

國立政治大學英國語文學系

碩士學位論文

透過線上英語學習平台發展跨文化溝通能力：兩位成  
人學習者的個案分析

Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence Through an Online  
English Tutoring Platform:  
A Case Study of Two Adult Learners

指導教授：許麗媛 博士

研究生：洪鈺茹 撰

中華民國 一 一 零 年 七 月

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE  
THROUGH AN ONLINE ENGLISH TUTORING PLATFORM: A CASE STUDY  
OF TWO ADULT LEARNERS



A Master Thesis

Presented to

Department of English,  
National Chengchi University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

by

Yu-Ru Hung

July, 2021

To Prof. Li-Yuan Hsu

獻給我的恩師 許麗媛教授



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first and foremost gratitude has come to my supervisor, Dr. Li-yuan Hsu, for her warm and inspiring guidance to the study. When I was fear of choosing the research topic, she gave me strength on studying the inspiring and interesting subject. When I handed in the draft each time, she examined whole specific details and provided useful suggestions to the work. The thesis would not have been completed without her encouragement and helpful suggestions. I would also like to express my gratitude to the committee members and oral defense, Dr. Chin-chi Chao and Dr. Jun-jie Tseng, for their insightful advice allowing me to refine the thesis. I am gratefully indebted to their useful feedback.

In addition, I am thankful to the two research participants, Darren and Grace, for their cooperation and feedback during the research. With their generous sharing and giving, the resources and stories have been conducted successfully and completely.

I also appreciate my TESOL classmates, Sherry, Annie, Betty and Rita for numerous support and unselfish sharing in the last three years. Recognizing the long road we have went through so far, I am thankful for having the most lovely classmates as my best partners.

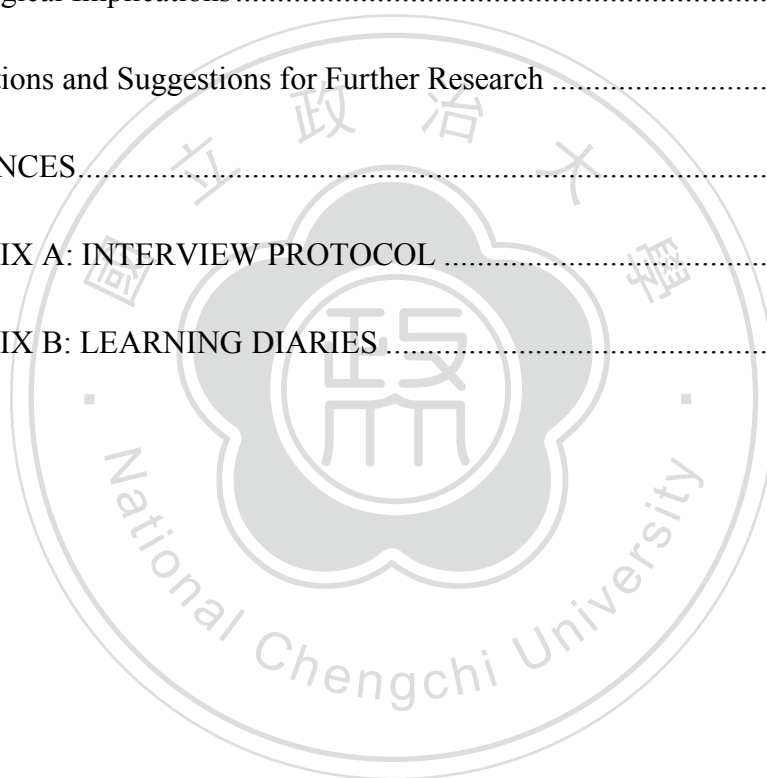
Last but not least, I want to give my deep gratitude to my warmest family and my boyfriend for their unstoppable love and support. I am deeply thankful to my mother, who worries about my future the most but encourages me without pressure, and to my father for believing my intuition and training me to think from multiple-perspectives. I also appreciate my two older sisters for continuous taking care of my family. Also, my deep thanks to my boyfriend, Su-tien Chang for always being there and cheering me up in the long thesis process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
CHINESE ABSTRACT.....	ix
ABSTRACT .....	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background and Motivation of the Study.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence.....	5
Components of Intercultural Communicative Competence.....	7
Synchronous Online Tutoring Platform: Functions .....	10
Synchronous Online Tutoring Platform: Problems and Challenges.....	11
Synchronous Online Tutoring Platform: Learners' Awareness .....	12
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	15
A Case Study Research Design .....	15
The Online Tutoring platform.....	16
Participants.....	17

Data Collection and Procedures .....	19
Semi-structured Interviews .....	20
Learning Diaries .....	21
Data Analysis .....	22
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....	25
Darren's Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence .....	25
The Affective Aspect .....	25
The Cognitive Aspect .....	32
The Behavioral Aspect .....	37
Grace's Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence .....	42
The Affective Aspect .....	42
The Cognitive Aspect .....	48
The Behavioral Aspect .....	54
Summary of the Two Participants' Development of ICC .....	61
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION .....	63
Learners' Attitude to the Intercultural Learning Experience .....	63
1. I felt confident to speak in the encouraging, private and authentic online environment .....	63
2. I determined to find my appropriate learning style in the limited online tutoring platform .....	67
Learners' Cognition and Behavior in the Intercultural Learning Experiences .....	71
1. The participants learned to adjust their values and judgement by understanding dynamic English tutors .....	71

2. The participants emphasized student-teacher connection when matching up with their tutors.....	73
Other Factors That Influence the Learner's Intercultural Learning Experience:	
Digital Literacy/ Personality/ the Critical Incident .....	76
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .....	81
Summary of the Findings.....	81
Pedagogical Implications.....	83
Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research .....	84
REFERENCES.....	87
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	95
APPENDIX B: LEARNING DIARIES.....	99



## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1 Chao's (2013) Three-Component Model of Intercultural Competence.....	10
Table 2 Timeline of the Study.....	19
Table 3 The Two Participants' Development of ICC in Three Aspects.....	62
Figure 1 One-on-one Online Tutoring Platform, <i>Cambly</i> .....	17





國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：透過線上英語學習平台發展跨文化溝通能力：兩位成人學習者的個案分析

指導教授：許麗媛博士

研究生：洪鈺茹

論文提要內容：

儘管線上學習成效的研究近年逐漸增多，像是針對學習動機及語言學習策略等，但針對 EFL 學習者在一對一線上英語學習平台的跨文化學習結果仍有不足。本文旨在探討兩名臺灣成人英語學習者如何透過一對一線上英語學習平台發展跨文化溝通能力以及他們的跨文化學習經驗。資料蒐集包含訪談與學習日記作為主要資料。研究中，依照趙子嘉(2013)的跨文化能力指標作分析，以了解學習者的跨文化溝通力。

研究結果顯示，兩名成人學習者藉由與母語人士溝通的線上英語環境，發展多層面的跨文化溝通能力。首先，針對跨文化溝通能力的情意方面，他們對線上英語學習有更開放的態度，包含對母語人士的背景故事、對平台的諮商、自我反省、隱藏的情緒、好奇心以及對學習的喜好。再者針對文化認知方面，他們均透過和母語人士不同文化議題的討論，提升了文化知識與文化意識察覺。最後針對研究對象的行為，兩位參與者皆感受到口語溝通能力與溝通技巧的大幅進步。除此之外，研究也指出藉由和線上平台母語人士的溝通，讓他們更願意說英文，並透過其師生連結學習調整對母語人士的刻板印象。

關鍵字：跨文化溝通能力、成人學習者、線上學習平台

## ABSTRACT

Although there is a growing body of research investigating the effectiveness of online tutoring on aspects such as motivation and learners' language strategy, research into EFL learners' intercultural learning outcomes through the one-on-one online tutoring platform has been scant. This study aimed to investigate two Taiwanese adult EFL learners' development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and their intercultural learning experience via an online English tutoring platform. Data were collected through interviews and learners' learning diaries. Chao's (2013) three-component model of intercultural competence was adopted to examine learners' development of ICC.

The results showed that the two participants developed various aspects of intercultural communicative competence through interacting with native speakers in the online tutoring environment. First, regarding the affective aspect of intercultural communicative competence, the participants were able to show open attitude to the tutors' backgrounds, interest in tutors' stories, surprises with the consulting functions of the platform, personal reflections, hidden emotions, curiosity as well as learning preference through English learning. As for the cognitive aspect of ICC, the participants gained cultural knowledge and awareness about different cultural issues. As for the behavior aspect, both participants admitted that they have greatly improved their English speaking ability and communication skills. As for their attitude toward the online learning experience, both participants were more willing to speak English due to the platform. They learned to adjust their stereotype by connecting with their tutors.

*Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Adult learners, Online tutoring platform*

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background and Motivation of the Study**

English as a lingua franca has increased the chances for people to use the language to communicate with others including both native speakers and non-native speakers of English in this globalized world. However, when interacting with people from other countries, not everyone is aware of the rules for successful cross-cultural interactions. Intercultural competence, hence, has become a crucial learning goal notably for learners of English around the world for it emphasizes language users' ability to mediate between cultures and the use of English appropriately. According to Byram (1997, p.71), intercultural communicative competence (ICC), refers to "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language." Thus, most EFL learners and teachers has tried to develop their ICC with the aims of appropriate communication.

In recent years, this rising importance of ICC has received more and more attention in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Many researchers have begun to explore various approaches to cultivating students' intercultural awareness and intercultural citizenship in the language classroom (Michelson, 2018; Porto, 2019). For instance, Michelson (2018) has advocated the approach of teaching culture as a relational process. In his study, each student was first assigned to a character in a global situation and then they needed to pretend and

interact at the chatroom. Students in the end developed different perspectives and awareness of the interrelationship between culture and language.

Among these innovative approaches to incorporating cultural elements in the language classrooms, the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become popular by online intercultural exchange programs (Avgousti, 2018). Studies have revealed the usefulness of using CMC in developing intercultural communicative competence. For instance, research has found that regular use of videoconferencing and audio conferencing in the English classrooms can offer students more opportunities for authentic oral interactions to practice their language (Chen & Yang, 2016; Liaw & Bunn-Le, 2010; Wang, 2012). Moreover, studies have also shown that the use of CMC through online cross-cultural collaboration projects can improve students' linguistic skills (Angelova & Zhao, 2016), foster their use of cognitive language strategies (Yu, 2011), increase personal motivation (Freiermuth, 2012; Hsu & Beasley, 2019), and promote digital literacies (Oakley, Pegrum, Xiong, Lim, & Yan, 2018).

In addition to the use of CMC in the language classroom, recently online tutoring platform, an informal language teaching and learning context, has emerged as a widely acceptable medium of learning foreign languages all over the world, including Taiwan. The synchronous learning system may allow individuals to have conversations with people from different parts of the world wherever and whenever they like (Eslami, 2011). Unlike the traditional classroom setting, in this new learning environment, instructional content is no longer solely controlled by teachers but is often negotiated with learners who are eager to practice their language skills (White,

Zheng, & Skyrme, 2020). Learners consider their interests and needs when they use technology in English learning (Zeng, 2018, p.47). The issue of how learners perceive their teachers is also raised because learners may consider teachers as both language partners and teachers and such positioning may influence learners' motivation (Eslami, 2011; Price, Richardson, & Jelfs, 2007).

Although there is a growing body of research investigating the effectiveness of online tutoring on aspects such as motivation and learners' language strategy, research into EFL learners' intercultural learning outcomes through the one-on-one online tutoring platform has been scant. Apart from the lack of research on students' development of intercultural competence in the context of online language exchange, even fewer studies focus on adult EFL learners. To fill this gap, this study attempts to investigate two Taiwanese adult EFL learners' development of ICC and their intercultural learning experience via an English online tutoring platform.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine two adult Taiwanese EFL learners' intercultural learning outcomes in the online cross-cultural tutoring environment. A case-study research design was utilized. Learners' development of ICC and their perceptions of intercultural learning was investigated through interviews and learning diaries. Two research questions were proposed to guide the current study:

1. How do two Taiwanese adult English learners develop their ICC through a one-on-one online tutoring platform?

2. What are two Taiwanese adult learners' attitude toward their intercultural learning experience through a one-on-one online tutoring platform?



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following sections aim to review the literature on two topics. The first one includes the conceptualization of intercultural competence and the essential components of intercultural competence. The second topic reviews studies involving the synchronous online tutoring platform in terms of the functions, problems and challenges, and learners' awareness.

#### **Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence**

The idea of intercultural competence (IC) has been discussed in several studies with different terminologies, such as intercultural communicative competence, cross-cultural communication, cultural intelligence, intercultural sensitivity, global competence, global citizenship, etc. With a variety of terminology of IC, the central core of IC requires complex insight of both linguistic and intercultural aspects (Fantini, 2000). Scholars have studied IC theory in different educational domains due to its diverse and dynamic characteristics (Baker, 2012), while few consensuses reached about the meaning of IC (Deardoff, 2006). In the following section, the important models and theories would be briefly presented to show different dimensions of intercultural competence.

For several decades, researchers have come up with IC models and norms to help EFL learners communicate effectively. The appropriate IC model has added local traits to the traditional native speaker's norms because the native speaker-based

notion of communicative competence tended to hinder learners from becoming effective communicators (Alptekin, 2002). Kramsch and Sullivan (1997, p.21) stated the need of “revising native speaker language use” to make it fulfill learners’ local needs. It is worthy to mention that the power of indigenous language and culture of individuals would engage learners with appropriate discourse (Alptekin, 2002, p.61). In the growing tendency of English as a lingua franca for people communicating with different purposes, IC model should encompass manifold aspects of culture to ensure a natural language environment.

Bennett and his team(2003) declaimed that developing IC demands *culture-specific* and *culture-general* approaches to communicate and interact with people appropriately. The goal of culture-specific approaches is to have knowledge and skills specific to the target culture. In this sense, language learning is limited to grammar and vocabulary instead of communicative competence in L2. On the other hand, culture-general approaches refer to knowledge, skills, and reflection on one’s own and other culture. The generalized features across different cultures lead to intercultural work that can be used to make comparisons and distinct attributes. It should be clear that the mix of culture-specific and culture-general approaches stressed the combination of not only knowledge of other culture or behave appropriately in the specific culture; it also addresses the understanding of a subjective culture being combined and explained with culture-general approaches.

Recent studies regarding intercultural communicative competence (ICC) or cross-cultural communication have pointed out how intercultural exchange with CMC approaches brings authentic texts and critical cultural awareness for language



learners. The well-designed task, tools and approaches in language classroom help learners to become communicators. Wach (2015) claimed that telecollaboration enhances learners' interest in other cultures and encourages learners to be willing to communicate with other people. For instance, Angelova and Zhao (2016) organized a regular meeting for American and Chinese students. The study showed that American English teachers improved teaching skills while Chinese learners developed cultural awareness by improving their communicative skills. In a synchronic chat task, a study by Freiermuth and Huang (2012) discussed how the innovative and attractive activity influenced Japanese and Taiwanese students' motivation in the communication process. Another study showed that Chinese and Australian students practiced both English and Chinese language skills by digital story exchanging in online language classroom (Oakley et al., 2018). Furthermore, blogs and podcasts were useful medium for task-based instruction (Lee, 2019) while email and Skype were found to be frequently used in intercultural communication (Hsu & Beasley, 2019). Thus, in light of the benefits of using technology to offer additional authentic interactions outside the language classroom, the current study would also focus on learners' intercultural experience outside of the classroom.

### **Components of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Over the years, scholars have established theoretical foundation for IC that a number of studies have shown different aspects of IC across knowledge, skills and behavior (Martin & Hammer, 1989; Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989). The most influential framework of ICC is Byram's ICC model (1997, p.73). He identified five

elements of ICC that language learners should be aware of different aspects of culture: (1) *knowledge*, (2) *skills of interpreting and relating*, (3) *skills of discovering and interaction*, (4) *attitude*, and (5) *critical cultural awareness*. Byram's model created a link between communicative function and clusters of skills, knowledge and attitude. Since Byram and his team contributed to the key elements of ICC based on the inductive view, they later on adjusted their models to *skills and knowledge, behavior, and motivation*. Based on the above ICC model, Fantini (2000) added a new content, *developmental process*, which focused on learners' language proficiency and improvement. In another study, GudyKunst (2004) proposed motivation, knowledge and skills as key concepts that were needed to become competent communicators. His study focused on bridging the differences with strangers from another culture. Students' motivation, their attitude of uncertainty and anxiety, and perceptions of meeting a stranger's behavior were included in the theoretical foundation. Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) proposed knowledge and motivation as the important components of ICC in the assessment of intercultural communication. They constructed a multidimensional understanding of ICC by triangulating the prior research, including social psychology, interpersonal communication, and anthropology. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) declared that the assessment of ICC includes three aspects, affective components, cognitive components and behavioral components. The focus of value orientation pointed out the importance of intercultural sensitivity, including individualism, collectivism, flexibility and open-mindedness. Deardorff (2006) further proposed that three aspects of ICC influence individuals when encountering cross-cultural differences, comprising cognitive, affective and

behavioral aspects. Of all three aspects, the affective factor influences the development of ICC the most.

Although several definitions of ICC can be found in the field of foreign language teaching, there is a growing consensus that ICC consists of three basic dimensions: affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects. Chao (2013) in her diary study of a group of Taiwanese university EFL learners' intercultural learning through foreign films, synthesized these major components and proposed a three-component model of intercultural communicative competence. Moreover, in the study, Chao suggested that these dimensions needed to be developed simultaneously to achieve effective and appropriate communication in intercultural settings. In other words, the model had the potential to explore differences in students' communicative development. With the use of the model proposed, Chao examined Taiwanese learners' intercultural learning outcomes through their diaries. Similarly, since the present study focused on two adult Taiwanese EFL learners' intercultural learning experience, Chao's three-component model of IC was adopted as a primary analytical framework in the study. Table 1 depicts the details of three components of IC in Chao's study.

Table 1 Chao's (2013) Three-Component Model of Intercultural Competence

Components	Features	Descriptions
Affect	Attitude	One's emotional and psychological reactions to the diversity of culture or to interacting with people of different cultural/linguistic backgrounds
	Motivation	One's willingness to communicate with people of different cultural/linguistic backgrounds. It is often affected by factors such as anxiety, stereotypes and expectations
Cognition	Knowledge	It includes culture-general, cultural-specific and culture hybrid information
	Awareness	An ability to develop a deeper understanding of the meanings and contexts of foreign people's attitudes (e.g. dynamic and hybrid cultures) and behaviors (e.g. the varieties of English) through observation, description, comparison, reflection, interpretation or critical evaluation
Behavior	English Proficiency	Refers to proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing
	Communicative strategies/ skills	Includes one's knowledge and actual skills producing verbal and non-verbal behaviors appropriately and effectively in intercultural contexts

### Synchronous Online Tutoring Platform: Functions

An online tutoring platform is usually a language teaching program that allows tutors or language teachers to guide learners to improve their English skills. Usually, the program comprises one or multiple online tutors to multiple language students. Most research indicated that tutors and students tended to focus on meaning and negotiation function triggered by communication problems in the synchronous platform, including video-conferencing (Helm & Dooly, 2017; Wang, 2004), audio-conferencing (Bueno Alastuey, 2011), and text-type (Kozar, 2016). On the other hand, students' comprehension and reflection in an online learning platform are worth

mentioning. Houge and Geier (2009) claimed that adult learners have improved their comprehension ability by being willing to share their personal experiences in the reading activity via videoconferencing. Furthermore, tutors' idiosyncratic strategies and oral and written negative feedback may influence students' learning strategies in a videoconferencing situation (Guichon, Bétrancourt & Prié, 2012). Students' strategies and language awareness could rise by observing the new concepts through communicative progress. Besides, learners may reduce anxiety in oral communication with native speaker peers due to different learning style and personality traits. They may feel secure and cozy chatting with the native speaker peers in a separated, online environment (Jauregi, De Graaff, van den Bergh, & Kriz, 2012).

### **Synchronous Online Tutoring Platform: Problems and Challenges**

Nevertheless, the problems and challenges of using synchronous online tutoring platforms are abundant and complex, often similar to the problems of using synchronous computer-mediated communication approaches. To begin with, the difficulty of using the synchronous mode with intercultural exchange across people from different time zones has been observed. It is hard for people behind the screen to find a perfect time to talk to their partners located in a widely spreading area (Avgousti, 2018). Second, the keyboarding should be considered since it could easily affect the fluency of communication (Freiermuth & Huang, 2012). In Helm and Dooly's study (2017), the challenge of transcribing multimodal data was discussed, focusing on how to select appropriate data and analysis, such as textual (multiple-participant and one-way text-chat), oral (the paralinguistic cues, voice, intonation),

visual data (the projection of learners and tutors, gesture and gaze), and how to use the multiple data in the study.

### **Synchronous Online Tutoring Platform: Learners' Awareness**

In addition, individual learning via the online tutoring platform help learners foster their awareness by undertaking the responsibilities of the learning process. Lee (2016) declared how autonomous learning is involved in the online learning task. She found not only teachers' kinds of tasks and digital tools foster learners' awareness, but also students' personal commitment to the work and the willingness to engage with the materials. Moreover, because assessment of online tutoring platform was often optional, students relied on their self-disciplined behaviors and motivation heavily (Blake, Wilson, Cetto, & Pardo-Ballester, 2008). An online tutoring website without compulsory homework and assists of error-analysis may lead to the situation that students failed in language learning process and depressed their teachers (Kozar, 2015). Thus, a preferred language assessment is based on understanding of learners' communication skills regarding four skills and learning strategies.

On the other hand, previous studies have pointed out that learners' perception of bonding with online tutors also influences learners' awareness. The role of the tutors has been changed from administrative (Shield, Hauck, & Hower, 2001) to a facilitator and a guide of communication for learners (Hauck & Hampel, 2005). Learning with online tutors helps learners to monitor and evaluate their language learning process in an online learning environment (Schwienhorst, 2007). Some indicated that higher

student efficacy is a reflection of great control and guidance from their tutors (Case, 2017).

In short, although previous studies have revealed the effectiveness of using CMC to promote intercultural learning, research into EFL learners' intercultural learning outcomes through the one-on-one online tutoring platform remains relatively scant. Given that learning in this instructional content is complicated, there are several problems and challenges in the synchronous online tutoring platform remaining to be resolved. A more comprehensive understanding of students' learning on the one-on-one synchronous online platform is necessary. As for learners' intercultural learning outcomes, the studies related to learners' development of intercultural communication are insufficient. To fill these gaps, this study attempts to examine adult EFL learners' development of ICC and their perceptions of intercultural experiences via one-on-one online tutoring platform.





## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The following sections provide further description about the research design including the online tutoring platform, two participants, data collections and procedures, and data analysis.

#### **A Case Study Research Design**

This study aimed to explore adult EFL learners' experience of using an online learning platform, Cambly, and to investigate how these English learners from Taiwan develop and perceive their intercultural learning through this cross-cultural, one-to-one online tutoring service. Since this study focused on two adult learners' online cross-cultural learning experience, a case study and qualitative research design was adopted. This is mainly because a qualitative case study approach allows researcher to establish a full picture of how learners "develop agency" and "give voice to their teachers" in online environments regarding the reality of the learners and interlocutors (Stickler and Hampel, 2019). By using the case study methods, the researcher of this study could explore the two participants' personal experience where the reality is multiple, contradictory and changing (Merriam, 1988). Due to the changing facets of cross-cultural experience in the study, it also helped the researcher better deal with the context of the two adult learners' experiences from a comprehensive perspective. Their beliefs, learning and attitude toward the online cross-cultural learning experiences could thus be further explored.

## **The Online Tutoring platform**

The online tutoring platform in this study is a mobile application designed by a commercial institute that offers professional and personal language tutors, viewing tutors' assistance as professional products or purchasable service (Kozar, 2015). The context of the current one-on-one online tutoring allows learners to choose qualified teachers who are native speakers of English or who use English as target language for communication purpose. Moreover, to attract learners from all over the world, the application features its environment as a place for learner to learn in a comfortable, positive and professional area. Learners can use their desktops, laptops or mobile devices to experience authentic online communication.

A paid application/service, Cambly<sup>1</sup>, is the target English app investigated in this study. This application provides learners chatting courses via video conferencing. Learners should pay a monthly subscription fee for the chatting packages with a certain number of minutes. Cambly was founded in 2012 and the tutors are all native speakers from various countries including the United States, Canada, the UK and Australia. It allows professional tutors to prepare learners with specific professions, from daily English conversations with diverse topics to the preparation of IELTS or TOEFL tests. First, learners reserve a class and connect to a tutor to have a 15-minute, 30-minute or an-hour conversational class. Then, learners interact with their tutors in oral communication, discussing issues ranging from topics of daily life to those related to tests preparation. After each session, learners can download a video available on Cambly. Second, learners would have a pop-up prompt that ask them to

---

<sup>1</sup> Cambly: <https://www.cambly.com/english?lang=en>

give teachers evaluation after each session of the class. By a five-star rating system, learners assess teachers' teaching skills privately, and they may select and compare skilled teachers in the next session. Given the scoring mechanism to the learners, the site provides expert English teachers for English learners from different parts of the world. Figure 1 shows the homepage of the one-on-one online tutoring platform featuring the speaking functions with native speaker partners.

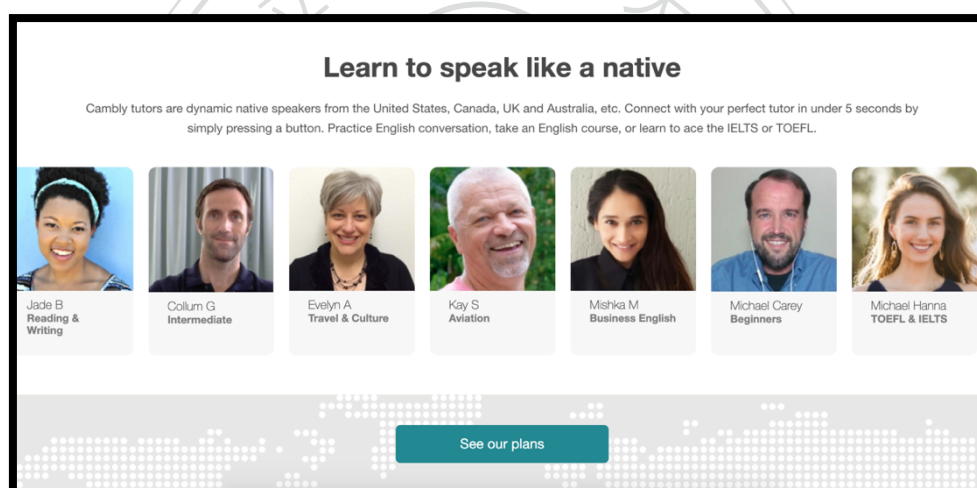


Figure 1. One-on-one Online Tutoring Platform, *Cambly*

## Participants

Two adult EFL learners (pseudonyms: Darren and Grace, aged 27 and 26), who have enrolled for the course offered by the Cambly application, were recruited to participate in this study. Both participants were Taiwanese EFL learners. Darren majored in electronic engineering while Grace majored in East Asian studies in college. By using the purposeful-sampling method, these two participants were chosen for two reasons: (1) They were long-term users of Cambly who had both used

the platform for more than a year to improve their English communicative skills.

During the study, Darren had a 12-month plan for 30 minutes per day, three times per week. Grace had a 12-month plan for 15 minutes per day, twice a week. (2) They all had the need to improve their English for a job in a global company.

At the time of data collection, Darren was recruited by a Japanese company in Taiwan where he was a sales engineer responsible for selling merchandize to meet the customers' needs, such as providing products, services or equipment. In the company, Darren had no chance to speak English since the company only focused on the Taiwanese market. Despite this circumstance, Darren practiced English on Cambly as many times as possible in a week when he had some spare time. Since his first use of Cambly, he had been talking with native speakers for one and a half years. Additionally, Darren had a strong rapport with the researcher before the study, so it was expected that he would be more open and willing to express his ideas about his online intercultural learning experience when interviewed by the researcher. Thus, he was chosen as one of the participants for the study.

As for another participant, Grace, at the time of data collection, she was preparing for the civil service examination for the job of aeronautics administration. Her goal was to become an air traffic controller who provides services to aircraft and controls the airspace. Since one of the qualifications and criteria for an air traffic controller was to have a good command of English and effective communication skills, she had been chatting with native speakers through Cambly to improve her communicative ability for over one year. For this reason, Grace was also recruited to participate in the study.

Regarding Darren's and Grace's English proficiency, these two participants were in a similar English proficiency level with nearly 800 points and higher scores of TOEIC reading and listening, but they were not capable of speaking fluently in English.

### Data Collection and Procedures

The data for this study was collected from two primary methods, the semi-structured interviews and learning diaries. Regarding the semi-structured interviews and learning diaries, the researcher interviewed with each participant respectively and collected their learning diaries from January to March. Then, the two primary data were transcribed for data analysis and major themes from March to June. (See Table 2 for details of the timeline)

Table 2 Timeline of the Study

Date	Research focus
January, 2021	Collecting interview data from the two participants:
-March, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Overview of intercultural experience.</li> <li>➤ Difference before and after the oral session</li> <li>➤ Culture-specific and culture-general information</li> </ul>
	Collecting learning diaries via email
March-April, 2021	Analyzing interview data & learning diaries
May-June, 2021	Writing and finishing thesis

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

Each semi-structured interview was conducted in Chinese, the participants' native language, in which they could freely express their opinions. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 min. The interview protocol was based on Carspecken's (1996) guidelines, which consisted of four topic domains: (1) English learning background, (2) English learning habits of using Cambly, (3) learners' intercultural communication with tutors, and (4) learners' perceptions of intercultural experiences. Each topic domain was formulated by a lead-off question and a list of followed-up questions that implicitly led our interviewees to address their experience. In addition, a set of covert categories were established to help the researcher produce the questions during the interviews. The follow-up questions were descriptive and concrete questions for learners to portray their learning experience (see Appendix A).

The first interview aimed to understand the interviewees' development of ICC and their initial perceptions of culture. The interviewees talked about their intercultural learning experience, learning strategies and changes, attitudes toward English teachers of native speakers, and perceptions of different cultures. Besides, the follow-up interviews attempted to further probe into how the interviewees perceived their ICC and whether they demonstrated their ICC when using English to communicate with foreign teachers. The researcher tried to gain more information after the first interview with the help of learning diaries and focused on the participants' attitude and critical awareness during the communication.

### *Learning Diaries*

A diary method was used in this study to understand the interviewee's intercultural development and their online language learning experience. Bailey (1991) proposed that a diary study was a first-person journal documented through regular and candid entries analyzed for learning events or patterns. It enabled researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of how learners reported on affective factors, language learning strategies and learners' perceptions, which was normally hidden from an external observer (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983, p. 189).

To gather information about how these two participants processed the lessons, and their perceptions in their learning, the participants in the present study were also required to write learning diaries when they finished a Cambly session. Each entry reflected on their perceptions after the lesson. When the participants finished the diaries after class, they would send their diary to the researcher. Participants were provided with a diary guiding sheet (Appendix B) to help them record and reflect on their learning experience from the online tutoring course. A total of twenty-three diary entries were collected from the two participants: Darren finished 10 entries and Grace completed 13 entries throughout the whole sessions. The main reason that the amounts of entries was fewer than the expected numbers may come from the two participants' insights of cultural information. They were not aware that the daily-life topics relevant to cultural differences. It was only when they focused on comparing the differences between tutors' and theirs that they were aware of the cultural context.

## Data Analysis

Two types of qualitative data (semi-structured interviews and learning diaries) were analyzed and interpreted to ensure the credibility and triangulation. In the qualitative case study, the analysis consisted of multiple sources of data to describe a detailed description and the “facts” of the context (Creswell & Poth, 2016 ).

After the first interview, the interviewee’s recording was transcribed and categorized as initial coding. The analysis of data was carried out based on Chao’s (2013) framework of the three components of IC, as it reflected participants’ intercultural learning development, the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. (1) The affective dimension allowed the researcher to look into how students react to people from diverse background, and whether they are willing to communicate with people from diverse background. (2) The cognitive dimension focused on what students know between cultural-general and culture-specific information, what kinds of attitude and people’s behavior they are aware of. (3) The final component was the behavioral dimension that concerned whether students’ knowledge, skills and behavior behave appropriately. Quotes and key sentences related to the two research questions were marked by the researcher and then made a comparison sentence by sentence. To answer questions concerning the participants’ development and perceptions of ICC, the researcher reconstructed the meaning and developed a coding scheme by identifying the recurring themes and topics. If the research data were not enough to build up an appropriate coding scheme and answer the research questions, the researcher continued asking some follow-up interview questions and repeated the above procedure to identify the final themes. Furthermore,



the learning diaries which provided personal perceptions were analyzed to ensure the codes were incorporated into the themes. Each learning diary conducted after each lesson was analyzed and utilized to supplement the findings from the interview data.

To further enhance the trustworthiness, two peer debriefers were invited to participate in the study to examine the analyzed data. They were English teachers with MA TESOL background. One of them also had experience with cultural studies. After the transcriptions were categorized in a word document, the peer debriefers checked whether the categories and evidence were consistent in terms of the affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. By having an online discussion through Line, the categories were checked directly and accurately. During the discussion, one suggestion was made by the peer reviewer regarding the participant Grace's use of strategies. As a result, the focus on Grace's changing strategies changed from choosing the accurate wording in the dictionary into giving abundant tokens to the tutors.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the two adult learners' intercultural learning experience through the online English learning platform. To answer research question one, the following section first reveals Darren's development of intercultural communicative competence. The major findings are presented in terms of the three dimensions of ICC: the affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. The second section reveals Grace's development of ICC in terms of the three aspects, too. The third section presents a summary of Darren's and Grace's development of ICC toward such online learning experience. Moreover, these findings also reveal the participants' attitude and feelings toward the online tutorial program.

#### **Darren's Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

##### *The Affective Aspect*

Regarding the affective aspect of online intercultural communication, Darren showed changing attitude toward tutors from different countries. The evidence of his substantial shifts of attitude was his respect for tutors from different countries and cultures, interest in tutors' stories, surprises with the consultant functions and the reflection on learner attitude.

##### *1. Developing an open attitude to tutors' background and showing more respect*

Conforming to what Darren has stated, he showed more consideration to tutors' background and stories in some cases, such as lifestyles and attitude to their life and

career. For instance, Tutor M interacted with Darren in a very warm and comfortable tutorial style. This tutor was an American but immigrated to Mexico to marry his wife. In the beginning, Darren suspected the reason for his tutor's immigration; he met too many English tutors online living in other countries. Darren assumed, "When tutors have no capability to live in his own country, one of their excuses is to pursue the dream of seeing around the world." Darren illustrated why he questioned the tutorial skills by describing one friend's experience for working in other country. Darren had a friend, Mia, who tried to experience the culture in Australia through working holiday. Mia had changed her career twice and decided to expand her horizon in Australia. Unfortunately, she ended the gorgeous working holiday recently because of the pandemic of coronavirus disease. Since she went back to Taiwan, her continuous change of working experience increased the difficulties finding a job which brought concern about her future. Darren showed a suspicious attitude to Mia's future with an ironic tone,

ary Findings with the

"If people want to live a life like that (meaning going abroad like a working holiday), they often ended up with an unstable life. My friend, Mia, lived a wonderful and abundant life in Australia then, but she has trouble finding a job right now. So, I would rather choose to live an extremely tired life when I am still young. Everyone around me, mostly engineers, is overworking right now, working from eight to seven, eight or nine. (The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)"

However, as Darren was concerned about the lifestyle of his tutor, Tutor M has shown Darren a different lifestyle and attitude that changed his stereotype. Tutor M was so optimistic about his life career of English teaching. Darren enjoyed the way talking with his tutor, besides, he helped significantly in revising Darren's use of words in English speaking and writing. Although Tutor M lived in Mexico which was not his native country, Darren found that Tutor M had great determination and excellent teaching skills in satisfying students' needs. Darren's interaction with Tutor M changed his original negative impressions of foreigners who moved from an industrialized country to a developing country where the standard of living is lower in a certain place. Darren changed his point of view about migrations and foreigners who live in other countries since he met this serious and responsible teacher on Cambly. Moreover, Tutor M has become one of the best teachers on Darren's list on Cambly. The following excerpt depicted how Darren praised Tutor M,

“Tutor M is the best teacher I have ever met. I think, with that little money, I have never had the same interaction and connection in other online English learning platforms. This tutor is responsible and always gives me an optimistic feeling. The strong atmosphere that he created is always making me feel comfortable. (The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)”

## *2. Expressing interest in the tutors' stories*

Darren showed great curiosity about his tutors' personal background but he was also very careful about the cultural and racial issues. Darren would not ask offensive

questions or questions that were too private about the tutor's personal background unless the tutor mentioned it first. For instance, Darren seldom asked the tutors questions about their personal life such as where and why the tutors lived in other countries. He would choose to conceal his curiosity by not asking questions like how the tutor met his spouse and started their family. Furthermore, sometimes it is odd to hear about the life attitude of some tutors who seem to lack concern for the future. He felt confused about how to respond to these people's attitude of life. He even started to question some of these tutors' teaching ability and contribution.

“Some teachers enjoy the present without worrying about future (in a negative way) apparently, like I can do whatever I want to do. Although I don't think all western people live their lives in this way and there must be some people in the west worrying or thinking about their future, I did meet some English teachers that gave me this kind of feeling. It seemed that they only wanted to live an easy life by having a casual conversation with students on Cambly.

(The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)”

Moreover, since Darren talked to most of teachers for only one time, he realized that he often speculated the teaching ability of those unfamiliar English tutors because of their unprofessional conversational style during the communication. He even mentioned an awkward and unendurable situation when no one spoke during the interaction.

“I am so sorry that my comments may have prejudiced some of the teachers on Cambly. The reason why I consider them as unprofessional is because it seems like they were passionless and unenergetic during the interaction. I would say I won't judge their lifestyle since some people prefer a simple and quiet life. A comfortable lifetime is what they have pursued. But the truth is I met numerous teachers on Cambly who had a unique lifestyle I cannot imagine in my life. (The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)”

Darren's description showed that he had some uncomfortable learning experience with tutors who seemed passionless and indifferent to learners. Sometimes, when tutors show no interest in the conversation, it diminishes students' motivation in using English to communicate.

Another example of unforgettable experiences showed by two other sessions with Darren's online English tutors. One time, Darren met a tutor eating cookies when having conversation with him. This tutor had little skills on how to guide the topic or to have a conversation with him. Their conversation was only a one-way dialogue coordinated by Darren. He was upset that after talking in a 30-minute long session, Darren gave the tutor one star and blocked down the his information. Darren mentioned that he learned one lesson from this experience: he refused to be treated badly by another irresponsible tutor again. The next time when he encountered other unprofessional teachers, Darren reacted more straightly to the circumstance. He mentioned the unskilled tutor was not paying careful attention to him. Darren recognized the teacher was smoking and browsing another website because his

glasses were glinting with the blue flashes. At the moment when Darren discovered this, he pretended to have the connecting problems and leave the classroom immediately. “I skip the classroom directly. If I felt the conversation unworthy, I could leave and call another tutor in a minute because I don’t want to waste my time and money.” Since then, when Darren found that if the teachers were not paying attention, he left the online course without saying goodbye.

### 3. *Surprised with the consulting functions on Cambly*

Although tutors’ conversation skills influenced Darren’s attitude regarding the respectful feelings and suspicious attitude to tutors, what fascinating was his willingness to share his own thoughts and even secrets with the tutors. He gradually considered the online talk as a way to relieve his pressure from his own everyday experience, such as sharing the difficult times. The common topics were only related to the job or interview experience. One time he said, “I chose to convey personal feelings to tutors since we only met for one time and never saw each other again. Comparing to online tutors, I feel that telling my friends about the interview experience was embarrassing.” Moreover, Darren exhibited surprised emotion on tutors’ consulting function in his own experience. Darren elaborated,

“During the long and difficult time when I was trying to find a job, I felt so depressed and being less confident when talking to other people about myself. I was almost hit down by so many interviews. At that time, a British old-male tutor talked with me. Since the tutor felt that my interview speech sounded



unconvincing because of too many details and even words of doubt about my personal ability, he kept helping me find my inner strength by encouragement. ‘You should be more confident in your interview. You should also be confident in your self-introduction. A sales engineer must be confident in what you said and your products. You must believe your words and sentences.’ It’s a very helpful session on motivating to go one step further. (The second interview with Darren, January 30, 2021)”

From the learning experience, we could find Darren was at first powerless against his deep frustration but gained strength from his tutor during the course. Though expressing his feelings depended on tutors and learners’ connection, it is possible that this online chatting platform provides the learner with the opportunity to deal with his personal life challenges.

#### *4. Reflecting on learner attitude*

However, it seemed that Darren also had an incongruous attitude toward learning English. He wanted to be able to speak English like his own first language and had focused on improving his speaking fluency for a long time. On one hand, he was comfortable with his current situation with no urgent needs and targets for gaining a higher English proficiency level. On the other hand, he was struggling with his current English ability which was not as professional as some EFL learners who can speak English fluently. One of the reasons why Darren had inconsistent attitude in English learning, was that job was Darren’s first priority pushing English learning as a

second priority. In the first interview, he revealed directly to the researcher, “I seldom reflected on how to improve my English speaking because I took much time in my job.”

Lastly, Darren was deeply influenced by many of his online tutors’ open-minded attitude toward students from different countries. Eventually, he realized that he has become a figure who is able to embrace people from different parts of the world, stop criticizing differences, and learn from other people’s stories. For instance, he thought, “Although many of the tutors’ backgrounds are different from their students, most of them have the skills to encourage their students to share their daily life experience in English. At the same time when I talk with them, their behavior and lifestyles affect mine, too.”

In sum, after numerous experience of communicating with the online tutors, Darren’s willingness to communicate with tutors in the online environment and his open-minded attitude to embrace and respect people has grown significantly.

### *The Cognitive Aspect*

In addition to a changing attitude toward tutors and their backgrounds, Darren also learned knowledge about a specific culture. Although he once said “I am not sure to what extent the details from the tutors represented the specific tutor or their culture,” Darren demonstrated positive changes in cognitive aspects as revealed in his interview with the researcher. He was observed to differentiate tutors’ characters by their nationalities and increase the cultural awareness across work-life issues.

### *1. Understanding the tutors' characters by nationalities*

As noted before, although Darren has acknowledged that he failed to remember the cultural backgrounds or details about those online tutors, he was aware that tutors seemed to have different teaching or conversation styles across nationalities.

First of all, Darren was aware of the distinct character among English teachers, regarding English native teachers and English teachers who used the language as a second language. He gave his narration about the long-term English speaking experience before using Cambly. Once he participated in an English immersion program cooperated by a Korean organization in Philippines, he interacted with professional ESL teachers in the camp. After the experience of a two-month session, Darren found that ESL teachers are less likely to be interactive with students than tutors on Cambly or English native teachers that he remembered. He further contributed the possible reason for the circumstances that the teaching styles of the ESL teachers in Philippine may be similar to the lecturing method under the influence of Asian traditional culture. Darren seemed to be aware of the cultural differences beyond the specific-culture information.

Then, the tutors on Cambly have left Darren with a distinct impression of cultural dynamic. Most tutors on Cambly are American, British, South African, Mexican. He explained that the tutors' teaching skills are certainly different from each other. For instance, British tutors have a more serious characteristic while American tutors are more laid-back. Comparing to other native speakers, in a sense tutors from South Africa seem to be less resourceful in teaching and delivering knowledge. From the diverse experience with many online tutors, Darren observed that in some

circumstances he had more negative impressions about American tutors than British ones. During the second interview, he answered the questions about how he interacted with tutors from different countries, He said, “I met good American tutors but I think the average teaching skills of British tutors are higher than American ones.” As the researcher asked him whether it has to do with their teaching style or the conversation topic, he replied negatively.

“It is about their ATTITUDE. You can feel they are not genuinely listening to your speaking. Some American tutors are...lazy and too laid-back, like a fat old man sitting on a couch and having a conversation with you. (The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)”

Seen in this regard, tutors’ attitude was the most important element for Darren to concern. Although tutors’ nationalities impacted their teaching style to some extent, tutors’ teaching attitude was what Darren care about.

## *2. Increasing cultural awareness across work-oriented and life-oriented issues*

Apart from the observation about tutors from different countries, another significant thing Darren learned from those online courses seemed to be the ability to appreciate the tutors’ perspectives on the balance between life and work. In the first and second interviews, when Darren talked about the issue of lifestyle, he showed a growing understanding of the different value of life from his tutors. The tutors’ perspectives tended to be working to live but not living to work. They cared about

their life after work and considered work as a small part of their life for living. But, it was not the common way of life in Asia. In Asia, people tended to work for the company but less care about the life quality. He further assumed that the major cultural differences came from the welfare benefits of people. For instance, one time he remembered, a British tutor told him that the flexible working schedule of a foreign company allowed a married couple to choose their office hour around the need to take care of their children. If the husband worked at an earlier time, his wife could decide to work in a late time. Although Darren was not ascertained whether this system was common in England, he admitted that the story shared by the tutor made him believe that foreigners cared more about quality of life than Asians did.

However, though Darren appreciated his tutors' lifestyle, he doubted the implementation of a work-life balance was worthwhile. During the conversation about work-life balance, Darren reported that his idea of having a better life changed throughout the days. He expressed his great wonder the first time he heard about keeping a work-life balance.

“At that time, the concept of a work-life balance was popular around the world. Since I just started a new job, I was jealous and admired people who were not in the job status but pursuing their dreams with a brand new way in foreign countries. (The second interview with Darren, January 30, 2021)”

Darren explained the reason of why he considered the lifestyle was improper in his age.

“We still had to work in Taiwan since time still went by. I found that this style was unfitting when I had reunion with my friends. If I pursued this living style, I would not do well on both work and life. Moreover, my college experience also reminded me that if I don’t focus on my work right now, it would take me more effort tomorrow. I agree with implementing this life style at my age. As a result, I pay more attention on working rather than thinking about life quality and being relax now. I have to say I still have relaxing time on the weekends. (The second interview with Darren , January 30, 2021)”

Darren also added that sometimes he and his tutors showed their perspectives so as to assess the potential reasons for different lifestyles, and they did not consider the work-oriented or life-oriented style as a good or bad living style.

However, though Darren could describe the culture in his own words, he still showed a limited perspective on how learning cultural features in an EFL environment. Since Darren developed various understanding of his and tutors’ culture by daily talk and sharing personal things, he valued the importance of understanding his tutors’ culture. When the researcher asked what kind of culture understanding he has learned, Darren stood firm and said,

“I am not sure how to learn to know a specific culture. We should live, experience and understand a culture but not learn it. So, the tutor and I just talk and share different things we have when having a conversation. (The second interview with Darren, January 30, 2021)”

Lastly, Darren's gain in the cognitive aspect of ICC was revealed in his recognition of more English idioms and slang. Darren considered the slang and idioms useful to describe a difficult circumstance in simple phrases. Noticing the benefit of using idioms, he need not describe with a long and complicated sentence but applied an appropriate idiom. For instance, he understood how to use "a cog in the machine" to illustrate his onboard working life that promoted the business of his company now. Nevertheless, although he was aware it was necessary to apply idioms in English speaking, he admitted he was tired of taking notes and memorizing the difficult words. Unless he had a chance to use it in real life, he may forget the idioms and slang easily.

### *The Behavioral Aspect*

From Darren's illustration, he was aware that he had language progress in speaking through the topic of job interview rather than listening and writing aspects. Moreover, Darren showed a positive change in his behavior when it came to the financial topics, showed by his improved English speaking ability, abilities to share personal interest in English, the improved interview skills and becoming a leading person in the conversation.

#### *1. Enhancing his English speaking ability*

First and foremost, the substantial improvement Darren has had was his speaking fluency that he acquired by communicating with so many tutors frequently and continuously. Darren expressed that cross-cultural communication improves his

language proficiency of speaking ability. For example, he expressed that he developed his fluency without being afraid of making mistakes. He described how he behaved and said during the conversation,

“I am no longer afraid of speaking English and describing the unknown words. Since I understood I could express in other ways or words for what I wanted to convey, the most important thing has become how to express the meaningful thing and let them understand it. (The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)”

Darren also added that he learned some responsive words to keep the conversation going, such as “make sense, I see, and I am with you.”

## *2. Improving communicative strategies by sharing personal interests*

Then, Darren also had positive changes on his communicative strategies such as using nonverbal responses, sharing similar experience, being an active listener and speaker, choosing better conversation topics etc. At the beginning of using Cambly, Darren described that he tended to react rather impolitely when his tutor said something that was very different from his own cultural perspective. His first intention was not to consider those foreign things by rejecting their culture. However, he realized his own changes of behavior after he had several interactions with different online tutors. In fact, he responded to the researcher with a complacent smile,



“At first, I might respond rudely and instantly if I didn’t have a conversation with so many tutors. But now, I would tell them my understanding of their story, and tell them what would happen in my surroundings. (The second interview with Darren, January 30, 2021)”

Furthermore, when Darren understood the tutors’ attitude was different from the common knowledge, he intended to share the differences which allowed them to discuss further. As shown in Darren’s learning journal, he once asked his tutor’s perspectives on the topic of “an unexpected pregnancy before marriage” by his curiosity (Learning journal, March 3, 2021). He wrote down what to do when people in Taiwan found his partner pregnant: getting married or having an abortion. On the other side, according to Darren’s description, his tutor showed people in South Africa were common to have a baby without marriage. Besides, the tutor argued that there was no law or regulations on a man showing responsible if something goes wrong in a pregnancy. In the end, they both identified the core of different perspectives on the base of culture, that is, whether people in the diverse culture are *responsible* for the pregnancy.

### 3. *Becoming a leading role in the conversation*

Additionally, Darren was eager to adjust his role of the conversation from a passive reactor to a leading role. At first, he had maintained his speaking strategy only listening and responding when the topic was relevant to him, however, what had become significantly different later was that he was willing to ask his tutors’ opinions

about professional topics and demonstrate his needs for suggestion in English. For example, he preferred to talk to tutors with sales experience and marketing but found tutors on Cambly lack economical awareness due to the profession in English teaching. He seldom met tutors who had economical knowledge enough to share their local conditions with him. Nevertheless, he was willing to share tutors with his ideas about marketing since he chose the easiest concepts of sales marketing to convey to his tutors. Darren responded that he put effort on guiding topics that he was interested in, such as sale experience, marketing and financial investment. Though he lacked chances to learn about his interesting topics in English, he asked himself to be a sharer spreading his knowledge of what he knew in English during the conversation. In fact, when the researcher asked him whether he should learn financial topics from people who spoke in Chinese, Darren responded in a surprising mood,

“I tried to find an interesting topic that I can learn from them. Though teachers were not professional in these areas, they shared their perspectives eventually. If I had only shared my daily works for my tutors’ request without giving them a specific topic to discuss, I would have been very boring. (The first interview with Darren, January 16, 2021)”

Although Darren tried to shift his communicational role, there were still some ambiguities in the conversation. Since Darren was a goal-oriented person, he maintained his interest in learning marketing things. He wondered whether tutors knew anything relevant to the professional knowledge about economics, but was struggling to converse with tutors. When the circumstances were not what Darren had

expected that tutors shared nothing in terms of the topic, Darren admitted that he had no idea what other topics they can discuss further. Furthermore, Darren was lazy to initiate a new topic since he always pursued his business interests in his life. He was not willing to guide any surface discussion in other topics. As a result, it is only when the tutors guided Darren to discuss other issues that Darren would talk about his subjective feelings about another in-depth topics.

#### *4. Improving interview skills in English*

Apart from the language progress in communicational strategy with English native tutors, Darren improved interview skills by rehearsing with his tutors: he learned how to write an English resume and how to behave like a professional sales in an English interview. As for the practice for a job interview, he said,

“I found tutors who had experience in human resources and told them my needs for job interviews and resume revising. Tutors’ encouragement was helpful in boosting my ego in the self-introduction of job interviews. The second useful focus was the content and grammatical correction. (The third interview with Darren, March 20, 2021)”

Darren understood there was no need to fix the details in the practice of his interview because unfamiliar tutors had no idea about his past experience. On the other side, the following excerpt showed how Darren gained experience positively in reviewing resumes and providing feedback,

“As for my resume, tutors spent time in revising the structure and words. I really appreciate them in this area. I may make common grammatical mistakes and the sentences in my resume seemed not native and local. Most of the time, I revised my sentence by tutors’ suggestion right away. (The first interview with Darren, January 6, 2021)”

To sum up, regarding the development of ICC in the behavioral dimension, Darren reported his improvement in English speaking fluency through diverse contexts and topics during cross-cultural communication.

### **Grace’s Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

#### *The Affective Aspect*

Regarding the affective aspect of intercultural experience, Grace has been continued to reveal an open-minded attitude toward stories of her tutors from different countries. Though Grace explained that her open attitude to different culture came from her prior experience in an international camp, she behaved more positively in meeting tutors on Cambly as the connection between person and person was more flexible than the connection in the international camp. In the following, it shows Grace’s open-minded attitude to people with different backgrounds, curiosity to authentic materials, relationship with British tutors and hiding emotions toward unfamiliar cultures.

*1. Revealing an open-minded attitude to people from different countries: prior experience until now*

Grace started her cross-cultural conversations on Cambly because she wanted to become a government employee in civil aeronautics administration. To be able to realize her dream, she must improve her ability in dealing with urgent circumstances, which is the necessary ability assessed in the entry test of the aircraft department. At first, she thought it was difficult to improve her English in an EFL environment. Since Grace joined an international camp where she communicated with people who used English as a second language, she considered that the effective way to improve speaking was having an English atmosphere to speak. That is to say, Cambly became one of the efficient tools to practice her English for its convenience and flexibility.

To begin with, Grace's opened-minded attitude was first influenced by her camping experience in college and she was willing to accept diverse culture then. It was an environmental camp in Germany where Grace stayed with a group of ESL learners from France, Spain, Finland, etc. The mission was to build environmentally friendly places for local students there. By cooperating with her partners, Grace started to understand the importance of seeing English as a communicative tool by noticing other ESL partners' attitudes of speaking English. She said,

“When we stayed and worked together for the two weeks, I need to communicate with them in English because it was our common language. Although we all were not English native speakers, they (people using English as a second language) just kept talking, kept talking and talking in English. They may use an

ungrammatical sentence... or they may choose the wrong words. But, they were willing to speak in English without fear in making a mistake.... (The first interview with Grace, January 20, 2021)”

Grace understood that talking to people from different places allowed her to find out her weakness. After the international camp, she was influenced by the partners’ speaking style and tried to embrace different communicative strategies, so that she can improve her speaking by the fearless attitude.

## 2. *Enhancing curiosity by authentic topics*

Noticing the critical attitude of valuing a language as a communicative tool, Grace showed a more positive response to authentic materials when having a conversation with tutors on Cambly. She stated the reason why she favored Cambly over other similar services,

“Not only can I learn English, but I also understand human culture with manifold aspects in English via Cambly. Since they came from different professional areas, you can learn things from them that cannot be learned from books. The fact is that, if I did not have the chance to interact with these tutors via this convenient platform, I was not able to have any chances to know their cultures. Just like the experience between me and my regular teacher, Tutor A. She explained a festival in the first class that I had ever heard of before. (The first interview with Grace, January 20, 2021)”

Grace also added that she was more willing to explore different topics with tutors on Cambly than receiving knowledge in EFL environment. She was interested in authentic cultural materials since she seldom had chances involving herself in tutors' interested areas. Grace utilized artistic criteria as an example to illustrate. She said, "I had no idea when he talked about Sotheby's, the art business. They seemed more often to go to small art galleries in their daily life." She further presented another finding, "They also have more opportunities for stargazing with a telescope. But it is not a usual hobby for me in my life or in my surroundings." Furthermore, though Grace never experienced these areas, the tutors increased Grace's motivation successfully in diverse topics. She was so interested in these topics that she was willing to share and hear more about tutors' sharing.

### *3. Maintaining relationship with friendly British tutors*

One of the affective findings was Grace's preference for maintaining a certain relationship with tutors who own the character of encouragement. On Cambly, Grace first believed the scoring mechanism and chose tutors with a higher score. But when picking tutors on Cambly, she often chose tutors with similar characteristics as hers and made a reservation with the tutor by video conferencing. She enjoyed the relaxed but serious mood among learners and tutors. Moreover, Grace has a motive for practice speaking with native speakers and she chose British tutors as her regular tutors since she favored a serious conversation style over talking with humor. Another reason for the intention for regular teachers was that she only had fifteen minutes to

speak. When the researcher further explored Grace's intention behind the British tutors, she explained naturally,

“I consider myself having an introvert character. In the meantime, the impression that ‘British tutors are more serious than Americans’ occur in my mind. Whether these cultural characters were one of my stereotypes, it has led me to choose British tutors so far. (The first interview with Grace, January 20, 2021)”

She remained firm in choosing British tutors by elaborating on how she overcame the obstacles with the accents. “Things became changed when I talked to several British tutors. I gradually got familiar with their accents, and now I am used to talking with British tutors than tutors from other nationalities.” Thus, her learning pattern has been identified as proof of how perception influences the relation across learners and tutors.

Grace also specified that the conversation with the British tutors was replete with influential interpersonal relationship. She appreciated the British tutors' teaching skills that they had good skills for encouraging learners to continue practicing the language. To be more specific, she illustrated the teacher-student relations by comparing the relationship with her tutors to her prior learning patterns with English teachers, who taught her in a traditional lecture method. She described in a suspicious attitude,



“I am not sure whether cultural differences are related to the relationship between the teacher and the student. But, in my prior experience, our language teachers did not encourage students as greatly as the tutors on the platform did. In our society, we were easily blamed by teachers if we have a bad performance. So, I felt that students, like me, were more willing to speak with native tutors because they aimed at encouraging students to speak continuously. It also strongly motivates me to practice further. (The second interview with Grace, February 4, 2021)”

In the meantime, though Grace intended to have a conversation with regular tutors, she sought opportunities to talk with different tutors. She pushed herself beyond her comfort zone by having conversations with new tutors. As a matter of fact, there were two reasons for the big push towards having conversations out of the comfort zone, one was practicing job interview and the other was overcoming the weakness of her personality. First, Grace showed her need for training self-introduction in front of a stranger since it was a necessary process in the job interview. Then, she also explained that sometimes she was nervous about talking to a stranger. Though using English was different from using Chinese, Grace intended to overcome her weakness by communicating with the unknown at times. She explained, “I have to train my nervous system to be adaptable in any circumstance.” However, she still preferred to talk with her regular tutors more since her major goal was to speak fluently and naturally.

#### *4. Hiding the emotions toward unfamiliar cultures*

When Grace heard tutors' individual stories that were instinctive, she was worried about asking a question about their privacy. If there is any need to continue the conversation, Grace revealed an attitude of keeping within the boundaries of their privacy since she was unlikely to share the details of her family, either. If only the tutors shared their personal life to motivate her to speak, she would choose to ask the relevant questions to continue the topic. For example, she stated that since her tutor, M, and his wife spoke different native languages, their children had problems mastering his language. Noticing the problem in their family, Grace only asked the tutor the appropriate question in a gentle voice, such as "what language did you and your wife use when you found your child's difficulty?". She also explained that the following question was too deep to ask, like "how did you meet your wife if you said different languages?"

In sum, Grace revealed a positive attitude toward tutors on Cambly. Despite Cambly are praised as a flexible platform for Grace, she has strongly valued the connections between her and the tutors through regular conversation and passionate speaking.

#### *The Cognitive Aspect*

Compared to Darren's cognitive aspect, Grace revealed considerable changes in the features of cognition. What showed the change contrastively was Grace's growing knowledge toward real-life issues, understanding about regular tutors' teaching styles and knowledge about slang and idioms.

### *1. Increasing knowledge about real-life issues*

Regarding the topics of communication, Grace considered real-life issues arose from all the topics she has discussed. Though tutors often utilized abundant topics to encourage her to speak, the topics were generally related to tutors' common knowledge in their life. For instance, when discussing with tutors, Grace explored diverse life-oriented issues in terms of art, cooking, environment, tea, movie. For each topic, since she often chatted with regular tutors, they would continue the same topic for two to three session if both the participant and the tutor are interested in the topics. Her learning diaries also revealed the detailed descriptions from her and her tutors' perspectives. She also added that foreign tutors was different from people in Taiwan when attaching importance to environmental issues,

“When Taiwanese people talk about environmental protection, we may think it is an argument from environmentalists. There are just a small group of people in Taiwan who truly care about protecting the environment. But the environmental actions remain common to most tutors I met, they felt it was ordinary to talk about environmental issues, like ‘do not use plastic bags’ or ‘drive electric vehicles’. (The third interview with Grace, March 19, 2021)”

“Most tutors consider environmental protection important that people should perceive it seriously. They all agreed that environmental issues needed more

attention and kept following it. (The third interview with Grace, March 19, 2021)”

Grace assumed tutors had more awareness on environmental friendly issues than people in Taiwan did. From the topics Grace wrote down in the learning journals, she has understood not only the specific perception in one topic, but different perceptions to broad topics in tutors’ personal life.

## *2. Understanding the regular tutors’ teaching styles by comparison and discussion*

Another example showed Grace’s ability in making cultural comparison between tutors’ diverse backgrounds and hers. In several entries of Grace’s learning diaries, she often wrote down the comparison of cultural circumstances across Taiwan, Thailand and England since one of her tutors was willing to share the personal life. For instance, while Tutor M told Grace his life story, Grace understood how Tutor M encountered the difficulties of inhabiting Thailand and how he lived with his cross-cultural family. In the meantime, Grace was aware that the cross-cultural marriage influenced children’s education since the children could have difficulties speaking Thailand or English. She reflected the relevant differences occurring with people’s nationality and their living places. She wrote down the findings on the learning diaries, and the topic evolved “exploring the form of politician by comparing the circumstance in Taiwan and the world,” “detecting the food issues: why becoming a vegetarian is not hard in England, fine in Taiwan but difficult in Thailand,” and “discussing the potential factors that influence children’s language learning.” When she further explored the reason why Tutor M behaved understanding in the

differences of the two cultures, she said, “Tutor M is a British while his wife is a Thai. The closest relationship probably made Tutor M aware of the cultural problems among him, his wife and his children.” As a result, we may find out Grace had a growing understanding of her tutors since her tutor had chances to experience other cultures deeply by marrying a Thai spouse instead of someone from the same country. The growing understanding was successfully made based on Tutor M’s open attitude to Grace.

On the other side, comparing to what Grace observed from Tutor M, when Grace got acquainted with the other regular teacher, Tutor L, she revealed a narrow interpretation about the tutor by her learning diaries. She gained little understanding of cultural observation toward Tutor L, not to mention British culture. According to Grace’s description, Tutor L, an artist who was professional in the artistic area, wandered in different places of the world before the pandemic. Although Tutor L has traveled to diverse countries and seen the world, he seldom shared what he saw in different part of the world, Grace explained the circumstance of how Tutor L behaved in the class.

“Tutor L only responded based on his personal experiences. Though he spent two to three months in one country, the time was probably insufficient for him to notice or understand the culture in one country. (The first interview with Grace, January 20, 2021)”

Grace used one topic to illustrate, “When we talked about student uniforms evolve into being, ‘whether two to three months of traveling helped him know the country’ was suspected.” She also found the reason why Tutor L seldom discussed issues from cultural aspects. Since Tutor L aimed to develop Grace’s critical thinking awareness, he guided Grace with numerous questions in topics to have a deep and natural discussion. The guiding questions were applied to motivate Grace to generate the subjective judgement relevant to her life. Tutor L merely share his perspectives with Grace because he focused on cultivating Grace’s speaking ability in terms of different topics.

Other example of discussion topics showed in the issue of children’s adoption. In this topic, Grace noticed that British people had a relatively different perspective from her that adopting children seemed common in England. Moreover, she figured out how they accepted each other’s opinion. Not only she understood the cultural perceptions and situations in the UK facilitated the willingness of adoption, her point of view was understood by the tutors because they had lived in Asia for a while. It enabled them to understand different points of view. For instance, she found the common pattern to illustrate their viewpoints was by using these words, “Your side tended to ... while our side tended to ...”. Grace and the tutor could be both aware of the perspectives on the other side. She also claimed, by her own experience, it was difficult to talk with tutors without Asian background knowledge or knowledge of Taiwan. When tutors showed a lack of cultural understanding about Asian culture, it was unlikely to have a deeper discussion.

Additionally, Grace also responded that she attempted to reflect on her own culture compared to what she heard from the tutors' cultural description. For example, she was aware that she adapted written language to the oral conversation since her spoken vocabulary tends to be academic. Grace considered the English course during high school education made her memorize useless words. When she was certainly eager to express her feelings by a precise word, she extracted the written words in a high school textbook from her memory. She further explained, "My tutor considered the word as a "nice" word, as if I speak of something that does not occur in a daily conversation but should occur in the book." She said,

"I tried to use a low-level word in the sentence, but I cannot think of it. Then, I came out with a high-level word that was not appropriate and weird in the conversation. (The second interview with Grace, February 4, 2021)"

She maintained her habit of applying the same word unless tutors encouraged Grace to substitute the word with a more precise vocabulary. Since Grace had difficulties in reviewing the lesson and checking out her common mistakes, she found it was the easiest way to try the written words in speaking language and ask tutors a suggestion directly.

### *3. Increasing knowledge about slang and idioms*

Grace also unexpectedly enriched her knowledge of British idioms. She was practicing her oral speaking through a series of conversations with tutors, but

sometimes she made unsuccessful attempts on her words. Her tutors suggested she substitute the expression with appropriate idioms. Take the interview as an example. Grace expressed that she had problems in illustrating people to do their business and collaborate with others. Conforming to Grace's difficulties, Tutor A indicated "horses for courses" as a better description for people having different qualities and skills in different situations. The examples of British idioms were more than that. Grace depicted other examples of British idioms, like "pet hates" which means something annoys you. However, she observed the idioms were seldom used in other countries where people have ever used or mastered British English. Since Grace resided in Asia where people rarely talk in the slang or idioms from British English, she made less effort on memorizing these British idioms.

In short, Grace showed the understanding of her tutors' culture by comparing the authentic topics and sentences. She understood tutors' perspectives from their culture instead of knowing tutors from their nationality.

### *The Behavioral Aspect*

Regarding the positive change in Grace's behavioral aspect, Grace pointed out her improvement on her communicative strategies and skill. At the beginning of the class, she was like a passive recipient that she only followed the speakers' topic by eliciting a simple response to the speakers, such as "yes" or "no". Yet, in the long-term conversation with tutors, she was able to listen carefully to the speakers, share more details, and ask questions to the speakers. In the following, she showed how she became a sharer by making subjective opinions, how she developed communicative



strategies by tutorial support, and how she improved her speaking and listening ability.

### *1. Becoming a sharer by offering personal opinions*

First of all, she gave a big accomplishment on how tutors improved her language proficiency and communicative strategies. For example, Tutor L, as her regular tutor, has been kept training Grace's subjective perspectives by providing a series of questions from a website. Since the questions included surface questions and deep questions, it helped Grace deliver her subjective judgement by an in-depth discussion. She explained,

“I have to think deeply concerning these questions. Then, with the help and encouragement from my tutor, I was able to articulate my own point and had a deep discussion to the point I just made. It is unlike the objective depiction of the phenomenon to be so factual—my internal reactions are largely included. (The third interview with Grace, March 19, 2021)”

Then, Grace used students' uniforms to illustrate how her subjective opinions were shaped in the conversation. She explained that Asian schools implemented different rules on students' uniforms for some unexplained reasons. Grace assumed the potential possibilities on how Asian high school insisted on students' wearing uniforms by her prior experience. She claimed, “It is teachers' hope for all students that they should focus on studying not on their clothes.” Grace indicated her

assumptions of traditional Asian perspectives that Asians tend to put a high value on educational achievements than students' personal development. Nevertheless, her tutors gave another reason and said, "One of the essential need for school uniform is to diminish the boundaries between the rich and poor." Seen from her tutors' descriptions, it was apparent that he paid more attention to the social influence than Grace. During the conversation, Grace emphasized that she racked her brain trying to think of words to describe her thoughts instead of looking the words up in an online dictionary. What is more, she believed that this communicative approach facilitated her speaking when she avoided to interrupt the conversation.

Grace has cultivated her communicative strategies in front of her tutors, whereas her communicative strategies were limited to a few skills. She has given the leadership of topic controlling to her tutors since most of the time her tutors were capable of starting a topic at the beginning of the conversation. It was hard for her to think about initiating a topic for English conversations. She also claimed, "I am not a person to initiate a topic of conversations, even in Chinese." Moreover, when she felt awkward in the pause of uncomfortable silence, the tutors took charge of the conversation immediately. Since the tutors' characters were patient and persevere and that they were willing to continue the topic and bring up the subject of the conversation, Grace lacked opportunities to manage the next new topic by herself. She considered it as a strength for talking on Cambly and said,

"I always gave them the authority of topic controlling: it was one of the advantages of online tutoring. The tutors understand how to respond to students

like me, who don't know what topic could be developed. (The third interview with Grace, March 19, 2021)"

Grace appreciated tutor's assistance for managing the topics, but at the same time she limited her creativity for bringing up a new topic.

## *2. Developing communicative strategies through the tutorial support*

As noted before, Grace still concerned about making too many grammatical mistakes. Yet, her worries are gradually solved by two female tutors, Tutor P and Tutor A, who has become one of her modal tutors on Cambly since they have professional teaching skills. Their communicative style met Grace's immediate needs that both were capable of identifying words and sentences that needed to be corrected. In addition, Grace observed that one of the reason the female tutors were much more skilled at making appropriate adjustments than male tutors was because "they had English teaching certificates to be qualified English teachers." Regardless of naming the qualification through an English teaching certificate, Grace reflected that the tutors who focused on language intended to modify some of the wording by giving the learners appropriate spoken words. They reflected on verbal adjustments more quickly than tutors who focused on the communication of meaning. Grace described the comparison by showing the examples of her two tutors,

"From the experience of communicating with Tutor P and A, they took time to propose revision by speaking and typing. So, we often only brought up a

surface-level discussion but not a meaning-focused communication. For Tutor M and Tutor L, it was the other way around. (The third interview with Grace, March 19, 2021)”

In fact, before encountering Tutor P and Tutor A, she hoped that her two previous tutors, Tutor M and Tutor L, could revise the weird spots of her sentences more frequently. She intended to ask them a favor to correct her grammar mistakes and sentence structures during the conversation since her next step as a professional speaker was to speak like a professional speaker. However, she was worried about expressing her needs in the conversation since she thought of them as friends, communicative partners instead of grammar correctors. She also stated it was not appropriate to change their conversation style since they had maintained the style for a long time. As a result, they remained using the same communicative strategy; only if there was an obvious mistake, they would try to make the arrangement and bring out a better English sentence.

### *3. Improving speaking and listening ability*

In addition to Grace’s verbal behavioral findings, she found that her listening ability was largely improved by continuously practicing with British tutors. She admitted that she had problems listening to the British accent at first. Since she intended to talk to British tutors, she spent time listening carefully to their accents. Recently, she understood over eighty percent of the conversation so that she rarely asked tutors to repeat what they said anymore. Grace was confident about her

listening ability in an American accent, too. She responded with her prior experience in a relatively confident voice, “Last time I happened to see an American film without subtitles, I could understand the film most of the time. ”

Grace also stated that her reading and writing ability were not as strongly improved as her speaking and listening ability, although she had several reading practices with tutors on Cambly. One of the possible reasons was that the reading passage tutors offered aimed to improve Grace’s speaking not reading skills. The passages were easy to understand by learners from senior high school to college. Grace said she seemed to comprehend all the passages in their discussion that she often finished reading the passage quickly.

Another positive behavior has shown in the learning journals. Grace demonstrated a positive reaction that she had no communication breakdown with her tutors. For almost all entries of learning journals, Grace wrote nothing on the questions of “communication breakdown”. She explained the following reasons to illustrate why there was almost no breakdown in the discussion. First, most of the time, as mentioned above, she racked her brain to figure out the words and sentences for the appropriate expressions. Despite the unknown words that Grace described in a long and complicated way, Grace successfully expressed her ideas in details. Then, her tutors were patient in listening and encouraging, so they understood what Grace meant and discussed with more details. If only tutors spoke unfamiliar words for Grace, she immediately asked the meaning of the words and made an effort to continue. In the long-term conversation, both the learner and the tutor had reached the goal of successful conversations.

Regarding English speaking practices, Grace also practiced her English speaking in reality. She participated in an English club, Toastmaster, to practice English speech. In the club, she had to discuss diverse topics in different forms, such as leading a topic as a professional speaker, practicing self-assessing ability by giving suggestions to other EFL learners' speech, expressing opinion to an English materials. Unfortunately, although she added that she could speak comfortably in front of a group of people in the English club and tutors on Cambly, she was uncertain that to what extent the two English learning experience influenced her speaking proficiency. She explained,

“I definitely was aware that my English proficiency was both improved by Cambly and Toastmaster. Since the two instruments were filled with encouraging property, I am not sure how to describe the specific influence between these two English learning approaches. (The third interview with Grace, March 19, 2021)”

She admitted that she would use these two approaches to foster her English ability in the long run.

To sum up, though Grace still had problems in leading the topics of the conversation, Grace has changed positively regarding of expressing ideas with numerous words, and speaking and listening proficiency.

### **Summary of the Two Participants' Development of ICC**

To conclude, Table 3 shows the two participants' overall development of ICC in three aspects. The two participants, Darren and Grace, both developed various aspects of intercultural communicative competence through interacting with native speakers in the online tutoring environment. First, regarding of the affective aspect of intercultural communicative competence, the two participants were able to show open attitude to their tutors' background, and their interest to tutors' stories, surprises with the consultant functions, reflections, curiosity, hiding emotions, as well as learning preference through English learning. As for the cognitive aspect of ICC, the participants enhanced their cultural knowledge and awareness about different cultural issues, evidenced by their increased perceptions toward tutors' characters, work-life issues, teaching styles, and local slang and idioms. As for the behavioral aspect, both participants recognized that they have greatly improved their English speaking ability and communication skills as they interacted with foreign tutors. The most salient change was that Darren and Grace can share personal experience as a leading role and a sharer in the online learning conversation.

Table 3 The Two Participants' Development of ICC in Three Aspects

Aspect of ICC		Darren	Grace
I. The affective aspect	1.	Developing an open attitude to tutors' background and showing more respect	1. Revealing an open-minded attitude to people from different countries: prior experience until now
	2.	Expressing interest in the tutors' stories	2. Enhancing curiosity by authentic topics
	3.	Surprised with the consulting functions on Cambly	3. Maintaining relationship with friendly British tutors
	4.	Reflecting on learner attitude	4. Hiding the emotions toward unfamiliar cultures
II. The cognitive aspect	1.	Understanding the tutors' characters by nationalities	1. Increasing knowledge about real-life issues
	2.	Increasing cultural awareness across work-oriented and life-oriented issues	2. Understanding the regular tutors' teaching styles by comparison and discussion
			3. Increasing knowledge about slang and idioms
III. The behavior aspect	1.	Enhancing his English speaking ability	1. Becoming a sharer by offering personal opinions
	2.	Improving communicative strategies by sharing personal interests	2. Developing communicative strategies through the tutorial support
	3.	Becoming a leading role in the conversation	3. Improving speaking and listening ability
	4.	Improving interview skills in English	



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

After indicating the two participants' positive changes of ICC in terms of the affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects, this chapter aims to answer the second research question and explains possible reasons and factors to the results of the current study. First, *learners' attitude to the intercultural learning experience* is aimed to answer research question two by two participants' assertions. The assertions highlight the two participants' feelings and determination of using the unique one-on-one online tutoring platform, Cambly. Second, *learners' cognition and behavior in the intercultural learning experience* shows the significant emerging themes and findings which are unexpected before the research. This section reveals their learning procedure of how they adjusted their learning style and what they emphasized the most in the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Third, *other factors that influence the learner's intercultural learning experience* is presented to bring out different faces of ICC. Although the above findings corroborate Chao's ICC framework (2013) in the three aspects, the findings also supplement the online learning experience where Chao's ICC framework did not mention.

#### **Learners' Attitude to the Intercultural Learning Experience**

*1. I felt confident to speak in the encouraging, private and authentic online environment.*

To begin with, the participants claimed that no matter what countries the tutors came from, it was the tutors' encouragement to push learners to speak louder against

their fear of making mistakes. Tutors' optimistic energy, such as patience and a comfort smile, allowed the two participants to have confidence to speak and go one step further into the next English proficiency level. It is relevant to Chao's (2013) framework. In the category of affect, learners' willingness to communicate with people of different cultural backgrounds are easily affected by learners' emotion, such as anxiety, stereotypes and expectations. On Cambly, the two participants no longer limited to the stereotype of speaking an accurate English because they were strongly encouraged by their tutors in a one-on-one interaction. The participants had courage to speak more than before by making mistakes, and they tried their best in English speaking. The assertion highlights optimistic encouragement as one of the factor influencing learners' motivation of English speaking on Cambly. Moreover, to expand the affective component in Chao's framework, this study further depicts how the context of online learning environment has fostered learners' English speaking ability. First, tutors on Cambly agree that it is a conversation platform encouraging learners to speak about daily things. Then, Cambly provide each learner privacy with one-on-one interaction. Third, learners met unique cultural experience by authentic conversation with people from different backgrounds. In the following, the three elements affecting the participants' motivation are presented.

1.1 Encouragement: In the one-on-one conversation, Darren and Grace were engaged in a big conversational circle where they could negotiate comfortably with tutors by specific guidance and questions that they had in common with tutors; tutors encouraged the participants to speak more. The participants figured out that the common problem was that they lacked abilities to communicate in an effective way.

They usually used a verbose explanation to describe a word or an event. But they were not embarrassed in the circumstance where pauses continued to recur. When they tossed tokens and sentences to the tutors, it was tutors' commitment to guarantee the participants they would not be blamed or feel awkward. "You do not have to be afraid, this discussion is only between you and me," quoted by Darren. It also highlighted the empathy that tutors abetted the participants response with a closed relationship. As reviewed in chapter two, when interacting with English native speaker partners, EFL learners reduced anxiety in the online environment where English native speaker partners' different personalities comforted them in the discussion (De Graaff, Jauregi, Kriz, & van den Bergh, 2012). The teachers' character and distinct personality became an effective motivation for EFL learners, which was also consistent with the current study. It emphasized that tutors' motivational strategies was established by the participants' language-related values and attitudes, and reflection related to the language and its culture (De Graaff, Jauregi, Kriz, & van den Bergh, 2012)." Besides, the two participants' positive changes also existed in their willingness to give opinions when they were engaging in the circle with tutors. Both of their learning behaviors changed positively in their strategies, language awareness and learning effect influenced by tutors' idiosyncratic strategies (Case, 2017; Guichon, Bétrancourt & Prié, 2012; Schweinhorst, 2007).

1.2 Privacy: Based on the supportive atmosphere, the participants perceived tutors not only as a motivational engagement, a grammar-corrector but a secret security. In the study, tutors' positive feedback and supportive atmosphere was a decisive component for the ongoing interaction with students. Since the two adult English

learners were reluctant to share secrets with people they had already known in the reality, they were more willing to share things in the virtual world with someone who they merely thought to have little chance to meet again. The two participants both compared with their prior speaking experiences with English speakers regarding of native speakers, ESL speakers and EFL speakers, and found out they tended to expose personal things with more details to the tutors online. Both Darren and Grace have expanded their territories of communication by tutors' continuous questions and interaction, as if enlarging the communicative circle by tutors' communicative territories. The reason for tutors being considered a secret security might come from the tutors' personality different from the teachers' images in the learners' culture. Once learners shared their deepest emotions with their tutors, learners understood that tutors tried to accommodate learners themselves by listening to the needs carefully. Learners may eager to share and be understood regarding life obstacles and future plans. It is possible to exist during a one-session course with a stranger or a regular session with a regular tutor.

1.3 Authenticity: Throughout the cross-cultural discussion, what opened learners' perceptions was the authentic tutors' life filled with changing and unstable elements for the two participants. It took a long process to understand what has been built in two participants' minds by observation, negotiation, comparison and reflection. When the researcher traced the root of the tutors' cultural descriptions and several influential cultural stories, the most impressive stories for the participants were often related to different tutors' life processes coming from tutors' sharing occasionally. Tutors' and the participants' communicational topics were abroad, from economic issues to

artistic programs. As the participants resolved to respond optimistically or pessimistically, the tutors' stories shaped both participants' mindset of cultural background, and gave the participants' seeds of knowledge and sporadic possibilities to engage with people from diverse backgrounds in the future.

*2. I determined to find my appropriate learning style in the limited online tutoring platform.*

On Cambly, the participants' determination for having an appropriate learning style has shed light on one part of learners' attitude in Chao's ICC framework. In her study, learners' attitude included emotional and psychological reactions to people of different cultural backgrounds. Regarding the emotional reactions, this study showed that the importance of learners' determination allowed learners to face different circumstances on Cambly. Since the two participants had diverse conversation via Cambly, they may encounter uncomfortable experiences when talking to unfriendly tutors. However, both participants in the study insisted that their determination to become a fluent and accurate English speaker was the key to continue the sessions by changing their learning styles. In Chao's study, the framework did not touch on the learners' determination for practicing English. From this study, it is important to take it into consideration when exploring learners' development of ICC, especially for the adult learners' learning experience. The two participants also changed their learning styles by self-determination.

2.1 Determinations: Although it was a long process to come over, the permanent goal with courage to reach the next English proficiency level has become one

essential component influencing the participants' positive change. As mentioned previously, the two participants' goals were becoming professional English speakers that permitted them to work in a global company or an English immersion company. Nevertheless, after using Cambly for a long-term period, the two participants revealed a little anxiety about their practice efficiency: their English proficiency was stuck at a certain level. Darren once stated, "I want to speak English fluently, although I work in a Japanese company where there is no chance to use English." On the other side, Grace said patiently, "I have already set my target to become an excellent speaker although the deadline of the entry test is still far from now." While Darren pursued a specific and urgent need to push him further, Grace vacillated on how to improve English speaking if there is no governmental test waiting for her. Their common learning obstacle was that they were eager to see their improvement as soon as possible, but they understood and accepted the limited platform during the practice. They noticed Cambly was a platform to have a casual conversation for EFL learners without providing a series of standardized courses. Therefore, the two participants attempted to try diverse ways of communicative approaches with different tutors repeatedly to find out their appropriate learning style.

2.2 The changing learning styles: In addition to understanding the personal learning style, they changed their learning styles by choosing different tutors. Darren and Grace revealed big differences in their learning strategies for the correction of grammatical errors as they understood their English proficiency level has reached a certain level. Darren prefers to ask the tutor a favor directly that he adjusted the way of words as soon as possible. On the other hand, Grace first vacillated to ask tutors to

offer professional advice on adjusting their grammatical mistakes. After a while, she determined to choose another tutor to query for error analysis as assistance for correcting her speaking. At the same time, she still had a tacit agreement with her regular tutors corresponding to her prior learning habits. The elements of changing learning styles were similar to communicative strategies in Chao's framework. In her framework, she mentioned how to produce verbal and nonverbal behavior appropriately and effectively in different circumstances. On Cambly, Darren and Grace found tutors not just for daily English chat, they asked tutors to revise their English so that they would have a better future or salary. The reasons for the changing learning styles may come from learners' unique English needs. This study shows that learners unique English need is one possible reason to explain the changing communicative strategies in Chao's ICC framework. Comparing the finding with Kozar's (2015) study, few online tutoring platforms featured "all you need to do is enroll" to show how easy to learn English speaking with online tutors. It turned out that learners increased ICC by changing styles when they knew the limited knowledge of the online tutors or platforms. The misleading statement, was not appropriate speaking skills for the two participants.

It should be noted that since the two participants were mature adults who controlled precisely their brain and lived an independent life, they illustrated limited but memorable vocabularies and impressive experiences, relying on their core knowledge. As Cercone(2008) enlightened in the characteristics of adult learners' online learning experience, the theoretic assumptions were mentioned. First of all, adult learners are independent and self-directed in order to achieve their future goals,

but some seek other people's advice for a better approach. It corresponds to the current study that the participants needed tutors to help produce appropriate sentences by asking suggestions for the structures and the cultural perspective from a foreign country in an one-on-one interaction. Secondly, adult learners accumulate experiences by relating new concepts to prior experiences. This concept was consistent with the current study in that the two participants figured out the learning pattern by fitting in the new concepts with their prior impressions.

Moreover, regarding the fact of adult learners' characteristics in learning, the study infers that both participants needed not only desirable goals along with corresponding guidance, but the demands of learner pressure from themselves. The two participants hold a strong determination to continue their practice regularly via Cambly despite both admitted that they dropped their class sometimes due to an exhausting day of working, inappropriate time management, or losing patience. According to Lee's (2016) report, online tutoring required students' time regulation that help satisfied the L2 target. Learners should "decide what, when, and how to learn and know how to monitor own learning" in front of the synchronous online learning platform. Both illustrations confirm the necessary skills for self-determination to fulfill personal goals when discussing with tutors. Furthermore, according to White, Zheng and Skyrme's (2020) study, the one-on-one encounter offered learners with more agency to shift their learning style and less requirement from teacher control, it was consistent with the study that learners developed the ability to "identify, work or treat from dynamic affordance of settings."



## **Learners' Cognition and Behavior in the Intercultural Learning Experiences**

### *1. The participants learned to adjust their values and judgement by understanding dynamic English tutors.*

When the participants shared individual perspectives to the tutors, the participants learned how to adjust values and judgement to the varieties of English by comparison and reflection. This statement is consistent to the cognitive factor in Chao's ICC framework. In the cognitive categories of learner awareness, learners would develop a deeper understanding of foreign people's dynamic attitude through personal observation, description, comparison and reflection. By stressing out the comparative ability, this study revealed how the two participants compared tutors' attitude and behavior between tutors' teaching style and nationalities. It also showed the two participants' values and judgement on tutors' teaching styles when they understood the tutors' profession.

First of all, it was by chance that they encountered a matched tutor being consistent with their needs since each adult learner had individual goals in English learning. Darren often chose the tutors with marketing experience because he was a goal-oriented person; Grace often chose the tutors with British background due to her stereotypical impressions for British people's serious characters. On cambly, Darren and Grace both revealed "expectations" for tutors, in terms of tutors' professional knowledge, guiding strategies and teaching attitude. However, their unrealistic expectations may contribute to misinterpretation of tutors' ability (GudyKunst, 2004). It was until the time when the two participants had a thorough discussion with tutors

that they started to set his/her sights on having fairly good tutors on Cambly. For example, they first projected an image to their new tutors by seeing their introduction profile before the class. Then, after a surface discussion, they found out the tutors under their expectations normally revealed different characters compared to the profile. Most of the time, it was a person who showed a passive attitude in guiding the speech. This study may further expand the Cognitive aspect in Chao's framework from an online learning perspectives. Before learners have a deeper understanding toward the tutors, they may influenced by the tutors' self-introduction profile, which gives learners either convincing or distorted impression to the tutors. The misinterpretation to some extent determine whether the conversation is going to be successful or not. Seen from Chao's ICC framework, learners' comparative ability allowed them to have a deeper understanding of tutors' behavior and attitude. This study may revealed that the online tutoring function influence learners' understanding to different tutors. However, the two participants gradually realized the average level and quality of English native speaker partners, and they began to understand their internal demands corresponding to tutors' limited knowledge and culture.

The two participants adjusted the stereotypes for tutors by understanding the individual characters of each tutor step-by step. They developed a capacity of critical examination, an insider understanding of their culture, to have a value-based judgement and critical instance to the culture (Moran & Lu, 2001, p.113). The cultural beliefs were gradually built on by the two participants' prior intercultural experience, the go-abroad experience of the English immersion camp. Both of the participants not only noticed they stereotype the tutors, but sought opportunities to create a meaning-

focused communication with tutors by sharing the comparison and reflection on the distinct properties of their culture during the conversations. Moran and Lu's idea of developing critical thinking also found a resonance in intercultural exchange programs with computer-mediated communication approaches (Angelova & Zhao, 2016; Freiermuth & Huang, 2012; Oakley et al., 2018; Wach, 2015). When the two participants develop values and judgement for the tutors, the participants found the differences of life between them and the tutors in the hundreds of discussion topics. The two participants shared their opinions gradually and shaped their perceptions in the conversations. The critical cultural awareness (Kramsch, 1993), was emerged as a critical cultural outcome in online learning experiences. As Bennett (2003) indicated, one of the essential elements to develop intercultural communicative competence is by cross-cultural comparison distinguished from distinct properties.

*2. The participants emphasized student-teacher connection when matching up with their tutors.*

As mentioned previously, since the study focused on the learning experiences in the one-on-one online tutoring platform, this study revealed a big difference on the part of the student-teacher relationship by CMC approaches comparing to the classroom setting. In the following, the study first implied the reason why the two participants built a stronger connection with the tutors. And then the study signified the participants' demands for tutorial roles when matching up with the tutors.

First of all, at the beginning of each cross-cultural communication, the participants first remained neutral attitude to the stories they encountered. Since they seldom

initiated specific questions to open a topic, the topic controller often belonged to the tutors who used numerous questions and surrounded-events to engage the participants into the conversation. The topics include numerous living experience, a small daily thing, or events and obstacles which tutors have been through recently. When probing into different subjects, the participants asked carelessly to the topics that they attempted to understand more about the tutors. They listened carefully to the tutors' details of personal stories without interruption and they responded in an open attitude in order not to be offensive to. But, on the inside of their deepest eagerness, they hid their desire and thought about why the tutors lived a copious cultural life.

In order to fulfill participants' eagerness and curiosity, they created a bond with the tutors, promoting a strong sense of interaction enhancing learners' satisfaction and commitment. For example, both Darren and Grace had regular tutors that they admired and appreciated. During the interview, they all gave enormous compliments when they talked about these tutors, such as the comprehensive and professional knowledge and the patient attitude. It should be highlighted that the learners valued the learning process with the regular tutors. Learners took the tutors' attitude as the first and significant factor of the deep core to become an effective tutor. Moreover, from Darren's experience, we could infer that he was influenced largely by the familiar tutors. It has been a long while since Darren first used Cambly, the cultural influence from tutors is indescribably diverse. Darren once used "assimilate" to illustrate the situation on how he forgot the former understanding and interaction with the tutors. He further explained, "I gradually felt that I am assimilating by tutors' attitude and behaviors." The statement focused on the tutors' doing but not the culture

itself. He said, “I like the tutors, and somehow I could not express how his culture influences me but how he influences me.”

Cambly gave more flexibility in the relations among learners and tutors.

Comparing to the teacher-student relationship in the classroom, the two participants situated in a learner-center situation. One of the reason was because tutors had less responsibilities for the learners’ improvement. The two participants had to be aware of communicative strategies, actions or techniques by themselves. It demands a high quality of observation and reflective ability for the two participants to use Cambly. As mentioned in Chao’s study, learners’ awareness of cognition refers to the ability to understand foreign people’s attitude and behavior, such as observation. In this study, when the two participants observed that tutors were diverse for teaching style and attitude, both participants spent time finding the perfect tutors who matched the learners’ preference. The connection they built with the tutors was disable since there were no regular sessions on Cambly. In this flexible environment, learners had to cultivate their speaking ability by building a more steady environment where they could develop a learning pattern with their favorite tutors, who were also their regular tutors. Having a stable relationship with tutors in an online learning environment was what the two participants wanted for their student-teacher relations, which might be one factor underpins the communicative strategies and skills in Chao’s framework. Besides the connection, as regards the learners’ perceptions to the tutors, although the two participants explained that they viewed tutors as friends, they perceived tutors more as an instructor, as if combining the roles of language partners and traditional teachers (Eslami, 2011; Price, Richardson, & Jelfs, 2007). On one hand, they

demanded skillful teaching and corrective feedback from tutors' instant language instruction. On the other hand, they cared about tutors' feelings as friends. The online environment subsequently changed into a separated classroom that learners maintained the relationship with tutors who provided pastoral care, personalized feedback, and a matched learning-and-teaching approach (Price, Richardson, & Jelfs, 2007). As a result, we may infer that the nature of the interaction situated in learners' needs and a sense of fulfillment which is the key component of successful tutoring and learning relations.

In sum, the demands for both tutorial supports and learners' needs should be discussed at the same time. When it comes to an one-on-one online learning scenario, matching learners' requests with tutorial supports may contribute to a successful intercultural communication.

### **Other Factors That Influence the Learner's Intercultural Learning Experience: Digital Literacy/ Personality/ the Critical Incident**

#### **1. Digital Literacy**

When the participants showed positive changes in ICC, the digital factors also had considerable impacts on learner communication. This study contributed to reveal the two participants' digital literacy in ICC by understanding the limitation on Cambly. First, the two participants should pre-arrange the chatting time with five-star tutors since it was not easy to have a schedule with the tutors (Avgousti, 2018). Seen from tutors' schedule on Cambly, learners had advantages to prognosticate on the assigned time of English speaking sessions. Secondly, learners could only share tutors the e-

materials by other platforms if they want to, such as using the google cloud. Darren took action to send his resume by google cloud since he aimed to accomplish a professional English interview in the beginning. The above digital limitation may appear in other online tutoring platform. However, the online tutoring platform varied differently so that each platform has its limitation on the technological aspects. When people develop their ICC through an online tutoring platform, they should regard the digital literacy as one influenced factor in ICC.

This study also sheds light on developing ICC in the context of videoconferencing. As reviewed in chapter 2, learners have improved their ICC from synchronous or asynchronous online learning approaches, such as email, blog, podcast, skype and instant message (Hsu & Beasley, 2019; Lee, 2019). Bearing this in mind, Cambly has opened a wide space to discuss varied cultural topics and issues about one's own and other countries conveniently with people in the globalized world. The medium of videoconferencing allows learners to speak a real language in the virtual world. Although the videoconferencing communication does not offer the same communication as the traditional face-to-face communication, tutors could arrange various resources for learners to initiate a topic, such as pictures, films or reading articles. That fact is that the tutors are both limited in the context of videoconferencing, but they adjusted to the virtual environment.

Lastly, evidence has showed that Cambly may lack providence for an official course which is unlike the traditional face-to-face tutoring. First, to some extent the official course Cambly offered lacks support for engaging learners' interest in the topics. Cambly provides a series of slides for numerous topics, such as the speaking

practice from TOEFL and IELZ, or other conversational courses from topical issues to business communication. Nevertheless, the two participants seldom used the official courses for the discussion, either did most of their tutors they have met. It may indicate the slide design were not appropriate for the learners who had specific purpose for English learning so that the participants show little interest in the template slides. Then, another reason for the unsuccessful slides may lie in the circumstance when the conversation only took place between two people, one tutor and one learner. The discussion slides were designed to have a started topic. However, it was easily to end up the discussion between only two people. In fact, the two learners show no confidence in the functions of official slides because Cambly has not proposed sufficient materials to meet learners' requirements.

## 2. Personality

The participants' personality may determine the online learning approaches by preferences. It seemed like the two participants had opposite personal characteristics: Darren appeared to adopt a goal-oriented mindset and planned to learn other professional knowledge rather than language part, whereas he lacked the ability to set up a specific goal that got him closer to the object. He had difficulties to improve his learning strategy to reach his vision boards. Sometimes he blamed himself for not having a productive improvement. On the other hand, Grace tended to accept the diverse circumstances and approaches which tutors gave her. She developed an open attitude for all kinds of resources by a verbal chat with tutors from different backgrounds. Her attitude led her to achieve her core goal: to speak a meaningful



English. It may also show that Grace had more opportunity to require incidental learning than Darren did due to Grace's opened interest to different culture. That is to say, she had more chances to understand the tutors' own culture and knowledge since each specific topic was probable in the discussion between her and the tutor.

We may infer that each participants' optimistic and pessimistic perceptions to English has led to individual learning outcomes. The study stressed that the two participants' learning choices come from their different characters so that it underpins personal characteristics relevant to the intercultural learning. Moreover, in the prior ICC framework of Chao's theory, it does not find resonance on personality issues. Taking personalities into account may supplement Chao's ICC framework in developing future learners' ICC. The personality base may be positioned to show the importance of individuality in learners' ICC.

### 3. The Critical Incident

Then, we further suggested that the critical incident influences the development of ICC. The critical incident of learners' life was found in Darren's development of ICC, his changes of career. Darren was looking for a job in August, 2020. Then, he found a job in a Japanese company in January, 2021. From the experience of career changes, Darren has switched his learning mode from the interview-preparation to the future advice. By examining Darren's changing English needs, the study revealed Darren's adjustment of pattern of learning throughout his description. According to Fantini (2000), the developmental process was one of the critical elements of ICC that focused on learners' improvements and proficiency. The results of the current study

suggest that the potential influences of life-critical events should be highlighted in the development of ICC, too. In short, to better capture students' intercultural development in an online learning context, these various factors such as digital literacy, personality, and critical life incident should also be addressed, which highlights the necessity to expand Chao's (2013) ICC framework.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The present study explored how two Taiwanese English learners developed their intercultural communicative competence via the one-on-one online tutorial platform. This chapter first presents the summary of major findings of this study based on the learners' experience of online cross-cultural communication. After that, the pedagogical implications as well as the limitations and suggestions for future studies are depicted.

#### **Summary of the Findings**

In summary, the findings revealed that the two participants, Darren and Grace, developed various aspects of intercultural communicative competence through interacting with native speakers in the online tutoring environment. First, regarding the affective factor of intercultural communicative competence, Darren and Grace are more willing to share ideas and opinions in English due to some tutors' positive guidance in the communication. Moreover, in general, their attitude toward native speakers, especially to the native English teachers, has shifted from perceiving them as a professional teaching figure to a supportive character in English conversation to some extent. Secondly, regarding the cognitive factor of ICC, the two adult EFL learners have learned the lifestyles of people from different nationalities through interacting with online tutors from Cambly. From these interactions, a variety of topics are discussed and learned such as work and life issues, environment, slang and

idioms, etc. Additionally, regarding the behavioral factors of ICC, both EFL learners report that they greatly improve their fluency in English speaking. Furthermore, the two learners also show improvement in their use of communicative strategies after gaining more interactions with different foreign tutors.

Additionally, the themes also indicates that the two participants have a strong positive attitude toward the intercultural communication experience via Cambly. During the long-term practice in the online environment, they are willing to speak on Cambly, the encouraging, private and authentic platform. Cambly provides the two participants a safe place where the participants could avoid embarrassment and worries by tutors' understanding and respect. Moreover, the two participant show the determination to develop the preferred English learning style on Cambly. They understand that the work on Cambly is limited to casual conversation, so they adjust the online learning mode by changing different tutors. The participants also enhance their learner awareness by acknowledging the learning goals and putting pressure on themselves.

Furthermore, from the participants' cognition and behavior, it reveals possible explanations for the two participants' positive attitude to the online tutoring platform. First, although tutors on Cambly does not follow a predictable teaching pattern, the participants learn to modify their stereotype and judgement due to the chatting with dynamic tutors. They misinterpret tutors' professions but adjust value by the long-term practice. Second, the connection of student-teacher connection make intercultural communication flexible than the traditional classroom does. The two participants hope to maintain a stable relationship in the changeable online learning

platform so that they can have deeper communication with regular tutors. Third, three factors, digital literacy, personality and the critical incident, may influence the performance of the two learners' development of ICC.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Drawn from the interviews' data and learning journals, the study suggests some pedagogical implications that have arisen from the above themes and findings.

Regarding to the result indicating adult learners' attitude for the online intercultural experience, the implication thus first focuses on adult learners' needs and suggestions for the English tutors, then the suggestions for the online learning platform. These implications may help future English tutors or teachers improve their teaching method to potential adults.

To begin with, the findings of the study highlight the importance of experiencing the intercultural contexts through the online language platform from two learners' perspectives. Darren and Grace have improved intercultural communicative competence by topical discussion in terms of job interviews, work-oriented questions, and the recognition of cultural differences in daily-life topics. For future tutors who would like to teach adult learners in an online environment, the above topics which would have been interesting to adults may benefit future tutors. Additionally, two learners showed different requests to the tutors and part of the tutors' skills are corresponding to learners' needs. Their feedback and preference for online tutorial support can benefit future tutors or teachers to perform in a suitable and teaching collaboration environment. For adult learners who try to improve English speaking in cross-cultural communication, having a personal goal before a thorough discussion

with tutors may foster learners to develop a communicative strategy and improve grammatical mistakes more efficiently. At last, establishing a positive relation with tutors can help learners diminish the boundary and resolve to speak. It can help tutors to build a relationship with learners first and coordinate a suitable pedagogy and method for online learners' needs then.

Secondly, the digital skills for online tutoring platform is worth noticing. Since the two learners used two kinds of media, cell phone and laptop, to operate the English conversation, it is important for online learners to understand the limitation of the mobile application they prefer to use. Learners should learn how to overcome the obstacles when pre-arranging the meeting with tutors, transmitting a message, profiles or understanding the unknown words without cutting the line with tutors, especially for learners who are used to the phones. Also, having an integrated skill for sharing and receiving information with multiple systems, such as a link or a new page, may help learners and tutors acquire as abundant cultural information as possible.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

The following section discusses three main limitations of the present study, and provides suggestions for future studies on adult EFL learners' intercultural competence. First, the length of the study only lasted for three months, which might not be enough for the participants to develop their intercultural communicative competence during the time of investigation. Future researchers might want to conduct a longitudinal study, so that adult learners' development of ICC can be more accurately documented over time.

Next, this case study only focused on two adult EFL learners' experience of using a single English online tutoring platform. Despite the richness of the data collected in the study, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of online tutoring on learners' development of ICC, future research may investigate adult learners with different language proficiency levels as well as involving other types of online English learning services.

Finally, as mentioned in chapter three, Chao's (2013) framework was adopted to analyze learners' intercultural communicative competence. Although the framework nicely captured many aspects of learners' ICC, its application to analyze cross-cultural interactions through various modes of computer-mediated communication (CMC) might be limited. Future research might use other analytical frameworks to examine students' CMC-based intercultural learning outcomes.





## REFERENCES

- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 56(1), 57-64.
- Angelova, M., & Zhao, Y. (2016). Using an online collaborative project between American and Chinese students to develop ESL teaching skills, cross-cultural awareness and language skills. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 29(1), 167-185.
- Arasaratnam, L. A., & Doerfel, M. L. (2005). Intercultural communication competence: Identifying key components from multicultural perspectives. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 137-163.
- Avgousti, M. I. (2018). Intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges: A systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 31(8), 819-853.
- Bailey, K. M. (1991). Diary Studies of Classroom Language Learning: The Doubting Game and the Believing Game. In E. Sadtono (Ed.), *Language acquisition and the second/foreign language classroom*. Singapore: SEAMEO, Regional Language Center.
- Bailey, K. M., & Ochsner, R. (1983). A methodological review of the diary studies: Windmill tilting or social science. *Second Language Acquisition Studies*, 188-198.
- Baker, W. (2009). The cultures of English as a lingua franca. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(4), 567-592.
- Baker, W. (2012). From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 66(1), 62-70.

- Bennett, J. M., Bennett, M. J., & Allen, W. (2003). Developing intercultural competence in the language classroom. *Culture as the core: Perspectives on Culture in Second Language Learning*, 237-270.
- Blake, R., Wilson, N. L., Cetto, M., & Pardo-Ballester, C. (2008). Measuring oral proficiency in distance, face-to-face, and blended classrooms. *Language Learning & Technology*, 12(3), 114.
- Brown, P., Levinson, S. C., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge university press.
- Bueno Alastuey, M. C. (2011). Perceived benefits and drawbacks of synchronous voice-based computer-mediated communication in the foreign language classroom. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24(5), 419-432.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Case, A. (2017). *One-on-one Language Teaching and Learning: Theory and Practice*, 71(3), 388–389. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccx023>
- Cercone, K. (2008). Characteristics of adult learners with implications for online learning design. *AACE Journal*, 16(2), 137-159.
- Chao, T. C. (2013). A diary study of university EFL learners' intercultural learning through foreign films. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 26(3), 247-265.
- Chao, T. C. (2014). The development and application of an intercultural competence scale for university EFL learners. *English Teaching & Learning*, 38(4), 79-124.
- Chen, J. J., & Yang, S. C. (2014). Fostering foreign language learning through technology-enhanced intercultural projects. *Language Learning & Technology*, 18(1), 57-75.

- Chen, J. J., & Yang, S. C. (2016). Promoting cross-cultural understanding and language use in research-oriented Internet-mediated intercultural exchange. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 29(2), 262-288.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-266.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2011). Assessing intercultural competence. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2011(149), 65.
- Eslami, Z. R. (2011). In Their Own Voices: Reflections of Native and Nonnative English Speaking TESOL Graduate Students on On-Line Pragmatic Instruction to EFL Learners. *TESL-EJ*, 15(2), n2.
- Fantini, A. E. (2000). A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. *SIT Occasional Papers Series*, 1, 25-42.
- Freiermuth, M. R., & Huang, H. C. (2012). Bringing Japan and Taiwan closer electronically: A look at an intercultural online synchronic chat task and its effect on motivation. *Language Teaching Research*, 16(1), 61-88.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2004). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication*. London: Sage.
- Guichon, N., Bétrancourt, M., & Prié, Y. (2012). Managing written and oral negative feedback in a synchronous online teaching situation. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 25(2), 181-197.
- Hauck, M., & Hampel, R. (2005). The Challenges of Implementing Online Tuition in Distance Language Courses: Task Design and Tutor Role. *Distance Education and Languages*, 258-277.

- Helm, F., & Dooly, M. (2017). Challenges in transcribing multimodal data: A case study. *Language Learning & Technology*, 21(1), 166-185.
- Houge, T. T., & Geier, C. (2009). Delivering one-to-one tutoring in literacy via videoconferencing. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(2), 154-163.
- Hsu, S. Y. S., & Beasley, R. E. (2019). The effects of international email and Skype interactions on computer-mediated communication perceptions and attitudes and intercultural competence in Taiwanese students. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(1).
- Jauregi, K., De Graaff, R., van den Bergh, H., & Kriz, M. (2012). Native/non-native speaker interactions through video-web communication: a clue for enhancing motivation?. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 25(1), 1-19.
- Kozar, O. (2015). Discursive practices of private online tutoring websites in Russia. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 36(3), 354-368.
- Kozar, O. (2016). Text chat during video/audio conferencing lessons: Scaffolding or getting in the way?. *CALICO Journal*, 33(2), 231-259.
- Kramsch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50(3), 199–212. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/50.3.199>
- Lee, J. S. (2019). Quantity and diversity of informal digital learning of English. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(1), 114-126. Retrieved from [http://www.lltjournal.org/collection/col\\_10125\\_58892](http://www.lltjournal.org/collection/col_10125_58892)
- Lee, L. (2016). Autonomous learning through task-based instruction in fully online language courses. *Language Learning & Technology*, 20(2), 81–97.
- Liaw, M. L., & Bunn-Le Master, S. (2010). Understanding telecollaboration through an analysis of intercultural discourse. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 23(1), 21-40.

- Martin, J. N., & Hammer, M. R. (1989). Behavioral categories of intercultural communication competence: Everyday communicators' perceptions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 303–332.
- Merriam, S., & Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education / Sharan B. Merriam. (2nd ed.)*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Michelson, K. (2018). Teaching culture as a relational process through a multiliteracies-based global simulation. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 31(1), 1-20.
- Moran, P. R., & Lu, Z. (2001). *Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Oakley, G., Pegrum, M., Xiong, X. B., Lim, C. P., & Yan, H. (2018). An online Chinese-Australian language and cultural exchange through digital storytelling. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 31(2), 128-149.
- Porto, M. (2019). Does education for intercultural citizenship lead to language learning?. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 32(1), 16-33.
- Price, L., Richardson, J. T., & Jelfs, A. (2007). Face-to-face versus online tutoring support in distance education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 32(1), 1-20.
- Schwienhorst, K. (2007). *Learner autonomy and CALL environments*. New York: Routledge.
- Shield, L., Hauck, M., & Hewer, S. (2001). Talking to strangers—the role of the tutor in developing target language speaking skills at a distance. *Proceedings of UNTELE*, 2000(2), 75-84.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., & Franklin, P. (2009). *Intercultural interaction: A multidisciplinary approach to intercultural communication*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Stickler, U., & Hampel, R. (2019). Qualitative Research In Online Language Learning: What Can It Do?. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching (IJCALLT)*, 9(3), 14-28.
- Wach, A. (2015). Advanced learners' intercultural experience through computer-enhanced technology: A study of Polish and Romanian students. In *New media and perennial problems in foreign language learning and teaching*, 21-38. Springer, Cham.
- Wang, C. M. (2012). Using Facebook for cross-cultural collaboration: The experience of students from Taiwan. *Educational Media International*, 49(1), 63-76.
- Wang, Y. (2004). Supporting synchronous distance language learning with desktop videoconferencing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 8(3), 90-121.
- Ware, P., & O'Dowd, R. (2008). Peer feedback on language form in telecollaboration. *Language Learning & Technology*, 12(1), 43-63.
- White, C., Zheng, Y., & Skyrme, G. (2020). PPTELL issue: developing a model for investigating one-to-one synchronous Chinese online language teaching via videoconferencing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-22
- Wiseman, R. L., Hammer, M. R., & Nishida, H. (1989). Predictors of intercultural communication competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 349-369.
- Yu, M. C. (2011). Learning how to read situations and know what is the right thing to say or do in an L2: A study of socio-cultural competence and language transfer. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(4), 1127-1147.
- Zeiss, E., & Isabelli-García, C. L. (2005). The role of asynchronous computer mediated communication on enhancing cultural awareness. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 18(3), 151-169.

Zeng, S. (2018). *English learning in the digital age : agency, technology and context*.

Singapore Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-2499-4>







## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol

#### I. Topic Domain One: English learning background

- Lead-off question: 在使用 Cambly 前，你有什麼機會可以使用英文溝通？
- Possible follow-up questions:
  - 1 你對學英文的看法是什麼？你覺得你是怎樣的學習者？
  - 2 你怎麼訓練你的英語口說？
  - 3 在你學英文的過程中，有沒有什麼特別口說經驗，或使用優文溝通的印象？
  - 4 是什麼原因讓你開始使用 Cambly 呢？
  - 5 當時，（在使用 Cambly 前）你期待你的口說能力變成什麼樣子？
- Covert categories: learning background;

#### II. Topic Domain Two: English learning habits of using Cambly

- Lead-off question: 你最初在什麼狀況下知道 Cambly 這個一對一學習軟體呢？
- Possible follow-up questions:
  1. 你在什麼樣的狀況下第一次接觸這個平台？
  2. 你希望用 Cambly 學習英文，是想增進英文口說的哪些方面？
  3. 有 x 年的時間，通常你都怎麼使用 Cambly？你一直都這樣使用嗎？
  4. 從最初到現在，你聯繫或預約過多少老師？
  5. 請你談一下使用他後，有印象的學英文經驗？
  6. 你都跟老師聊哪些話題呢？有特定主題嗎？老師的哪些特點吸引你繼續使用？你可以形容一下特別有印象的三個老師嗎？

7. 你有請網站上的老師協助您任何英文相關的工作或考試嗎？
8. 學習過程中你的筆記會著重什麼內容？
9. 可不可以開啟你的介面讓我看看？還有其他不同的使用方式嗎？
10. 你為什麼想使用他練習英文口說？有什麼優點？有什麼特別的原因嗎？

➤ Covert categories: learning habits; learning strategies;

### III. Topic Domain Three: learners' intercultural communication with tutors

- Lead-off question: 既然你使用這個軟體也一段時間了，是什麼原因讓你繼續使用它？
- Possible follow-up questions:
- 1 除了口說外，有幫助到聽讀寫嗎？
  - 2 除了可以學英文外，在學習過程中，老師曾經聊了哪些讓你印象深刻的主題？之後的你遇上這些主題時都怎麼回應呢？
  - 3 和不同國籍的老師互動中，對於文化的不同有什麼比較深刻地發現嗎？你為什麼覺得他特別呢？他有帶給你什麼轉變嗎？
  - 4 你有學到有關老師本身的什麼嗎？像是態度、文化、語言習慣、環境？
  - 5 對於這些文化發現你有什麼感覺？
  - 6 你曾經和其他人提起這些文化差異嗎？
  - 7 在整個過程中你跟老師有沒有發生什麼誤會？這些誤會通常是起因於什麼原因？
  - 8 你會做出什麼反應呢？不懂的時候會說什麼，可不可以舉個例子，理解或是覆議的時候你會說什麼？不同意的時候你會說什麼？
  - 9 你使用軟體後有到哪裡（非該平台）使用英文交談？你們聊了什麼？你有感受到自己有什麼改變嗎？

- 10 跟你之前的口說經驗比起來，線上老師和以前的老師有什麼不同？線上老師和以前老師有任何共同處嗎？
  - 11 你的線上老師有帶給你任何英文上的使用習慣嗎？（或特別強調的重點）
  - 12 你在學習過程中曾經感受到壓力或不舒服？是怎樣的過程呢？你如何適應這些壓力？你如何調整自己的學習方式？
  - 13 剛剛有提到你的學習過程中有一些實際轉變，你怎麼會這麼認為呢？
  - 14 你說你在某方面有進步，你是怎麼知道你有所進步呢？你的進步原因主要是什麼？
- Covert categories: learners' interesting topics; misunderstanding and reflection; tutors' teaching methods;

#### IV. Topic Domain Four: learners' perceptions of intercultural experience

- Lead-off question: 當你使用 Cambly 的這段期間，你說了哪些關於自己的事情？
- Possible follow-up questions:
1. 從你與老師的溝通之間，你可以間接了解到自己的什麼嗎？你是透過什麼方式了解到？
  2. 你覺得在溝通過程中，你把自己塑造成怎樣的語言溝通對象？
  3. 你覺得現在的你跟過去的你練習英文口說的態度有什麼不一樣？是什麼事情讓你走向現在？
  4. 長期學習以來，你現在最注重英文溝通方面的什麼呢
  5. 結束課程後，對討論過的事情你曾經做過什麼具體行為嗎？
  6. 結束課程後，你覺得和老師一對一學習過程中，有什麼優點與缺點？你的整體感受是什麼？
  7. 你對未來自己的英文溝通能力有什麼期待嗎？能請您舉例說明？
  8. 你對自己的英文跨文化溝通能力的整體期待是什麼？

- Covert categories: learners' learning expectation; learners' awareness; learners' attitude

1 有什麼事我們沒有問到，但你卻想要分享的嗎？



## APPENDIX B

### Learning diary

A guiding sheet for learning diaries	
日期：	課程長度：
上課前	
你希望從這次課程中學到什麼？	
上課後	
1. 老師來自哪裡？	
2. 我從課程中學到哪些知識？	
3. 這次的課程讓我覺得（例：有趣、驚訝、困惑…）  因為…	
4. 我的反思與感想：	