72	1.05	(1.4)	(3.9)	(46.9)	(22.8)	(19.1)	(5.9)
IS/Q21								
			When selecting English material(s)/textbook(s), I take the allocation of local cultures into consideration.					
			17	32	210	55	23	19
	3.26	1.05	(4.8)	(9)	(59)	(15.4)	(6.5)	(5.3)
IS/Q22								
			When selecting English material(s)/textbook(s), I take the variety of English accents into consideration.					
			17	14	177	95	46	7
	3.45	.99	(4.8)	(3.9)	(49.7)	(26.7)	(12.9)	(2)
IS/Q23								
			I apply intercultural communication theories <sup>6</sup> to culture teaching of English curricula.					
			7	95	152	36	65	1
	3.17	1.08	(2)	(26.6)	(42.7)	(10.1)	(18.3)	(.3)
IS/Q24								
			I guide students to explore and understand those linguistic factors that may cause the breakdown of intercultural communication.					
			5	3	163	91	81	13
	3.78	.97	(1.4)	(0.8)	(45.8)	(25.6)	(22.7)	(3.7)

*Note.* IS = intercultural strategies; NDT = never do this; SDT = seldom do this; SoDT = sometimes do this; ODT = often do this; UDT = usually do this; ADT = always do this.

<sup>6</sup> Intercultural theories that provide an overview of patterns underlining cultures are useful for understanding cultural similarities and differences. In intercultural education, the familiarity of various intercultural theories are important for developing competence in intercultural communication (Lustig & Koester, 2006), just like the significance of learning second language acquisition theories for foreign/second language teachers.

The following statements from the interviewees offer an explanation regarding why they were unlikely to employ intercultural strategies in ELT. Specifically, they lacked authority in textbook selection (Excerpt 15), their major concerns regarding the teaching materials were convenience and quality (Excerpt 16), some of them were constrained by sociocultural factors (Excerpt 17), they lacked intercultural training in previous teacher education (Excerpt 18), and they based their approach on personal learning experiences (Excerpt 19).

15. Textbook selection is not my responsibility. . . it is decided by our school English curriculum and instruction committee. (VS 2)
16. Generally, we prefer imported English textbooks with a complete package, including a teachers' manual, test materials, and PPT. . . . Of course, it is better [if the material has been] edited by native speakers. . . . I think convenience and quality are our major concerns in choosing teaching materials rather than those issues about cultures or the varieties of English. (TU 2)
17. The limitation of school lecturing hours and the pressure from entrance exams have made school English teaching become very routine and stressful. . . . I do not have time to guide students [through exploring] the potential factors [that cause] intercultural communication breakdown. (SHS 1)
18. I have not heard [of] any intercultural communication theories. . . . I only learnt second language acquisition theories in my TESOL M.A. program. (JHS 4)
19. My learning experiences tell me [that] teaching kids American English—the standard one—is the best choice. . . . A good start is half way to success. . . . I do not encourage students to develop local English accents. . . . Most parents expect their kids to acquire native speakers' English. (K 2)

Moreover, when asked which cultural issues should be integrated into ELT if possible, many interviewees expressed that traditions, customs and festivals in English speaking countries (19/22: 86%), tourist attractions (17/22:77%), daily life and routines in English-speaking countries (14/22:64%), and American and British literature and drama (11/22: 50%) as crucial topics for students to master.

Accordingly, these teachers preferred using traditional strategies in



intercultural education, such as delivering cultural knowledge and social activities/practices of English-speaking countries, and only introducing standard Englishes of native speakers. Obviously, these strategies that participating teachers employed were constrained by previous learning experiences, the lack of intercultural education training, the pressure from social expectations, insufficient lecturing hours and pre-decided teaching materials; as a result, their strategies in intercultural education could not reflect the needs of globalization and intercultural communication in some way.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The current study was investigating the ICC in ELT of NNETs in Taiwan through a self-assessment inventory developed by the researcher. It is suggested that other ICC-related assessment tools or questionnaires, like the Cultural Intelligence scale (Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2008), and Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension scale (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997) could be used in future studies to expand our understanding of their relatedness to the ICC of NNETs in ELT. As a consequence of the issues of privacy and time, the researcher only had 22 teachers for interviews in this study. The findings may not be representative but are still informative. In order to develop a holistic profile of Taiwanese NNETs' intercultural capabilities and practices in ELT, more interviewees are needed; moreover, dynamic and reflective approaches, such as Kelly's Repertory Grid Technique (Borg, 2006) and focus group interview through a 'liquid' approach (Dervin, 2011), could be employed to stimulate dialogic communication among teachers and researchers, reduce potential biases and control during the interview process and thereby increase the reliability of collected discourse data.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The quantitative results of this study show that many NNETs had positive affective orientations regarding intercultural communication and considered themselves effective intercultural speakers in some way. However, there were obvious inconsistencies between the NNETs' self-reported ICC (e.g., personal capabilities) and ICC-oriented teaching practices (e.g., teaching objectives and strategies). Their teaching

attitudes and practices could not be characterised as intercultural. For example, few of them had frequently employed intercultural strategies in their classrooms. Scant attention was given to promoting the acquisition of intercultural knowledge and skills. Instead, they preferred to introduce the cultures of English speaking countries. Many teachers are unconsciously trapped in the fallacy that the native speaker model is the optimal model of English instruction and that English learners should know cultural facts (i.e., knowledge) regarding English-speaking countries.

The qualitative interviews revealed that personal (e.g., interests, personalities and life experience of individuals) and sociocultural factors (e.g., entrance exams and social norms) might explain the survey results. First, although the NNETs claimed that they were highly motivated to have intercultural contact with people from other cultural or linguistic backgrounds, the foreigners that many NNETs liked to interact with often referred to Western people or people from English-speaking countries. Some NNETs did not appear to be sensitive to the ELF- or EIL-related issues in ELT, which affected their teaching behaviours (e.g., selecting textbooks and cultural content). Moreover, because of a lack of explicit guidance regarding intercultural education, insufficient ELF-related materials for intercultural teaching, and inadequate intercultural training in teacher education, many NNETs were not familiar with instructing the various Englishes, and they even overlooked the importance for students to develop an awareness and acquire knowledge of their own culture and other cultures, which is a useful ability in intercultural communication. Furthermore, the pressures from school, parents, entrance exams, and social norms seemed to be critical reasons affecting NNETs' perspectives on ELT and teaching practices. The results reveal that many Taiwanese NNETs in this study like other foreign language teachers around the world (Aleksandrowicz-Pedich et al., 2003; Han & Song, 2011; Liddicoat et al., 2003; Luk, 2012; Young & Sachdev, 2011) have not been ready to appropriately incorporate the content of ICC into their pedagogical practices.

On the basis of these findings, firstly, it is suggested that the educational policy for English curriculum and instruction (e.g., objectives, content, pedagogy, and assessment) in Taiwan should include intercultural perspectives. Secondly, many Taiwanese NNETs as the study indicated had a vague concept of ICC, did not sense the urgency and possibility of intercultural learning in EFL classrooms, and presented

low motivation in employing intercultural strategies in teaching practices. In order to assist Taiwanese NNETs with developing the new professional identity of being an FL&IC teacher (Sercu, 2006; Sercu et al., 2005) in ELF education, it is necessary to elucidate the notion of culture and interculturality as well as arrange ICC-related training and assessment in English teacher education programs. Furthermore, more dialogues, interactions and negotiations regarding the factors influencing the ICC development of NNETs in ELT (e.g., identity) should be generated among language teachers, teacher educators and researchers to identify potential difficulties and challenges, and then discover contextually sensitive and appropriate solutions.

This paper concludes that regardless of which culture or standard of English mainly being taught in school contexts, students should be informed that there are different varieties of English and their related cultures, and be given opportunities to be exposed to those diversities. That is, NNETs should act as cultural facilitators (Luk, 2012) to increase EFL learners' awareness and comprehension of various Englishes and cultures, and help these ELF/EIL users know how to communicate effectively with not only native English speakers, but also the increasing number of nonnative English speakers all over the world.

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## 臺灣英語非母語之英語教師跨文化溝通教學力自評初探

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全球化使得跨文化教學成為英語為國際共通語教育的目標之一，此趨勢讓英語教師在教學專業力上面臨新的挑戰。此研究是要探索臺灣英語非母語之英語教師在英語教學中跨文化溝通教學力的發展情形。此教學力包含了四個面向：跨文化溝通的情意傾向、跨文化溝通能力、英語教學的觀點、英語教學中跨文化面向的實行。透過一份自評問卷與事後深入訪談，研究者收集與分析來自臺灣不同教育機構，英語非母語之英語教師的態度與觀點。自評問卷結果顯示，參與教師所陳述的個人跨文化能力與其在英語教學中跨文化面向的實行很不一致。從訪談資料中發現，個人或是社會文化的因素可解釋自評問卷的結果。本文強調發展英語非母語之英語教師跨文化溝通教學力的重要，特別是對英語教學中文化多元性與英語變異性的覺醒與教學。最後針對未來英語師資培育與相關研究提出建議。

**關鍵詞：**英語為國際共通語、英語非母語之英語教師、跨文化溝通教學力、英語教學