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DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE LEARNING APPROACH AMONG COLLEGE ENGLISH LEARNERS IN SHANDONG, CHINA

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Abstrak

Walaupun Kecekapan Komunikatif Antara Budaya (ICC) ditekankan dalam dasar, pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris Universiti di China masih berfokuskan linguistik, menyebabkan perkembangan ICC dalam kalangan pelajar EFL prasiswazah tidak memadai. Bukti empirikal tentang keberkesanan Pembelajaran Bahasa Antara Budaya (IcLL) dalam konteks EFL pengajian tinggi China adalah terhad. Justeru, kajian ini bertanya: apakah kesan pendekatan IcLL terhadap perkembangan ICC dalam kalangan pembelajar Bahasa Inggeris Universiti di Shandong, China. Kajian ini bertujuan menyiasat kesan intervensi pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris Universiti berasaskan IcLL terhadap perkembangan pelajar dalam empat dimensi ICC: sikap, pengetahuan, kemahiran dan kesedaran antara budaya. Reka bentuk kaedah campuran kuasi-eksperimen terbenam digunakan. Seramai 110 pelajar tahun pertama bukan pengkhususan Bahasa Inggeris dari sebuah universiti awam di Shandong, China dibahagikan kepada kumpulan eksperimen dan kawalan. Data kuantitatif dikumpul menggunakan Skala Penilaian Kecekapan Komunikatif Antara Budaya sebelum dan selepas intervensi, dan dianalisis menggunakan ANCOVA dengan skor praujian ICC dan tahap kecekapan bahasa sebagai kovariat. Analisis kesan mudah dan ujian-t sampel bebas berstrata digunakan bagi dimensi yang melanggar andaian statistik. Data kualitatif diperoleh melalui temu bual separa berstruktur dengan enam pelajar dari kumpulan eksperimen. Intervensi tersebut meningkatkan kesedaran antara budaya pelajar secara signifikan. Kemahiran antara budaya meningkat dengan ketara dalam kalangan pelajar yang mempunyai tahap kecekapan bahasa lebih tinggi, manakala sikap antara budaya meningkat dalam kalangan pelajar yang mempunyai tahap asas sederhana. Tiada kesan signifikan ditemui bagi pengetahuan antara budaya. Dapatan kualitatif mendedahkan peningkatan keterbukaan sikap dan kesedaran reflektif, manakala perkembangan pengetahuan dan kemahiran dihadkan oleh kecekapan bahasa, tuntutan tugasan dan faktor individu. Kajian ini menyediakan bukti empirikal dari bilik darjah EFL pengajian tinggi China serta memperluas aplikasi model ICC Byram dalam kerangka IcLL. Dapatan juga menawarkan implikasi praktikal untuk mengintegrasikan objektif antara budaya ke dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris Universiti di bawah kekangan khusus konteks.

Kata kunci: Kecekapan Komunikatif Antara Budaya, Pembelajaran Bahasa Antara Budaya, Bahasa Inggeris Universiti, Kaedah campuran

Abstract

Despite policy emphasis on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), College English teaching in China remains linguistically focused, resulting in inadequate ICC development among EFL undergraduates. Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL) in Chinese tertiary EFL contexts is limited. Thus, this study asks what is the effect of an IcLL approach on ICC development among College English learners in Shandong, China. This study aims to investigate the effects of an IcLL-based College English intervention on students' development of four ICC dimensions: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness. An embedded quasi-experimental mixed- methods design was adopted. A total of 110 first-year non-English majors from a public university in Shandong, China, were divided into experimental and control groups. Quantitative data were collected using the Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale before and after the intervention and analyzed using ANCOVA with pretest ICC scores and language proficiency as covariates. Simple effects analysis and stratified independent-samples t-tests were applied for dimensions violating statistical assumptions. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with six students from the experimental group. The intervention significantly enhanced students' intercultural awareness. Intercultural skills improved notably among students with higher language proficiency, while intercultural attitudes increased among those with moderate baseline levels. No significant effect was found for intercultural knowledge. Qualitative findings revealed enhanced attitudinal openness and reflective awareness, whereas knowledge and skill development were constrained by language proficiency, task demands, and individual factors. This study provides empirical evidence from Chinese tertiary EFL classrooms and extends the application of Byram's ICC model within an IcLL framework. The findings also offer practical implications for integrating intercultural objectives into College English instruction under context-specific constraints.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Intercultural Language Learning, College English, Mixed methods

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List of Abbreviations

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CQ	Cultural Intelligence
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
ICAT	Intercultural Attitudes
ICAW	Intercultural Awareness
ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence
ICCAS	Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale
ICKN	Intercultural Knowledge
IcLL	Intercultural Language Learning
ICLT	Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching
ICSK	Intercultural Skills
OPT	Oxford Placement Test

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the overall context and direction of the present study. It outlines the background that motivates the research, clarifies the research problem, and establishes the purpose of the study. The chapter also presents the research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses, and defines the scope of the investigation. In addition, key terms are operationally defined to ensure conceptual clarity. Together, this chapter provides the conceptual and methodological foundation for understanding the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Globalization has significantly increased mobility and interaction among societies worldwide, accelerating exchanges in the fields of economy, technology, and culture (Yang, 2021; Goncharova et al., 2021). This has led to the rapid global spread of the English language, with non-native speakers now outnumbering native speakers, making English the primary medium for communication in multicultural settings (Yeşilbursa & Damar, 2020). English has thus evolved from a language of native communities to a lingua franca, facilitating intercultural communication across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021).

In response to these global changes, many educational systems worldwide have adjusted their English language teaching (ELT) policies to place greater emphasis on intercultural communicative competence (ICC). In Europe, intercultural learning has been systematically embedded into foreign language education, with intercultural

reflection and communicative adaptability identified as key educational outcomes (Helm & Acconcia, 2019). Similar trends have been observed in Asian contexts, such as Japan and South Korea, where developing ICC alongside linguistic proficiency has become a strategic priority in university English programs ((Fukuda & Nishikawa Chávez, 2021; Luong et al., 2025). Recent studies have emphasized the necessity of shifting from a purely linguistic model of English education to one that actively integrates cultural learning and critical intercultural engagement (Baker, 2024; Liddicoat, 2024).

In China, English has played a crucial role in facilitating international communication, especially in the fields of science, technology, business, and diplomacy. Consequently, College English becomes a compulsory course for non-English major undergraduates in China (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative, proposed in 2013, further strengthened China's engagement with culturally diverse regions (Guo et al., 2021). Therefore, national education policies, such as the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020) (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2010) and the *Guideline on College English Teaching* (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020), have explicitly articulated the goal of cultivating talents with global vision, international awareness, and ICC.

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However, despite these policy aspirations, empirical studies have reported that ELT in Chinese tertiary education remains largely instrumental, with a predominant focus on linguistic accuracy and examination preparation rather than intercultural development (Xu, 2022; Rui & Tong, 2021; Zhong, 2021; Wu et al., 2021). Intercultural components are often marginalized or treated superficially, and EFL teachers face considerable challenges in implementing ICC-oriented pedagogy due to

limited professional training and lack of theoretical guidance (Peng, 2020). Although theoretical models, such as that proposed by Byram (1997), have provided valuable frameworks for conceptualizing ICC, the practical integration of intercultural learning in Chinese EFL classrooms is still at a nascent stage.

This disjuncture between global educational developments and the current practices in China underscores the urgent need for applied research. Specifically, empirical investigations are necessary to explore how certain intercultural learning approaches can be effectively designed and integrated into College English curricula to support the development of students' ICC, thereby preparing them for active participation in a globalized world.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Culture in intercultural education is increasingly conceptualized as a dynamic, socially constructed system of meanings, values, and practices that individuals negotiate through interaction rather than a fixed set of national traits (Risager, 2018). Language is limited by the social setting in which it is employed, and linguist ic structure and communicative practice are both influenced by culture (Kramsch, 2020; Nguyen, 2020). Thus, foreign language learners who possess only linguistic competence may still struggle to interpret social meanings or manage culturally situated communication, as intercultural interaction requires skills beyond grammar and vocabulary (Kramsch, 2020; Deardorff, 2020). For this reason, foreign language learning must move beyond a linguistic focus toward fostering learners' competence to approach language in socially and culturally suitable ways (Lagou & Zorbas, 2020).

ICC has therefore become an important educational goal in Chinese higher education,

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with its four dimensions: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness being recognized as essential for meaningful communication in multilingual and multicultural settings (Deardorff, 2020; Jackson, 2020). Recent studies highlight that ICC enhances learners' ability to interpret cultural meanings, tolerate differences, adopt new perspectives, and mediate across cultural boundaries (Fantini, 2020; Fang, 2022; Feng et al., 2025). The need to develop ICC is particularly salient for Chinese EFL learners, who increasingly engage with linguistically and culturally diverse interlocutors under national strategies such as the Belt and Road Initiative (Fang, 2022). The College English Teaching Guidelines (2020) and the National Standards for Teaching Quality in Undergraduate English Majors similarly emphasize the cultivation of intercultural awareness, global vision, and the ability to engage in international communication as integral components of College English education in China (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020; University Foreign Language Teaching Advisory Board, 2020). These policy documents position intercultural development as a core curricular objective rather than an optional extension of language instruction.

However, despite clear policy endorsement and growing academic attention to interculturality in language education (Lee et al., 2023; Fitriyah et al., 2019), empirical research consistently indicates that Chinese university students' ICC remains at relatively low levels, particularly in intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills (Rui & Tong, 2021; Quan, 2022; Zhong, 2021; Wu et al., 2021; Yin, 2020). Teachers also report difficulties in implementing intercultural teaching due to limited training, insufficient cultural resources, and the dominance of language-focused syllabi (Peng, 2020; Ma, 2022). As a result, the intercultural objectives articulated in national policies have not been fully realized in classroom

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practice, creating a persistent policy–practice gap.

To address the challenges in real classroom practice, scholars have explored different approaches for integrating cultural learning into language classrooms. Internationally, widely used approaches, like isolated culture courses, often emphasize static cultural knowledge, such as history, literature, and arts, which may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes (Liu, 2019; Mohamed, 2020). Common classroom activities, such as cultural capsules, role-plays, and ethnographic interviews have offered partial support for intercultural development (Wang, 2021). However, these activities frequently focus on isolated aspects of ICC, such as cultural awareness (Al- Afifi et al. 2025), rather than a comprehensive development of student ICC. The four dimensions, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness, operate in a mutually reinforcing manner, each shaping and enabling the development of the others (Fantini, 2020). As recent revisions of the ICC model (Byram, 2021) highlight，ICC must now be understood not only as four interrelated dimensions but also as a form of intercultural citizenship involving mediation and ethical responsibility in communication. Thus, from a developmental perspective, ICC emerges through the dynamic interaction of these dimensions, which means that developing and examining them in isolation risks overlooking the integrated nature of intercultural learning (Byram & Wagner, 2018).

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Moreover, those approaches designed in Western contexts do not always align with the instructional realities of large-scale College English classes in China, where limited instructional time, exam-driven curricula, and heterogeneous proficiency levels constrain sustained intercultural engagement (Moreau, 2021; Mohamed, 2020). For instance, study-abroad programs, while beneficial, remain inaccessible to most students in the Chinese context due to financial, institutional, and logistical

constraints (Kazykhankyzy & Alagözlü, 2019). Consequently, these approaches offer limited potential for systematically developing multiple dimensions of ICC within China's College English classrooms.

In addition, few studies in China have employed mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to systematically evaluate how intercultural interventions influence the multiple dimensions of ICC or to examine the processes through which students experience meaningful intercultural development (Ma, 2022; Zhang, 2023). This indicates a lack of pedagogical models that are both theoretically grounded and empirically validated for the College English context in China.

Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL), developed by Liddicoat and colleagues (2003, 2004), offers a promising pedagogical framework for addressing these gaps. IcLL emphasizes a holistic understanding of the inseparability of language and culture through processes such as noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting processes explicitly linked to the development of ICC (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Liddicoat, 2020). The framework encourages students to mediate meanings between their own and others' linguistic and cultural systems, engage in dialogic meaning-making, and critically examine their assumptions during communication (Scarino, 2014; Byram & Wagner, 2018). These principles align closely with the multidimensional structure of ICC and offer a structured process for integrating intercultural learning into language classrooms.

Despite this theoretical alignment, empirical studies examining IcLL on student ICC remain limited, where most existing research focuses on stakeholders' perceptions of IcLL and views of its implementation in fostering ICC (e.g., Miftakh & Wachyudi, 2019; Tran & Duong, 2022) rather than student learning outcomes. Existing research has primarily relied on qualitative case studies (e.g., Curtis et al., 2019) or

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single-instrument approaches (e.g. Kiswaga & Anita, 2019), and there has been limited systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of IcLL interventions in enhancing students' ICC, especially in China's College English context. As scholars have highlighted the need for updated empirical evidence demonstrating how IcLL functions in contemporary multilingual learning environments (Liddicoat, 2020), the existing research on it remains insufficient.

Given these gaps, the present study responds to several important research needs: a. the lack of empirical research assessing how an IcLL-based instructional model influences multiple dimensions of ICC in Chinese College English classrooms; b. the scarcity of studies adopting mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to link quantitative changes with qualitative insights into learning processes; c. the need to justify the four ICC variables, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness, based on theoretical and empirical relevance; and d. the need to explain how qualitative inquiry can illuminate students' experiences of IcLL and the mechanisms through which IcLL contributes to ICC development.

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To address these gaps, the current study employs an embedded two-phase quasi-experimental mixed-methods design to examine the effectiveness of an IcLL-based College English intervention at a Chinese university. The quantitative phase assesses pre–post changes across the four ICC dimensions, while the qualitative phase explores students' perceptions and classroom experiences to understand how IcLL shapes intercultural development. By integrating outcome measurement with experiential analysis, this study aims to provide comprehensive evidence on the pedagogical value of IcLL in the Chinese context and to contribute a contextually grounded model for fostering ICC among Chinese university students.

1.4 Research Objectives

In accordance with the research background and the problem statement, the study was designed to evaluate the effects of an IcLL-based intervention on the development of ICC among Chinese undergraduates in College English courses. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine whether there is a significant difference in intercultural attitudes between the Experimental Group (EG) and the Control Group (CG) after the IcLL-based intervention.
2. To examine whether there is a significant difference in intercultural knowledge between the EG and CG after the IcLL-based intervention.
3. To examine whether there is a significant difference in intercultural skills between the EG and CG after the IcLL-based intervention.
4. To examine whether there is a significant difference in intercultural awareness between the EG and CG after the IcLL-based intervention.
5. To explore EG students' perceived changes in their ICC after the IcLL-based learning.
6. To explore EG students' experiences in the IcLL-based College English course.

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1.5 Research Questions

In line with the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated to guide the investigation:

1. Is there a significant difference in intercultural attitudes between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention?

2. Is there a significant difference in intercultural knowledge between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention?

3. Is there a significant difference in intercultural skills between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention?

4. Is there a significant difference in intercultural awareness between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention?

5. What are the perceived changes of EG students in their ICC after the IcLL-based learning?

6. How do EG students describe their experiences in the IcLL-based College English course?

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1.6 Research Hypotheses

To address Research Questions one to four, hypothesis testing was employed as the primary inferential analysis method in this study, and the following null hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference in intercultural attitudes between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention.

2. There is no significant difference in intercultural knowledge between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention.

3. There is no significant difference in intercultural skills between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention.

4. There is no significant difference in intercultural awareness between the EG and the CG after the IcLL-based intervention.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted within the context of College English instruction for non-English majors in Chinese higher education. It focused specifically on EFL and investigated the effects of an IcLL-based instructional intervention on the development of students' ICC. In line with this focus, the study aimed to examine how students' ICC developed after the intervention in the four dimensions: intercultural attitudes, intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills, and intercultural awareness.

To address this objective, the study adopted an embedded two-phase quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, involving undergraduate students from a university in eastern China. The experimental group, which received IcLL-based instruction, was compared with a control group that followed conventional College English teaching. The ICC outcomes after the intervention were compared between groups quantitatively. To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative interview data were collected from students in the experimental group to explore their experiences and perceived changes during the IcLL-based course. The scope of the study was therefore limited to one institutional context, though the findings may offer insights relevant to College English teaching in similar Chinese higher-education settings.

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1.8 Significance of the Study

This study makes theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical contributions to the field of tertiary EFL education and intercultural research. Theoretically, previous research on IcLL has largely focused on teachers' perceptions or descriptive case studies, while empirical evidence examining its impact on learners' ICC remains

limited. By systematically examining the effects of an IcLL-based instructional intervention on multiple dimensions of ICC, this study extends existing literature by providing empirical support for the applicability of IcLL in the Chinese EFL context. The findings also contribute to current discussions on how ICC can be developed within formal language education.

Methodologically, this study contributes by adopting a embedded two-phase quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, which remains underrepresented in ICC-related research in China. By integrating quantitative outcome data with qualitative insights into learners' experiences, the study demonstrates how experimental and interpretive approaches can be combined to capture both developmental patterns and learning processes in ICC research. This design provides a replicable methodological model for future studies seeking to evaluate intercultural interventions in classroom settings.

Pedagogically, the study offers practical guidance for College English teachers by illustrating how intercultural objectives can be systematically embedded into classroom instruction through IcLL principles. The IcLL-based course design, teaching procedures, and learning tasks described in this study provide concrete examples of how intercultural learning can be implemented alongside language instruction.

At the curriculum level, the findings provide evidence-based support for integrating ICC-related outcomes into College English curriculum design. The study demonstrates how intercultural objectives can be aligned with language learning goals, offering practical implications for curriculum planners seeking to operationalize policy mandates related to intercultural education.

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At the policy level, the empirical results of this study can inform educational stakeholders about how national guidelines on intercultural development can be translated into classroom practice. By identifying specific pedagogical processes and learner outcomes associated with IcLL implementation, this study offers practical reference points for policymakers seeking to strengthen the intercultural dimension within tertiary English education.

Finally, for students, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and encourages reflective engagement with cultural differences. By fostering knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and skills relevant to intercultural interaction, the study supports students' preparation for participation in an increasingly globalized academic and professional environment.

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1.9 Conceptual Framework

This study is conceptually grounded in Byram's model of ICC and Liddicoat et al.'s IcLL framework. Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual framework underlying this study. This framework hypothesizes that students' ICC can be developed through an IcLL-based College English course. In this framework, IcLL-based instruction serves as the independent variable, ICC is treated as the dependent variable, and language proficiency is incorporated as a covariate.

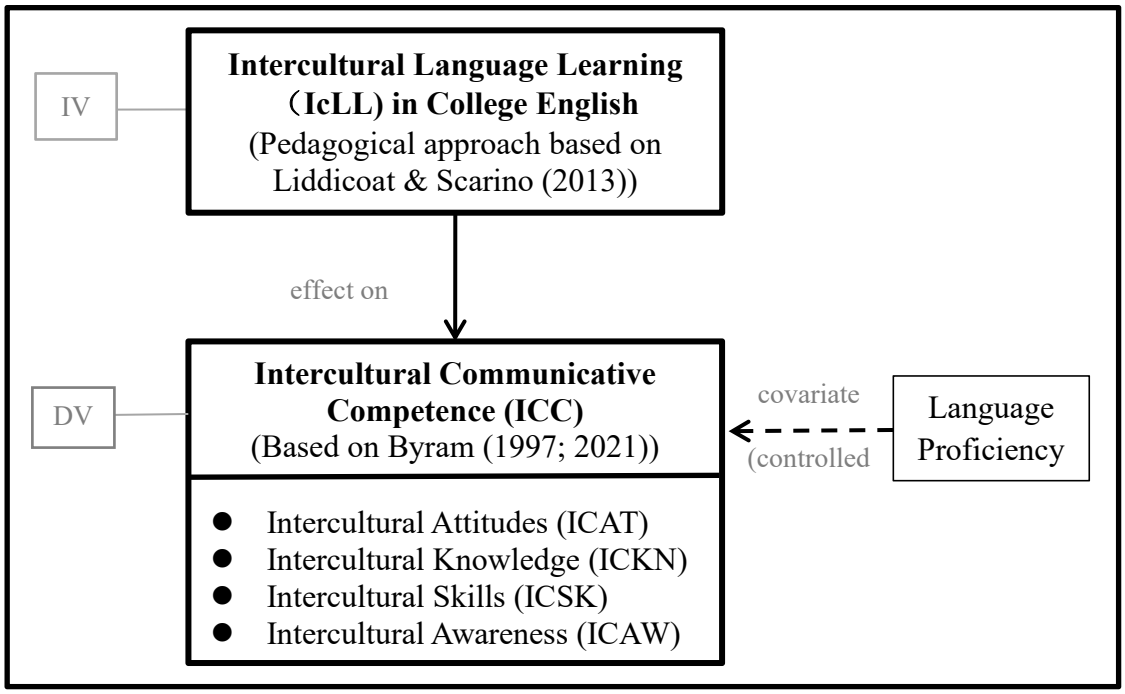

Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework of the study

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ICC is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of four interrelated dimensions: intercultural attitudes, intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills, and critical cultural awareness. These dimensions collectively reflect students' ability to communicate appropriately and effectively in intercultural contexts. IcLL is theorized to affect ICC through a cyclic process of intercultural pedagogy of noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). This process enable students to reconstruct cultural understanding, develop interpreting, relating, relating and interacting skills, and cultivate their intercultural attitudes and critical awareness. In addition, controlling for language proficiency allows for a more accurate isolation of the effect of IcLL on ICC development by accounting for differences in students' linguistic level.

1.10 Operational Definitions

In order to provide clarity and consistency throughout the study, it is essential to

define key terms and concepts operationally. These operational definitions ensure that each concept is measured and interpreted in a clear and consistent manner. The following sections outline the operational definitions of the core constructs in this study, including ICC and its dimensions, intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, awareness, as well as the instructional method of IcLL. These definitions are based on established theoretical frameworks and adapted tools used in the study to guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

1.10.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural communicative competence refers to the ability to communicate and interact with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in ways that are appropriate, effective, and ethically responsible. It involves not only linguistic competence but also the capacity to understand cultural meanings, interpret perspectives, negotiate differences, and mediate between cultural viewpoints (Byram, 2021; Byram & Wagner, 2018). In this study, ICC is understood as an integrated construct consisting of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and intercultural awareness (critical cultural awareness), through which individuals engage with diversity reflectively and responsively.

1.10.2 Intercultural Attitudes

Intercultural attitudes refer to dispositions such as openness, curiosity, respect, and willingness to engage with cultural difference. They include the readiness to suspend judgment, the capacity for empathy, and a commitment to understanding others on their own terms. It reflects a student's affective orientation toward cultural diversity

and their readiness to participate constructively in intercultural interaction (Byram, 2021).

1.10.3 Intercultural Knowledge

Intercultural knowledge refers to understanding of social groups, cultural practices, values, belief systems, institutions, and historical contexts in both one's own culture and other cultures. It includes knowledge of how culture operates in communication and how meanings are shaped by social, political, and historical conditions. Intercultural knowledge enables students to recognize cultural perspectives and situate interaction within broader social contexts (Byram, 2021).

1.10.4 Intercultural Skills

Intercultural skills involve the ability to interpret and relate cultural meanings, to discover new cultural understanding through interaction, and to mediate between perspectives when misunderstanding occurs. These skills enable students to negotiate meaning, manage difference, and engage flexibly and critically in intercultural encounters. Intercultural skills reflect the practical competence to communicate across cultures with sensitivity and adaptability (Byram, 2021).

1.10.5 Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness, also referred to as critical cultural awareness, denotes the ability to critically reflect and evaluate cultural values, beliefs, and practices in one's own culture and in other cultures. It involves reflective judgment, ethical awareness, and the ability to question taken-for-granted assumptions. This dimension emphasizes evaluation of cultural phenomena from an informed and principled perspective (Byram, 2021).

1.10.6 Intercultural Language Learning

Intercultural Language Learning is an approach to language education that integrates language, culture, and learning based on the following five principles: active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection and responsibility (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Liddicoat, 2020). It views culture as a dynamic process rather than a fixed body of knowledge. In this study, IcLL was applied to the experimental group through a College English course, designed around the principles of IcLL. The course integrated language skills development with intercultural tasks, focusing on real-world cultural issues and intercultural interaction.

1.10.7 Language Proficiency

Language proficiency refers to an individual's overall ability to use a foreign or second language effectively and appropriately for communication across contexts. It is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, involving receptive and productive skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as underlying linguistic and communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2020; Bachman & Palmer, 2010). In this study, language proficiency is regarded as a general communicative ability in English enabling intercultural communication and serves as a covariate in this study, helping in analyzing changes in ICC.

1.11 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the background of the study and outlines the research problem. It presents the research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses, and explains the scope and significance of the

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study. The chapter also provides the conceptual framework, operational definitions of key terms, and an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to intercultural orientation in EFL and College English education in China. It first discusses the intercultural shift in EFL, including the relationship between language and culture, the development from linguistic competence to ICC, and culture teaching in EFL. The chapter then examines the conceptualization of ICC and Byram's model of ICC, including intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, as well as the role of language proficiency in ICC development. It further introduces IcLL, its conceptualization, pedagogical principles, and the pathway for developing ICC through IcLL. The chapter concludes with a review of related empirical studies on developing ICC through IcLL.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology adopted in this study. It describes the research design, the research setting, population, and sampling procedures for both quantitative and qualitative phases. The chapter also introduces the research instruments. It further explains the pilot study conducted to validate the instruments, the procedures for data collection, and the methods used for quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Ethical considerations are also addressed.

Chapter Four reports the findings of the study. It first presents the quantitative results concerning the effects of the IcLL-based intervention on the four dimensions of ICC—intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness—through descriptive statistics and inferential analyses. The chapter then presents qualitative findings derived from thematic analysis of student interviews, focusing on students' perceived changes in ICC and their learning experiences in the IcLL-based course. Supplementary robustness analyses are also provided to strengthen the reliability of

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the findings.

Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to the conceptual framework and previous studies. The chapter begins with a summary of the key findings and then discusses the results regarding the development of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, as well as students' perceived changes and learning experiences. It also examines the interplay among the four dimensions of ICC. The chapter further elaborates the theoretical and practical implications of the study, addresses the limitations of the research, and provides recommendations for practice and suggestions for future research. The thesis concludes with a final summary of the study.

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CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature related to ICC and IcLL within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical foundation and research context for the present study. The chapter is organized into five sections. It first examines the intercultural orientation in EFL and College English education in China, including the intercultural shift in EFL, the relationship between language and culture, and the role of culture teaching in language education. The second section focuses on ICC, discussing its conceptualization, Byram's model of ICC, and the relationship between language proficiency and ICC development. Then it introduces the IcLL approach, including its conceptualization, pedagogical principles, and the pathway for developing ICC through IcLL. The forth section reviews empirical studies on the development of ICC through IcLL. Finally, it summarizes the main points of the chapter and highlights the research gaps addressed in the present study.

2.2 Intercultural Orientation in EFL and College English in China

In recent years, EFL has increasingly taken an intercultural orientation. This shift is grounded in recognition of the intertwined relationship between language and culture, which cannot be treated as separate domains in language learning (Kramsch, 2019; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2020). In addition, the goal of language learning is no longer confined to linguistic proficiency but extends to communicative competence. In the context of globalization, communication increasingly takes place across cultures, which gives communicative competence an inherently intercultural nature (Council

of Europe, 2020; Jackson, 2020). Problems encountered in intercultural interactions further highlight that effective intercultural communication depends on the development of ICC (Deardorff, 2020).

The following subsections thus first review the relationship between language and culture and the theoretical shift from linguistic competence to communicative competence in EFL, along with the practical status of culture teaching in EFL, and then discuss the necessity of ICC in EFL and College English in China, under the context of intercultural communication. The gap between policy and instructional reality of College English has also been discussed to highlight the need for pedagogical approaches to ICC development in College English.

2.2.1 Intercultural Shift in EFL

Intercultural orientation in EFL did not emerge in isolation, but is closely related to two developments in language education: the growing recognition of the relationship between language and culture, and the re-conceptualization of learning objectives from linguistic competence to communicative competence, and from communicative competence to intercultural communicative competence. These perspectives help clarify why interculturality has become a central concern in contemporary EFL, and the exploration of culture teaching practices in EFL indicates the need for a systematic theoretical-informed pedagogical approach to ICC development in College English.

2.2.1.1 Language and Culture

Language, as the core medium of human communication, has long been defined as a systematic set of symbols used to convey meaning (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).

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However, in the context of EFL teaching, language is defined not merely as a static system of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar, but as a dynamic social practice embedded in specific contexts (Kramsch, 2020). As Wardhaugh & Fuller (2021) note, language serves as the core medium of human communication, while Kramsch (2020) further clarifies that language is inherently embedded in the social and historical contexts in which it is lived and used by its speakers, who form discourse communities shaped by shared experiences, institutions, and ways of life. This perspective highlights that language use is not only a matter of linguistic accuracy but also a process of adhering to cultural norms and negotiating shared meanings.

Culture, like language, is a complex and multifaceted construct. It is a learned and shared system of thoughts, behaviors, and creations within a discourse community (Liddicoat, 2022; Kramsch, 1998). Contemporary intercultural research characterizes culture as encompassing what people think, do, and produce, while emphasizing its dynamic and socially constructed nature (Risager, 2022), while key frameworks such as the "Big C-little c" dichotomy (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) and the 3P model (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996; Deardorff, 2020) help unpack its layers, from tangible artifacts to implicit worldviews. The iceberg model (Hall, 1976; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009) further emphasizes that most cultural elements (e.g., values, assumptions) are invisible yet profoundly influence the understanding of a culture, underscoring that the key of culture learning should not be factual knowledge, but rather values underlying it (Deardorff, 2020).

In EFL teaching, culture is refined to prioritize its relevance to communication. Kramsch (1998) offers a more targeted definition: culture as "a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting" shared by members of a

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"discourse community" with "common social space and history, and common imaginings" (p. 3). This definition restricts the scope of culture to groups bound by language use, aligning with the goal of EFL teaching to prepare students for cross-cultural communication.

Liddicoat et al. (2003) asserts that "a knowledge of and engagement with the systems of culture are fundamental to being able to communicate successfully, and provide a basis for the ways in which speakers of a language establish shared meanings and communicate shared concepts and ways of seeing the world" (p. 45). This definition emphasizes that culture is not merely a set of factual knowledge but a dynamic system that governs communication and meaning-making, making it an integral part of language education.

The relationship between language and culture is widely recognized as reciprocal and inseparable (Kramsch, 2020; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2020). As Brown (2000) and As Kramsch (2020) emphasizes, language and culture are mutually constitutive: language mediates cultural meaning, while culture shapes how language is interpreted and used. Oxford and Gkonou (2018) further metaphorically describe this bond as "a tightly woven tapestry, rich with vibrant colors, shadows, and highlights", underscoring that their form and function are deeply intertwined.

Risager's (2022) term "linguaculture" captures this intrinsic connection, highlighting that language embodies and transmits cultural values, while culture shapes how language is used (Risager, 2022; Tektigul et al., 2023). On one hand, language functions as the most visible expression of culture (Brown & Lee, 2025). Words and expressions often encode specific cultural knowledge: for example, English terms like "Thanksgiving" or "afternoon tea" carry cultural connotations that cannot be fully translated without understanding their historical and social contexts (Kramsch,

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1998; Tektigul et al., 2023). Through language, cultural knowledge is transmitted across generations, making it a crucial vehicle for cultural continuity (Tektigul et al., 2023). Moreover, language, both verbal and non-verbal, enacts and negotiates culture in everyday life: speakers use linguistic choices (e.g., address forms, tone of voice) to align with cultural norms and construct social identities (Kramsch, 1998; Jackson, 2023).

On the other hand, culture actively shapes language. The variability of linguistic expression across cultures demonstrates that meaning is culturally contextualized: a phrase in one language may not map directly to another, as it reflects distinct cultural conceptual systems (Lantolf, 1999; Athanasopoulos, 2021). For instance, the Chinese concept of "guanxi" has no exact equivalent in English, as it embodies cultural values of reciprocity and social harmony that are unique to Chinese society (Liu, 2019; Guo, 2021). Culture also influences linguistic structure and use: in high-context cultures (e.g., Japanese, Chinese), communication relies heavily on implicit context and non-verbal cues, while low-context cultures (e.g., English-speaking countries) prioritize explicit verbal expression (Hall, 1976; Deardorff, 2020). This cultural difference directly impacts EFL learners' communicative performance: Chinese learners may struggle to express disagreement directly in English, as it conflicts with their cultural norm of maintaining harmony (Pan et al., 2024).

Given the reciprocal relationship between language and culture, language learning is inherently cultural learning (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Jackson, 2020). To master a language, learners must not only acquire linguistic competence but also develop an understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Byram (2021) argues that language education must integrate cultural learning in order to support

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appropriate communication in real-world contexts. This view is supported by contemporary empirical research: Gong et al. (2020) found that EFL learners who received integrated language and culture instruction demonstrated significantly higher communicative competence than those who focused solely on linguistic forms, particularly in cross-cultural interactions.

This cultural orientation of language learning requires learners to develop "cultural awareness", the ability to recognize cultural differences and negotiate meaning across boundaries (Kramsch, 2013; Jackson, 2023), through dynamic, interactive learning that fosters intercultural attitudes (e.g., openness, empathy) and skills (e.g., cultural observation, reflection) (Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009; Deardorff, 2020). Such integration also aligns with global citizenship education goals, fostering intercultural understanding essential for communication in an interconnected world (Council of Europe, 2020).

In sum, this reciprocal relationship between language and culture underscores the necessity of integrating culture into EFL teaching. Language is not a neutral tool but a cultural practice, and effective language use cannot be achieved without cultural understanding. This insight guides the theoretical shift toward ICC explored in the following sections.

2.2.1.2 From Linguistic Competence to Intercultural Communicative Competence

The re-conceptualization of EFL learning objectives, evolving from linguistic competence to communicative competence and ultimately to ICC, reflects the field's deepening understanding of language as a social and cultural practice. This theoretical shift is not arbitrary but a response to the practical limitations of earlier

frameworks in addressing real-world communication needs, especially in an increasingly globalized context where cross-cultural interactions have become ubiquitous (Jackson, 2023; Council of Europe, 2020).

In the 1960s, Chomsky (1965) pioneered the concept of "linguistic competence", which is defined as the innate, abstract knowledge of a language's grammatical rules that enables native speakers to produce and comprehend grammatically correct sentences. This framework focused exclusively on the formal structure of language, treating it as a static system isolated from its social context (McNamara, 2019). However, as language teaching practice evolved, a critical gap was recognized: linguistic accuracy alone does not guarantee effective communication. A sentence that adheres perfectly to grammatical rules may still be inappropriate, confusing, or even offensive when used in specific social or cultural contexts (Hymes, 1972; Byram, 2021).

To address this limitation, Hymes (1972) proposed the concept of "communicative competence", which marked the beginning of the "communicative turn" in language education. Drawing on ethnographic research, Hymes conceptualized communicative competence as the integration of linguistic form and communicative function, emphasizing appropriateness in context rather than formal accuracy alone (Leung, 2005; Taguchi, 2022), emphasizing the sociolinguistic ability to use language appropriately in context rather than merely correctly (Taguchi, 2022). This framework expanded the scope of language learning beyond grammatical mastery to include an understanding of when, where, and with whom to use specific linguistic forms, a shift that aligned with the practical goal of preparing learners for real-world interaction (Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009; Kramsch, 2020).

Subsequent scholars refined and expanded Hymes' model to enhance its

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operationalization in language teaching. Canale and Swain (1980) developed a influential four-component model of communicative competence, encompassing grammatical competence (knowledge of linguistic rules), sociolinguistic competence (ability to adapt language to social contexts), discourse competence (skill in constructing coherent texts), and strategic competence (use of communication strategies to overcome barriers). Van Ek (1986) further elaborated this framework into six dimensions, adding sociocultural and social competence to the existing components. These developments solidified the centrality of communicative competence in EFL curricula worldwide, shifting instructional focus from mechanical grammar training to interactive, context-rich learning activities (Baker & Fang, 2021).

However, with the globalization of economies, education, and digital communication the landscape of language use has been transformed: English, in particular, has evolved into a lingua franca used by over 1.5 billion people worldwide, the vast majority of whom are non-native speakers (Crystal, 2018; Jenkins, 2020). In this context, communication increasingly takes place across cultural boundaries, where interlocutors bring distinct value systems, interaction norms, and interpretive frameworks, a shift that introduces unique challenges absent in same-culture interactions (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). As Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) note, intercultural communication essentially involves “exchanging information and meanings” between individuals from “significantly diverse cultural backgrounds”, yet traditional communicative competence models fail to address these cross-cultural-specific challenges (Deardorff, 2020; Jackson, 2020).

Traditional communicative competence frameworks have a fundamental limitation that renders them inadequate in this globalized context: their implicit reliance on

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native speakers as the norm for "appropriate" language use (Byram, 1997; Baker, 2021). Specifically, Hymes' original model framed communicative competence as the ability to interact with native speakers according to their cultural norms, while subsequent expansions by Canale and Swain (1980) and van Ek (1986) retained this native-centric orientation. This orientation overlooks three critical realities of contemporary EFL learning: first, non-native learners acquire the target language within their own linguistic and cultural context, making it nearly impossible to mimic native speakers' thinking and behavior; second, most learners primarily use the target language with non-native speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds; and third, forcing learners to abandon their cultural identities to imitate native speakers risks linguistic confusion and cultural alienation (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Jæger, 1995; Baker, 2021).

Consequently, traditional communicative competence assumes a shared cultural background between interlocutors, allowing reliance on implicit contextual cues and shared norms (Byram, 1997; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). In cross-cultural encounters, this shared context breaks down, leading to misunderstandings, value conflicts, and the activation of cultural stereotypes, what Fox (1997) termed communication "misfires" (Solak, 2020; Çelik & Topkaya, 2020). For example, a Chinese EFL learner's tendency to avoid direct disagreement, rooted in cultural norms of harmony maintenance (Pang et al., 2024), may be interpreted as evasiveness or lack of confidence by an English-speaking interlocutor from a low-context culture that values explicit expression (Hall, 1976; Deardorff, 2020). Such misalignments clearly highlight that effective cross-cultural communication requires more than traditional communicative competence; it demands the ability to recognize, negotiate, and bridge cultural differences (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009;

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Deardorff, 2020; Jackson, 2020), which have thus led to the emergence of ICC.

ICC equips learners with the "21st-century competence" needed for international collaboration, global citizenship, and professional success (Baker & Fang, 2021; Council of Europe, 2020). ICC serves three core functions in cross-cultural communication: first, it enables learners to retain their own cultural identity while engaging with diverse cultural others, avoiding the cultural alienation risked by mimicking native speakers; second, it equips learners with the ability to mediate and interpret cultural differences, transforming potential communication conflicts into effective meaning negotiation; third, it fosters the cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacities needed to communicate appropriately and effectively across diverse cultural contexts (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Deardorff, 2020). In this sense, ICC broadens the traditional understanding of language education objectives, shifting the focus from "communicating like native speakers" to "communicating effectively as intercultural mediators", a shift that is more aligned with the reality of EFL learning in a globalized world.

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Crucially, ICC should be understood as an expansion of, rather than a replacement for, linguistic and communicative competence. A learner cannot develop ICC without first mastering basic linguistic forms and communicative strategies; conversely, linguistic and communicative competence become practically useless in cross-cultural contexts without the cultural awareness and adaptability that ICC provides (Byram, 2009; Kramsch, 2019). This hierarchical yet complementary relationship reflects the evolving understanding of language learning as a holistic process that integrates form, function, and culture.

In sum, this theoretical evolution provides the foundational rationale for the intercultural turn in contemporary EFL education. If language and culture are

inherently intertwined (Risager, 2022; Tektigul et al., 2023), and if communication in a globalized world is inherently intercultural (Jackson, 2023), then ICC cannot be a peripheral add-on to EFL curricula, it must be a central goal.

2.2.1.3 Culture Teaching in EFL

The theoretical recognition of the inseparability of language and culture and the shift from linguistic competence to ICC has stimulated extensive discussion on how culture should be incorporated into EFL instruction. Research has examined stakeholders' understandings of culture teaching, the extent to which cultural content is addressed in classrooms, and the practical challenges that teachers encounter when attempting to integrate culture into language lessons (Baltacı & Tanış, 2018; Estaji & Savarabadi, 2020; Qian, 2024). Collectively, these studies reveal that although the value of culture integration is widely acknowledged, its implementation remains inconsistent and often fragmented across EFL contexts.

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A considerable number of studies shows that teachers, students, and even parents generally hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion of cultural content in language education (Baltacı & Tanış, 2018; Çankaya, 2018; Reddy, 2022). Teachers in particular tend to view culture as an essential component of communicative language teaching. However, divergence in how stakeholders conceptualize "culture" leads to uncertainty regarding what cultural content should be taught. For example, Qian (2024) reports that many Chinese EFL teachers still perceive culture primarily as static factual knowledge, while Estaji and Savarabadi (2020) find that teachers often equate cultural instruction with target-culture information rather than intercultural perspectives. Some groups even express concerns about cultural preservation: parents in Punar and Karatepe's (2019) study feared that exposure to foreign cultures

might weaken children's attachment to national values, and teachers in Reddy's (2022) study expressed ambivalence about prioritizing target-culture topics.

These uncertainties lead to a gap between teachers' stated beliefs and classroom practices. Many teachers report confidence or willingness to integrate culture (Peng, 2020; Munezane, 2025), yet empirical observations show that cultural content is addressed only occasionally or superficially. Even when cultural elements appear in lessons, they tend to be unplanned supplements rather than systematic pedagogical components (Peng, 2020). Teachers often attribute this gap to structural constraints, such as limited curricular time, heavy teaching loads, exam-oriented systems, and institutional expectations that prioritize linguistic accuracy over broader communicative goals (Rasouli & Moradkhani, 2021; Munandar, 2019). Limited professional preparation also plays a role: many teachers feel insufficiently trained in cultural knowledge or intercultural pedagogy and thus rely on familiar content and traditional methods (Qian, 2024; Peng, 2020).

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In practice, a wide range of approaches has been employed to introduce culture into EFL classrooms. Cultural teaching programs and modular interventions have been developed for different pedagogical goals, including oral communication (Menacho-Vargas et al., 2021), listening comprehension (Namaziandost et al., 2018), and reading (Razavi & Gilakjani, 2020; Sheridan et al., 2019). More structured approaches, such as Yang's (2021) CLIL-based cultural curriculum and Ibarra Santacruz's (2025) ICC-oriented lesson study program, attempt to embed cultural learning more systematically. Other studies highlight strategies such as comparing and contrasting cultural practices, reflective tasks, and the use of authentic materials (Lien & Hoa, 2022). Newer initiatives incorporate digital tools, e.g., Kahoot, Quizzes,

and Bamboozle, to facilitate cultural engagement (Lien & Hoa, 2022). Additionally, pedagogical models such as leaderful pedagogy (Egitim & Sandu, 2023) demonstrate that classroom structures promoting collaboration and shared responsibility can enhance learners' intercultural flexibility and awareness.

Despite these diverse efforts, findings on effectiveness reveal certain limitations. Many teaching interventions focus on linguistic outcomes rather than cultural or intercultural development (Sheridan et al., 2019; Ngoc Diep et al., 2022), reflecting a lingering perception that culture is secondary to the "four skills." Even when cultural gains are observed, such as increased awareness or improved adaptability (Wang, 2021; Ibarra Santacruz, 2025), they often occur in controlled or short-term instructional settings. Few studies examine long-term growth or explore the integration of culture as a sustained pedagogical orientation rather than an add-on component. These patterns suggest that although cultural teaching is valued conceptually, it still lacks a coherent pedagogical framework capable of supporting deeper intercultural development across varied instructional contexts.

Taken together, studies indicate that culture teaching in EFL remains characterized by conceptual ambiguity, inconsistent implementation, and limited methodological grounding. These challenges reinforce the need for pedagogically robust and theoretically informed approaches that can meaningfully integrate cultural perspectives into the core of language teaching rather than treating culture as supplementary. This need becomes even more salient when considering the specific cultural and educational characteristics of China, which shape how intercultural goals are interpreted and enacted in College English classrooms.

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2.2.2 Intercultural Orientation in College English in China

The intercultural turn in EFL, rooted in the intertwined relationship between language and culture and the theoretical evolution toward ICC, cannot be detached from the specific social and educational contexts of individual countries. For China, as a major EFL learning context with the largest number of English learners worldwide, the integration of intercultural orientation into College English education carries unique practical significance against the background of deepening international exchanges (Liu, 2019).

The exploration of intercultural orientation in China's College English focuses on the localization practice of EFL intercultural education. This subsection centers on two core dimensions: on one hand, it analyzes the unique intercultural challenges faced by Chinese English learners, which stem from the inherent cultural differences between Chinese and other societies and shape the specific demands for ICC development; on the other hand, it clarifies the explicit intercultural objectives defined in China's College English curriculum, and lays the groundwork for subsequent discussions on the gap between curriculum policy and teaching practice. These two aspects collectively reveal the practical necessity and urgency of strengthening intercultural education in China's College English.

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2.2.2.1 Intercultural Challenges of China

Against the backdrop of China's deepening international engagement, epitomized by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has facilitated cross-border cooperation with over 150 countries across Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America (Wang, 2022), Chinese English learners are increasingly immersed in intercultural communication scenarios with interlocutors from diverse cultural

backgrounds. However, the inherent characteristics of Chinese culture, while shaping learners' unique identity and communication styles, also pose distinctive challenges in cross-cultural interactions. These challenges primarily stem from cultural differences in value systems, communication norms, and cognitive frameworks between Chinese culture and other cultural contexts (including Western, Southeast Asian, and Central Asian regions), often leading to misunderstandings, value conflicts, and ineffective communication (Liu, 2019; Qian, 2024).

A core challenge lies in the divergence of communication contexts and implicit norms across cultures. As Hall (1976) proposed, high-context cultures rely heavily on implicit cues, non-verbal signals, and shared background to convey meaning, but the specific manifestations vary across regions. Chinese learners, socialized in a high-context environment that prioritizes harmony and indirect expression (Pang et al., 2024; Zhang, 2024), may struggle even with other high-context cultures: for instance, their euphemistic refusals were found to confuse Thai interlocutors, who adhere to more subtle hierarchical cues tied to "kreng jai" (consideration for others) (Li & Wongwaropakorn, 2024; Sripunvoraskul, 2022; Enquirer, 2023). In BRI-related cooperation with Central Asian partners, Chinese professionals' focus on building rapport through informal conversations before discussing work clashed with local norms separating personal and professional interactions (Wang, 2022). With Western low-context cultures, the gap is more pronounced: Chinese learners' indirectness in group projects was interpreted as lack of confidence, while Western directness was perceived as rude by Chinese counterparts (Wang, 2022; Pang et al., 2024).

Another prominent challenge arises from differing manifestations of collectivist orientations across non-Western cultures. While China, Southeast Asia, and Central

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Asia are often categorized as collectivist, their core values vary significantly (Kitayama & Salvador, 2024). Chinese collectivism emphasizes interpersonal networks ("guanxi") and hierarchical respect (Charoensukmongkol, 2021; Qian, 2024), which conflicted with Indonesian "gotong royong" (mutual assistance) that prioritizes group equality over hierarchy (Hermawan & Loo, 2019). In Sino-Indonesian joint education programs, Chinese students' reluctance to disagree with leaders (out of respect for authority) was perceived as passivity by Indonesian peers expecting open discussion (Zhang & Wang, 2021). With Western individualist cultures, Chinese students' hesitation to voice personal opinions in seminars (to avoid standing out) was interpreted as lack of critical thinking (Liu, 2019).

Religious and cultural customs add additional layers of complexity. Chinese learners' lack of awareness of Islamic etiquette (e.g., avoiding alcohol, modest dressing) has led to unintended offenses in interactions with Muslim-majority countries in Central Asia and Southeast Asia (Chen et al., 2019). Similarly, gift-giving practices rooted in Chinese culture have occasionally conflicted with regional norms, such as negative connotations associated with specific items in some Southeast Asian countries (Zhu, 2018).

Collectively, these challenges demonstrate that Chinese EFL learners' cultural background creates barriers across interactions with other countries.. The diversity of these challenges underscores the urgency of developing students' ICC to navigate multifaceted cultural contexts, an urgency reflected in the explicit intercultural objectives outlined in China's College English curriculum.

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2.2.2.2 Intercultural Objectives in College English Curriculum

As an indispensable part of China's higher education system, College English has undergone more than half a century of development and plays a crucial role in fostering students' comprehensive qualities and international competitiveness (Yan, 2020). Guided by the national educational policy of "promoting international exchange and cultivating global citizens", the curriculum has explicitly incorporated intercultural education as a core component, reflecting the alignment between domestic educational needs and the global trend of EFL's intercultural turn (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020; Baker & Fang, 2021). Rooted in the principle of integrating "instrumentality" and "humanism", intercultural education serves as a key manifestation of the curriculum's humanistic value, with its core objective defined by the *College English Teaching Guide* as enabling students to "acquire information about foreign societies and cultures, deepen their understanding of diverse cultures, enhance awareness of similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and develop ICC" (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020, p. 15).

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This intercultural objective is operationalized through a three-level teaching system: foundation, improvement, and development; yet the descriptions of these levels fail to provide clear and actionable guidance for intercultural teaching. As noted, the *Guide* has provided the requirements for individual language skills and knowledge, but lack explicit teaching requirement for ICC (see Table 2.1). Specifically, the foundation level requires students to "observe cultural and value differences when communicating with people from different cultures, and use limited communication strategies according to communication needs" (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020, p. 16), but the term "observe" remains undefined in terms of how such observation should be taught or assessed. The improvement level elevates the requirement to

"better handle cultural and value differences and use appropriate communication strategies" (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020, p. 16), yet it does not clarify what constitutes "better handling" or how to distinguish this from the foundation level. At the development level, the goal advances to "effectively handle cultural differences and flexibly use communication strategies according to different scenarios, occasions, and interlocutors" (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020, p. 16), a standard that is equally vague due to the lack of specific criteria for "effectiveness" and "flexibility". Such ambiguity means the three-level system, in practice, cannot serve as a reliable framework for guiding intercultural teaching or assessment, leaving educators without consistent benchmarks for instruction.

Table 2.1

Three-level Teaching Requirements of ICC in General English

Foundation	**Improvement**	**Development**
when communicating with people from different cultures, one can observe cultural and value differences between them, and can use limited communication strategies according to communication needs.	when communicating with people from different cultures, one can better handle differences in culture and values with the other party, and can use communication strategies according to communication needs.	when communicating with people from different cultures, one should be able to handle the differences in culture and values with the other parties, and be able to use communication strategies appropriately according to the different communication scenarios, occasions, and objects.

(*Source:* Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020)

The vagueness of these intercultural objectives directly translates into inconsistencies in teaching practice, laying the groundwork for a significant gap between curriculum policy and classroom implementation. Without clear definitions of what students should learn and how their progress should be measured, intercultural education in College English becomes highly dependent on individual teachers' subjective understanding, rather than a standardized component of the curriculum (Qian, 2024).

This subjectivity not only leads to uneven quality of cultural instruction across institutions but also makes it difficult to align teaching efforts with the curriculum's overarching goal of developing students' practical ICC.

Despite this explicit objective and systematic framework, a significant gap persists between curriculum policy and actual teaching practice, undermining the effectiveness of intercultural education in College English (Peng, 2020; Qian, 2024; Munandar, 2019). A key manifestation of this gap is the disconnect between teachers' perceptions and practices: over 80% of surveyed College English teachers recognize the importance of cultural teaching and express willingness to integrate it into lessons (Peng, 2020), yet empirical observations show that only a small percentage implement it regularly and systematically. When cultural content is addressed, it is often reduced to isolated factual knowledge, such as introductions to Western festivals or food, rather than dynamic exploration of cultural values and communication norms, failing to foster students' practical ICC (Qian, 2024; Estaji & Savarabadi, 2020). This "knowledge-based" approach deviates from the curriculum's goal of developing communicative competence, leaving students ill-prepared to navigate the real intercultural challenges discussed in Section 2.2.2.1 (Byram, 2014; Gong et al., 2020).

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This gap stems from multiple interconnected factors, with institutional constraints and an exam-oriented educational system being the most prominent. College English teaching in China is heavily influenced by standardized tests such as CET-4 and CET-6, which prioritize linguistic accuracy (vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension) over intercultural ability (Qian, 2024; Yan, 2020). To meet students' test-taking needs, teachers often allocate over 90% of class time to linguistic skill drills, leaving minimal room for cultural discussion or interactive intercultural

activities (Peng, 2020; Munandar, 2019). Heavy workloads and large class sizes further exacerbate the issue: most College English teachers face 16-20 teaching hours per week with classes of 50-60 students, making it logistically difficult to design and implement student-centered intercultural tasks (Peng, 2020; Qian, 2024).

Teachers' limited ICC and pedagogical training also contribute to the gap. Many Chinese College English teachers perceive culture primarily as "target-culture knowledge" (e.g., Western history or literature) rather than a dynamic system of communication norms, leading to one-sided and superficial cultural teaching (Estaji & Savarabadi, 2020; Qian, 2024). Additionally, insufficient professional development opportunities leave most teachers without systematic training in intercultural pedagogy; they lack skills to design comparative cultural activities or guide students in reflecting on cultural conflicts, and thus rely on textbook-based factual content (Peng, 2020; Rasouli & Moradkhani, 2021). Some teachers also lack in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture, making it impossible to effectively guide students in comparing Chinese and foreign cultures or mediating cultural differences (Qian, 2024).

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This misalignment between policy and practice is particularly concerning against the backdrop of China's deepening international engagement. The College English curriculum's intercultural objectives are precisely designed to address the diverse intercultural challenges Chinese learners face in BRI-related cooperation and global exchanges, yet the current teaching reality fails to translate these objectives into students' practical abilities. Closing this gap requires targeted pedagogical solutions that reconcile the curriculum's intercultural goals with the practical constraints of College English teaching, solutions that not only clarify "what to teach" and "how to teach" but also align with the exam-oriented context and teachers' professional

development needs. It is this urgent need that drives the exploration of effective ICC cultivation approaches in subsequent sections of this study.

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

As discussed in the preceding sections, the intercultural turn in EFL education has highlighted the indispensable role of ICC in addressing the diverse intercultural challenges faced by Chinese college students. However, the vague and abstract intercultural objectives in China's College English curriculum, coupled with the gap between policy and teaching practice, have underscored an urgent need for a clear and operable theoretical framework to guide ICC cultivation. Clarifying the core connotation and structural dimensions of ICC thus becomes a foundational prerequisite for optimizing intercultural education in College English and bridging the aforementioned practical gaps.

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2.3.1 Conceptualization of ICC

ICC can be defined as the complex ability to communicate appropriately and effectively when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself, while retaining one's own cultural identity and mediating cultural differences (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002; Deardorff, 2020). This definition highlights three core connotations. First, ICC emphasizes the dual criterion of "appropriateness" and "effectiveness" in communication, requiring learners not only to accomplish communicative goals but also to align their language use with the cultural norms of the interactive context. Second, it emphasizes the subjectivity of the learner's own cultural identity, thereby challenging native-speaker-centered norms and affirming the value of learners' own cultural background. Third, it

highlights the core function of "cultural mediation", which positions ICC as a bridge for meaning negotiation between different cultural groups rather than a one-way imitation of foreign cultures.

Based on the core definition and the exploration of existing studies, ICC is commonly characterized by four interrelated features. First, ICC is a multidimensional construct, integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2020; Byram, 2021). Cognitively, it involves knowledge of one's own and others' cultural values, social institutions, and communicative conventions. Affectively, it includes openness, respect, empathy, and tolerance of ambiguity. Behaviorally, it manifests in the ability to adjust communicative strategies and mediate cultural differences in interaction. Earlier research (e.g., Wiseman, 2002) tended to prioritize cognitive and behavioral dimensions, while ignoring the dynamic interaction of affective factors (such as motivation and tolerance for ambiguity) in cross-cultural communication. Recent studies (Wu et al., 2023; Deardorff, 2020; Baker, 2021) have corrected this bias, pointing out that the affective dimension is the "trigger" for the exertion of ICC, and the lack of positive intercultural attitudes will directly limit the effectiveness of cognitive knowledge and behavioral skills.

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Second, ICC is inherently interactive and negotiable. Its core lies in the recognition, interpretation, and mediation of cultural differences during communication (Portalla & Chen, 2010, Byram, 2021, Liddicoat, 2022). The role of ICC is to promote the negotiation of meaning between different schemas, so as to avoid communication problems caused by cultural misunderstandings. Unlike the one-way "adaptation" advocated by traditional communicative competence, ICC emphasizes the two-way interactive nature of cross-cultural communication; learners need to not only

understand the cultural norms of the other party but also actively express their own cultural perspectives, realizing the co-construction of cross-cultural meaning. This characteristic is particularly prominent in the research on English as a Lingua Franca in recent years (Jenkins, 2020), which holds that ICC is the core ability to ensure the effectiveness of communication among non-native speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Third, ICC adopts a non-native speaker–centered orientation, replacing the traditional goal of approximating native-speaker norms with the notion of the intercultural speaker (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Aguilar, 2002; Byram, 2021). As an intercultural speaker, foreign language learners first belong to their own native culture; even if they have the same language proficiency as native speakers, they still retain their sociocultural identity in the learning process. This orientation fundamentally solves the problem of cultural alienation caused by the native speaker norm in traditional foreign language education (Byram, 1997; Holliday, 2015; Byram 2021). Although early concerns questioned whether the "intercultural speaker" is a realistic goal for EFL learners, believing that it may increase the learning burden (Arévalo-Guerrero, 2009), empirical studies have demonstrated that such abilities can be systematically developed through instructional support (Dai, 2018; Gong et al., 2020), which verifies the feasibility of this goal.

Fourth, ICC includes critical cultural awareness, that is, the ability to reflect on one's own cultural biases and the power dynamics inherent in cross-cultural communication (Byram, 1997; Baker & Fang, 2021). This characteristic makes ICC not only a "communication tool" but also a "critical thinking tool"; learners need to recognize that cultural norms are not absolute and static, and there may be unequal power relations behind cross-cultural communication (such as the influence of

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cultural hegemony on communication discourse). Early ICC models (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980) lacked this critical dimension, which led to the risk of simplifying cultural differences in practical application. The emphasis on critical cultural awareness in recent years (e.g., Kramsch, 2020; Risager, 2022) has made the connotation of ICC more in line with the requirements of global citizenship education, which is an important progress in the development of ICC theory.

Given the complexity of ICC, scholars from different disciplines (such as applied linguistics, cross-cultural communication and psychology) have put forward diverse interpretations and alternative terms for it, including intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural competence, cultural intelligence, global competence and international mindedness (Hammer et al., 2003; Peterson, 2004; Chen & Starosta, 2012; Hunter et al., 2006), reflecting the interdisciplinary characteristics of ICC research.

These concepts have similarities in core connotation but obvious differences in focus. First, they are different in cognitive-affective-behavioral orientation. Hammer et al. (2003) define intercultural sensitivity as the ability to identify and experience relevant cultural differences, focusing on the cognitive perspective of individuals in cross-cultural contexts. In contrast, Deardorff (2006) emphasizes that intercultural competence in cross-cultural situations usually includes appropriate behavior and effective communication, focusing more on the behavioral dimension. Second, they are different in the scope of application scenarios. Chen and Starosta (2012) define cross-cultural competence as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from multi-level cultural backgrounds, which is applicable to both face-to-face and indirect cross-cultural communication. Peterson's (2004) cultural intelligence (CQ) focuses more on the ability to adapt to cultural differences in organizational and professional contexts, emphasizing the practical value of

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cross-cultural ability in workplace scenarios. Third, they are different in the inclusion of unique dimensions. Wiseman (2002) uniquely includes motivation as a core element of ICC, believing that the willingness to engage with cultural differences is the premise of exerting cross-cultural communication ability, which is not explicitly emphasized in other frameworks.

Among the various ICC frameworks, Byram's (1997, 2021) model is selected as the theoretical foundation of this study, mainly based on three rationales: first, it hsas a strong educational orientation. Unlike many psychological models (e.g., Deardorff, 2020) which focus on the psychological mechanism of cross-cultural ability, Byram's model explicitly emphasizes that ICC can be explicitly taught, assessed and integrated into formal language teaching (Byram, 2014, 2021). This is particularly important for EFL contexts where learners have limited opportunities for immersive cultural interaction, as it provides a theoretical basis for classroom-based intercultural education. Second, it has clear curriculum implications. Byram's model identifies five core elements of ICC (attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness), which can be directly translated into specific teaching objectives and teaching activities (Byram et al., 2002; Dai, 2018). Compared with other frameworks (e.g., Fantini's 2000 model which is relatively abstract), Byram's model is more operable in curriculum design and teaching practice. Third, it can be widely applied and verified in EFL contexts. A large number of recent empirical studies (e.g., Gong et al., 2020; Dai, 2018; Wu et al., 2023) have applied Byram's model to EFL teaching practice and proved its effectiveness in promoting learners' ICC development. Especially in the Chinese EFL context, Byram's model has been widely used in College English

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teaching reform research, which has high adaptability to the research context of this study.

At the same time, recent discussions suggest that Byram's model may require contextual extension to account for digitally mediated intercultural communication and ELF interactional realities (Jenkins, 2020; Risager, 2022). However, considering its strong educational orientation and operability, this study still takes Byram's model as the core framework, and appropriately absorbs the research results of recent digital intercultural communication (e.g., Jenkins, 2020) to supplement and improve it in the subsequent teaching design part, so as to make it more in line with the actual needs of contemporary EFL teaching.

2.3.2 Byram's Model of ICC

Byram proposed the ICC model from the perspective of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), aiming to address the limitations of traditional communicative competence frameworks in cross-cultural interaction interaction (Byram, 1997), a concern he later reiterates by emphasizing the need to prepare learners for communication across cultural boundaries rather than within homogeneous native-speaker norms (Byram, 2021). The core of this model consists of five interrelated savoirs necessary for intercultural communication: knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovering and interacting, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness and political education (Byram, 1997; Köroğlu, 2020). Table 2.2 shows the five components of ICC and the expected outcomes of a foreign language learning process.

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Table 2.2

Byram's (1997) Conceptualization of ICC

Intercultural Communicative Competence	Attitudes	Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own.
	Knowledge	Knowledge about social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
	Skills of interpreting and relating	Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own
	Skills of discovering and interacting	Ability to acquire new knowledge of culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real time communication and interaction.
	Critical cultural awareness and political education	An ability to evaluate critically and based on explicit criteria perspectives, practices and production in one's own and other cultures and countries.

(*Source:* Köroğlu, 2020)

Among the four factors, Byram (1997) regarded knowledge and attitudes as pre-conditions for successful intercultural communication, a view he later refines by framing these dimensions as developmental resources that shape learners' readiness for intercultural engagement (Byram, 2021). In any intercultural situation, no matter between one native speaker and a foreign language learner, or between people from different counties and language learning the same culture, the interaction is impossible to be in the same way between native speakers. To make a successful interaction, smooth information exchange is not enough, people need to establish an interpersonal relationship which calls for appropriate attitudes and well understanding of intercultural knowledge (Byram, 1997, 2021). The knowledge dimension supports learners' skills of interpreting and relating, as existing cultural knowledge enables them to make sense of others' behaviors and to relate these to their own cultural frames of reference (Byram, 2021; Liddicoat, 2022). As a result,

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the ICC dimensions in this study are in the following order: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness.

In addition to the construct of ICC, Byram also contemplates the objectives of each intercultural dimension for teaching, learning and assessment. Table 2.3 presents the objective of each domain of ICC. These objectives inform instructional design, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria within the IcLL-based College English course.

Table 2.3

Byram's (1997) Learning Objectives of ICC

ICC Dimensions	Learning Objectives of ICC
Knowledge	(a) historical and contemporary relationships between one's own and one's interlocutor. (b) the means of achieving contact with interlocutors form another country (at distance or in proximity), of travel to and from, and the institutions, which facilitate contact of help resolve problems. (c) types of causes of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins. (d) national memory of one's own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of other countries. (e) national memory of one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from one's own country. (f) the national definitions of geographical space in one's own country, and how these are perceived from the perspective of other countries. (g) the national definitions of geographical space in one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from owns' country. (h) the processes and institutions of socialization in one's own and the interlocutors' country. (i) social distinctions and their principal markers, in one's own country and the interlocutor's. (j) institutions, and perceptions of them, which impinge on daily life within one's own and one's interlocutor's country and which conduct and influence relationships between them. (k) the processes of social interaction in the interlocutor's county.
Attitudes	(a) willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality, distinct from seeking out the exotic of the profitable. (b) interest in discovering other perspectives or interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices. (c) willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one's environment.

Table 2.3 continued.

	(e) readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction.
Skills	(a) identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origin. (b) identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present. (c) mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena. (d) elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and develop an explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena. (e) identify significant references within and across cultures and elicit their significance and connotations. (f) identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances. (g) use in real time an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from a different country and culture, taking into consideration the degree of one's existing familiarity with the country, culture and language and the extent of difference between one's own and the other. (h) identify contemporary and past relationships between one's own and the other culture and society. (i) identify and make use of public and private institutions which facilitate contact with other countries and cultures. (j) use, in real time, knowledge, skills and attitudes for mediation between interlocutors of one's own and a foreign culture.
Awareness	(a) identify and interpret explicit and implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other cultures. (b) make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which refer socio-cultural to an explicit perspective and criteria. (c) interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of those exchanges by drawing upon one's knowledge, skills and attitudes.

(*Source:* Byram, 1997, pp. 57-64)

To better align with the research context and objectives, this study adapts Byram's original five-savoir model into a four-dimensional framework through two operational adjustments. First, the two skill dimensions, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovering and interacting, are merged into a single "intercultural skills" dimension. This adjustment is based on the practical observation that the two types of skills are highly interconnected in real intercultural communication and are often measured as an integrated construct in empirical research (Dai, 2018; Wu et al., 2023). Second, the "critical cultural awareness and

political education" dimension is simplified to "intercultural awareness" by excluding the political education component, considering that the research focus of this study lies in the general intercultural communication ability of college English learners rather than political literacy. These adaptations are operational adjustments for the convenience of subsequent data analysis and intervention design, without altering the core connotation of Byram's ICC construct.

2.3.2.1 Intercultural Attitudes (ICAT)

Intercultural attitudes in Byram's model are defined as curiosity, oppression and willingness to suspend judgement towards other cultures and belief in one' own. (Byram, 1997; Köroğlu, 2020). Byram conceptualizes intercultural attitudes as a prerequisite for intercultural communication, arguing that openness, curiosity, and a willingness to explore similarities and differences are essential for initiating and sustaining intercultural interaction (Byram, 1997; Byram, 2021). Recent studies have further strengthened the understanding of the role of intercultural attitudes: as the affective core of ICC, attitudes directly influence learners' motivation to participate in cross-cultural activities and their willingness to adjust communication strategies (Wu et al., 2023; Yin, 2020). Specifically, positive intercultural attitudes can reduce the psychological resistance to cultural differences, thereby promoting the integration of intercultural knowledge and skills in practical communication. In the College English course, the teacher can help learners identify their attitudes by providing some critical incidents, and identify the stereotypes for further discussion.

2.3.2.2 Intercultural Knowledge (ICKN)

Intercultural knowledge in Byram's model is functional rather than encyclopedic.

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Byram's definition of intercultural knowledge differs from the simple mastery of cultural facts; instead, it focuses on three core components: knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and the interlocutor's country, knowledge of the general processes of societal and individual interaction, and knowledge of the sources of misunderstanding between cross-cultural interlocutors (Byram, 1997; Köroğlu, 2020). This knowledge can be further divided into declarative knowledge and interpretive knowledge: declarative knowledge refers to the factual understanding of cultural phenomena (e.g., social institutions, cultural customs), while interpretive knowledge refers to the ability to explain the causes and implications of cultural behaviors based on contextual factors (Aguilar, 2002; Risager, 2022).

In EFL contexts, intercultural knowledge is necessarily finite and selective, as instructional time and resources cannot accommodate exhaustive cultural coverage; therefore, knowledge selection should be guided by curricular goals and learners' communicative needs (Byram, 1997; 2021). In the College English course, the intercultural knowledge is integrated into the thematic units, and is closely related to the theme of each unit. In doing so, the combination of language and cultural instruction is achieved without being contrived and far-fetched.

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2.3.2.3 Intercultural Skills (ICSK)

Skills here do not refer to those linguistic skills as listening, speaking, writing etc., but "skills to interpret and relate, and skills to discover and/or to interact" (Byram, 1997, p. 37). In her later work, Byram (2021) further emphasizes that these skills are developmental in nature and are enacted through intercultural mediation rather than as discrete, transferable abilities.

Interpreting and related skills are described as the capacity to "interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to documents of one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 52). The skill of discovery and interaction is defined by Byram (1997) as "the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices, as well as the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (p. 52). The merging of these two skill types is widely accepted in empirical research, mainly because the two are highly complementary in practical cross-cultural communication: the skills of interpreting and relating provide the cognitive basis for understanding cultural differences, while the skills of discovering and interacting realize the practical application of this understanding in dynamic interaction (Dai, 2018; Gong et al., 2020).

As the dimension closest to behavioral performance in ICC, intercultural skills are the direct manifestation of the practical value of ICC. In College English, relevant activities were carried out to enhance learner's intercultural skills within the limitations of classroom teaching. Teacher invited native English speakers to the classroom, and used authentic materials from the Internet or newspapers to let the learners interpret from the underlying cultures and relate it to the Chinese culture.

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2.3.2.4 Intercultural Awareness (ICAW)

Intercultural awareness (adapted from Byram's critical cultural awareness) occupies a unique position in the ICC framework: it is the only dimension with a critical nature, distinguishing ICC from simple cultural knowledge acquisition or communication skill training. Different from attitudes (affective predisposition), knowledge (cognitive content) and skills (behavioral ability), intercultural awareness refers to the ability to critically evaluate cultural perspectives, practices and products

based on explicit criteria, as well as to identify and interpret implicit values in cross-cultural communication (Byram, 1997, p. 73; Baker & Fang, 2021). Intercultural awareness is the most difficult dimension to develop and measure in ICC, because it requires learners to break through ethnocentric biases and conduct in-depth reflection on the power relations and value systems behind cultural phenomena (Kramsch, 2020; Risager, 2022). Recent discussions have further strengthened the emphasis on "criticality" in this dimension: contemporary intercultural awareness not only requires the ability to evaluate cultural differences but also involves reflecting on the influence of global power structures and cultural hegemony on cross-cultural communication, which is an essential requirement for cultivating global citizenship (Baker & Fang, 2021; Risager, 2022). In the College English course, learners were invited to engage in classroom discussion, presentation and debate about certain culture phenomenon.

Because there is difficulty in creating a general syllabus for teaching ICC that is applicable to all curriculum, Byram's model of ICC can be used to guide the development of a particular syllabus for a foreign language curriculum. Building on Byram's ICC model, this study incorporates IcLL pedagogical principles to guide the formulation of research questions, the development of a syllabus, the selection and design of data collection instruments, and the data analysis in this study.

2.3.3 Language Proficiency and the Development of ICC

Language proficiency, generally referring to an individual's ability to use a language accurately and fluently across various communicative contexts, plays a pivotal role in intercultural communication. In the context of EFL learning, developing intercultural ICC requires not only cultural sensitivity but also the linguistic ability to

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engage effectively across cultural boundaries. Accordingly, understanding how language proficiency influences ICC development is crucial for designing and evaluating intercultural education interventions.

Theoretically, the connection between language proficiency and ICC has been well recognized. Byram's (1997) influential model of ICC explicitly includes linguistic competence as a foundational component, emphasizing that language mastery enables learners to access and interpret cultural meanings embedded in discourse. Similarly, Liddicoat et al. (2003) argue within the IcLL framework that language and culture are inseparable, and that inadequate language proficiency can hinder learners' abilities to engage in meaningful intercultural reflection and negotiation. Deardorff (2006) also highlights that while language ability alone does not guarantee intercultural competence, higher levels of linguistic proficiency facilitate more effective intercultural engagement by enabling deeper understanding, empathy, and adaptability.

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Empirical studies further substantiate the link between language proficiency and ICC development. Wu et al. (2023) reported that English language ability positively predicted students' intercultural attitudes and interaction skills in EFL settings. Huang's (2021) study proved that English proficiency significantly predicts stronger gains in ICC knowledge and skills. Rui and Tong (2021) also observed that lower-proficiency learners often struggled with the cognitive and behavioral aspects of intercultural communication, reflecting the constraint of limited linguistic resources. However, some scholars (e.g., Yin, 2020) caution that language proficiency, while important, does not automatically lead to intercultural sensitivity, suggesting a complex, rather than purely linear, relationship between the two constructs.

Given the theoretical and empirical evidence, it is clear that language proficiency significantly influences the developmental pathway and extent of improvement in learners' ICC. Therefore, in the present study, English language proficiency was statistically controlled as a covariate when analyzing the effects of the IcLL-based intervention. This approach ensured that observed differences in ICC development could be more accurately attributed to the instructional intervention rather than pre-existing disparities in students' linguistic abilities.

2.4 Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL)

IcLL, a language teaching approach, foregrounds the integration of language and culture. It provides a pedagogical framework for operationalizing intercultural objectives in classroom practice. The subsections below discuss the conceptualization of IcLL, its pedagogical principles, and the pathway it proposes for the development of ICC.

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2.4.1 Conceptualization of IcLL

IcLL has been discussed from different perspectives in the field of language education. To clarify its theoretical basis, this section first defines IcLL and then examines the role of culture within the IcLL framework.

2.4.1.1 Defining IcLL

IcLL, a pedagogical approach of language learning, is a significant advancement in foreign language education. It is built on an acknowledgment and comprehension of the relationships between language and culture, as well as an awareness of the way people communicate across cultures (Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000; Liddicoat &

Scarino, 2013). Rather than treating language and culture as separate domains, IcLL conceptualizes them as integrated systems of meaning-making and positions intercultural understanding as central to language education (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Liddicoat, 2022).

Within this framework, learners engage with language and culture at cognitive, behavioral, and affective levels, developing the knowledge, interpretive abilities, and attitudes required for intercultural communication. Intercultural learning is therefore understood not as the accumulation of cultural facts, but as an ongoing developmental process in which learners interpret, compare, and reflect upon their own and others' cultural practices (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liddicoat, 2022).

IcLL conceptualizes language learning as an interpretive and relational process in which learners engage with cultural meanings rather than merely acquire information. Recent studies emphasize that intercultural language education involves reflexive positioning, negotiation of perspectives, and the development of intercultural mediation capacities (Scarino, 2025; Holmes, 2020; Holmes et al., 2022; Zhu, 2018). In this view, language functions as a semiotic resource through which identities, values, and worldviews are constructed and contested (Byram, 2021; Dervin, 2022). The pedagogical aim of IcLL is therefore not imitation of native-speaker norms, but the cultivation of learners' ability to interpret, relate, and act across cultural boundaries in context-sensitive ways (Porto, 2021; Liddicoat, 2022).

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2.4.1.2 Culture in IcLL

While the concept of culture has been discussed extensively in earlier sections, IcLL adopts a distinct and pedagogically significant interpretation. It emphasizes a dynamic and practice-oriented view of culture, moving away from static conceptions

traditionally prevalent in foreign language education. This orientation aligns with the recent discussions in intercultural education, where culture is understood not as a fixed body of knowledge but as a relational and meaning-making process enacted in interaction (Scarino, 2018; Byram, 2021).

Liddicoat (2002) distinguishes between static and dynamic views of culture in foreign language teaching. This distinction has significantly influenced intercultural pedagogy and resonates with contemporary discussions of interculturality in language education, which increasingly emphasize relational and dialogic understandings of culture (Porto, 2021; Baker, 2021). Recent research suggests that rather than a simple binary, these perspectives exist along a continuum, with increasing emphasis on dialogic and reflexive engagement with cultural meanings (Dervin, 2020; Liddicoat, 2022).

In the static view, culture is treated as concrete knowledge of facts or artifacts which can be acquired in culture learning. It is "knowledge-out-of-context" rather than "knowledge-in-action". Thus, learning under the static perspective of culture concentrates solely on issues such as a country's history, customs, institutions, arts, literature, and geography. (Liddicoat et al., 2003). The cultural competence gained from this kind of cultural learning is merely the recall of this information. This static view of culture separates the relationship between culture and language, making cultural teaching exist independently of language teaching, or making cultural teaching a supplement to language teaching (Liddicoat, 2002). In lower-proficiency classrooms, cultural content may be delivered primarily in learners' first language, limiting opportunities for intercultural meaning-making (Baker, 2021; Liddicoat, 2022). Such a view risks reinforcing stereotypes and detaching culture from real communication (Dervin, 2022), since the information are limited only through the

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presentation from teachers and textbooks.

In contrast, the dynamic cultural view is just the opposite of the static cultural view. Culture is viewed as an extremely diverse and ever-changing entity by IcLL scholars, who emphasize a dynamic approach to culture (Liddicoat, 2002). It is defined as a system of constantly evolving daily behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes; it is not immutable, but can be created by its people in interaction. Culture learning with a dynamic approach emphasizes an engagement with culture. That is to say, learners need to engage positively in culture learning, instead of passively inculcated cultural knowledge. Because culture is variable, learners need to look at culture in a particular time and space, changing their understanding across "time, regions, classes and generations" (Crawford & McLaren, 2003). Dynamic cultural learning involves reflexive positioning, whereby learners critically examine both "the other" and their own assumptions in intercultural encounters (Scarino, 2018; Holmes, 2020; Dervin, 2022). The pedagogical focus therefore shifts from acquiring cultural knowledge to developing ICC as an interpretive and relational capacity.

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A dynamic view of culture powers IcLL's philosophy of culture, on the basis of which Liddicoat et al. (2003) develop a paradigm of culture as practice. They pointed out four approaches in cultural learning: culture as high culture; culture as area studies; culture as societal norms; and culture as practice (Liddicoat et al., 2003). These approaches reflect varying degrees of static and dynamic conceptualizations of culture, with the latter emphasizing participation, mediation, and meaning-making in interaction (Liddicoat, 2022).

High culture equals to human civilization, and is the traditional focus of culture learning in FLT. High culture includes literary works, film, arts, music, etc. It can be found particularly in foreign language programs in tertiary level (Liddicoat et al.,

2003). Area studies often serve as the background knowledge about a certain area (like a country) to language learning, including the topics of geography, prominent people, transportation, and historical events. This knowledge is so self-contained that it can be taught outside foreign language classroom (Liddicoat, 2002). Therefore, the underlying view of area studies is a static one. Culture was seen as societal norms by anthropologists (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 2013) in last century. They view culture as the practices and values which is typical of them (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). The pragmatics of being polite, direct, and respect, nonverbal communication (like making eye contact), and the speakers' religious and societal convictions (e.g., culturally symbolic colors) are some instances of these topics. While this approach empathizes pragmatic and behavioral dimensions of communication, it may risk generalization if cultural patterns are presented as homogeneous or fixed (Dervin, 2022). Contemporary studies emphasizes that cultural norms are negotiated, context-dependent, and internally diverse rather than uniformly shared within groups (Baker, 2021).

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These three approached reflect relatively static views. High culture and area studies often present cultural content without active engagement. Culture as societal norms, although more behaviorally oriented, tends to universalize or stereotype cultural values (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). These views emphasize observing "the other" without critical reflection on the self, limiting learners' ability to act interculturally.

In contrast, the culture-as-practice approach, developed by sociologists and ethnomethodologists (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1959; Cohen & Taylor, 2003), focuses on how meanings derived from materials are shaped and understood within human behavior and interaction (Newton et al., 2010). Contemporary developments extend this understanding by emphasizing intercultural mediation, dialogic

meaning-making, and reflexive engagement in situated encounters (Liddicoat, 2022; Porto, 2021; Scarino, 2018). Culture-as-practice thus encourages learners to engage with lived experience, interpret multiple perspectives, and reflect on their own identity in communication.

Notably, adopting a dynamic view does not mean dismissing the value of high culture, area knowledge, or societal norms. Rather, these elements can be approached through an intercultural lens that invites critical comparison and reflexive interpretation (Baker, 2021; Porto, 2021). Literature may serve as a site for exploring identity and values; area studies can prompt reflection on diversity beyond generalizations; and societal norms can be analyzed to understand how stereotypes are constructed and sustained. Through such reframing, cultural content becomes a resource for intercultural development rather than an endpoint of knowledge acquisition.

IcLL's dynamic understanding of culture ultimately underpins its pedagogy. It reorients language education from transmitting static cultural information toward cultivating learners' capacity to interpret, negotiate, and mediate meanings across cultural contexts (Byram, 2021; Liddicoat, 2022). In this view, culture learning becomes an ongoing process of developing interculturality, an evolving capacity to engage with difference reflexively and relationally through language (Dervin, 2022).

2.4.2 Pedagogical Principles of IcLL

To effectively integrate intercultural learning into foreign language education, five principles for IcLL as a classroom process was proposed by Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003), which is show in Table 2.4. Liddicoat (2008) argues that these principles are starting points for an intercultural language learning, not an

intercultural pedagogy itself (Liddicoat, 2008). Therefore, they are utilized to provide a framework for choices of methods, activities, materials, assessment tools in the design and planning of a curriculum (Liddicoat, 2008).

The principle of active construction highlights learners' agency in intercultural meaning-making. Rather than passively receiving cultural information, learners engage with texts, technologies, and social interaction to construct interpretations of both their own and others' cultural practices (Liddicoat et al., 2003). It involves reflexive positioning, where learners interrogate assumptions and re-evaluate taken-for-granted perspectives (Scarino, 2018). Teachers, therefore, facilitate rather than transmit knowledge, creating conditions for inquiry and dialogue.

Making connections involves linking new cultural input with prior linguistic and cultural knowledge. Learners compare perspectives across contexts and reconsider existing frameworks of understanding. This comparative dimension aligns with recent intercultural education research that positions comparison as a catalyst for critical awareness rather than mere identification of difference (Baker, 2021; Dervin, 2022). Effective instructional design scaffolds these connections through guided questioning, multimodal resources, and dialogic engagement.

Social interaction situates intercultural learning within communicative practice. Through interaction, learners encounter diverse viewpoints and negotiate meaning collaboratively. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) emphasize that ICC develops through participation rather than observation alone. More recent developments highlight that interaction in IcLL contexts entails intercultural mediation: learners interpret, reformulate, and co-construct meanings across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Liddicoat, 2022). Teachers play a crucial role in structuring opportunities for inclusive participation and reflective feedback.

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Reflection constitutes the metacognitive dimension of IcLL. Learners critically examine cultural differences and their own cultural views, asking not only what differences exist, but why they matter and how they are interpreted. Reflection is not evaluative in a simplistic sense; rather, it involves interpretive engagement with perspectives, values, and emotions (Scarino, 2018). This process contributes to the development of critical cultural awareness, a key dimension of ICC (Byram, 2021).

Responsibility underscores the ethical dimension of intercultural communication. Learners are encouraged to assume responsibility for successful interaction and for cultivating an intercultural perspective characterized by openness and respect (Liddicoat et al., 2003). This responsibility was viewed as relational and dialogic, requiring learners to engage with difference without erasing their own identities (Porto, 2021).

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Table 2.4

Pedagogical Principles of IcLL

Principles	Description
Active construction	Learners need to purposefully and actively engage in culture exploration through interaction with people, text and technology, creating their own knowledge about culture of their own and others, including a personal way of responding to linguistic and cultural differences and the cultural meaning behind behaviors. Teachers showed support the active construction of culture instead of mechanical inculcation of cultural knowledge.
Making connections	Learners are encouraged to make comparison between their prior knowledge of culture and language and the new input in the classroom, as well as making connections between the first culture and other cultures. The need to rethink their initial conceptions and bring new insights into the existing framework of knowledge. Teachers should encourage students to make connections through interactive questioning, resources and technologies.
Social interaction	Social and interactive learning and exploring language and culture allows students to discover differences and construct meaning through communications with others. Teachers should involve all learners in social interaction, and give feedback for the improvement of interaction.
Reflection	Learners need to reflect critically on the cultural difference and their own cultural behavior in terms of what, how and why.

Table 2.4 continued.

Responsibility	Learners need to accept their responsibility for achieving successful intercultural communication and the responsibility for developing an intercultural perspective and attitude.

(*Source:* Liddicoat, et al., 2003, p. 47-51)

The classroom practice, under the guidance of these principles, becomes a cyclic process of noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting (see Figure 2.1) (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). More recent studies emphasize that this process model should be understood not merely as procedural sequencing, but as a framework for mediating intercultural meaning-making in situated classroom contexts (Liddicoat, 2022; Porto, 2021).

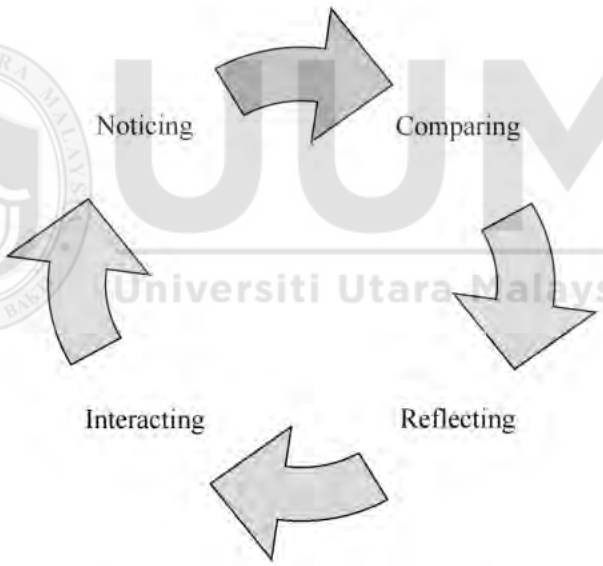

Figure 2.1. Interacting Processes of Intercultural Pedagogy
(*Source*: Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013)

When starting the IcLL, one should first notice the differences and similarities between the new input and the existing knowledge. However, the noticing is not naturally developed in the language classroom, instead it calls for regulation, so that students know what to notice (Liddicoat, 2008). So, teachers need to help students by interactive questions. The next step is to identify similarities and differences through

comparison. This comparison is based on the old knowledge they have for the cultural issue and what is it like in their own culture (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). As the similarities and differences are figure out, the students are then encouraged to reflect on them. Reflection does not imply a judgmental process. Students don't have to answer "yes" or "no" but rather provide a personal interpretation of the experience. This interpretation includes perceptions of, and feelings about cultural diversity, as well as ways of coping with and participating in diversity (Liddicoat, 2008). When one has clarified his understanding of the diversity, he/she can participate in the interaction, in which he communicates his/ her personal interpretation with others, and notice new input from others, then a new round of this process begins.

The noticing–comparing–reflecting–interacting cycle operationalizes these principles in classroom practice (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Although often depicted visually as circular, suggesting flexibility and iteration, the stages are pedagogically interdependent. Noticing directs attention to culturally meaningful features; comparison generates interpretive contrast; reflection deepens understanding; and interaction enables learners to test and reformulate meanings in communication. Rather than a strictly linear sequence, this cycle functions as a recursive process through which learners progressively refine their intercultural understanding (Liddicoat, 2022).

This model highlights that effective intercultural teaching goes beyond transmitting cultural facts. It fosters the development of reflective, critically aware, and ethically responsible language users. In this study, the five principles and the noticing–comparing–reflecting–interacting cycle form the pedagogical foundation for designing the IcLL-based intervention and guiding classroom activities that aim to develop ICC.

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2.4.3 Pathway for developing ICC through IcLL

Although IcLL provides clear pedagogical principles for integrating language and culture, these principles do not in themselves explain how intercultural learning develops through classroom instruction. In EFL contexts, teachers need more than a general orientation; they also need a process that shows how learners engage with cultural input, make sense of differences, and gradually adjust their understanding through practice and reflection. For this reason, IcLL needs to be complemented by a pathway that specifies the learning processes through which ICC development can be supported over time.

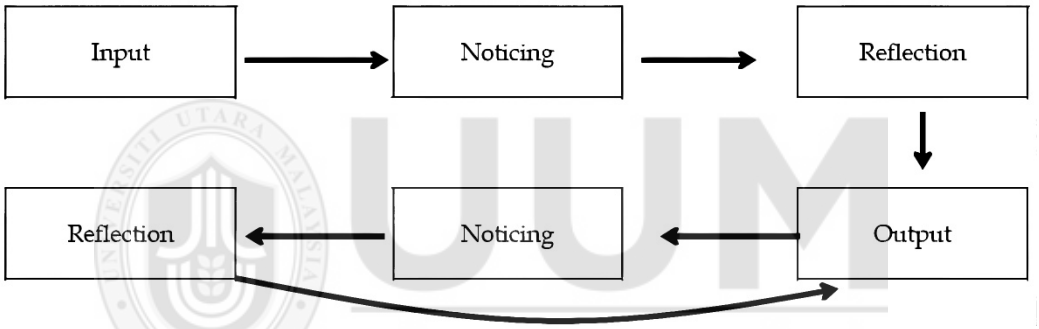

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Figure 2.2. A Pathway for Developing ICC

(*Source:* Liddicoat, 2002)

A pathway for the development of ICC was proposed by Liddicoat (2002) as a model of IcLL (see Figure 2.2). It aims to guide learners in exploring both their own culture and the target culture through a structured process, thereby supporting the development of intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. Rather than presenting ICC as an outcome of exposure alone, the model conceptualizes development as mediated practice, a position consistent with more recent interpretations of intercultural learning as dialogic and reflexive meaning-making (Scarino, 2018; Liddicoat, 2022).

The model begins with exposure to a wide range of authentic texts and sources,

including oral, performative, visual, and written materials, as well as opportunities for interaction with speakers of the target language (input) (Liddicoat, 2002). Such input is not neutral content but a stimulus for interpretive engagement (Porto, 2021). Learners are encouraged to attend to salient or unfamiliar features in communicative events (noticing), drawing on prior knowledge to interpret difference. Noticing here functions not merely as perceptual awareness but as the first step in constructing intercultural meaning.

Following noticing, learners engage in comparison and reflection. They examine possible reasons underlying observed practices and articulate personal responses to them. Reflection involves questioning assumptions and situating both self and other within broader socio-cultural contexts (Scarino, 2018). Through this process, learners begin to move beyond surface-level observation toward critical awareness, an essential dimension of ICC (Byram, 2021).

The pathway then shifts toward practice and output. Learners experiment with newly interpreted forms, perspectives, or communicative strategies in interaction derived from earlier input. During this stage, a second phase of noticing occurs, as learners evaluate the comfort, appropriateness, and effectiveness of their communicative choices. This recursive noticing-reflection dynamic supports incremental adjustment rather than immediate transformation, aligning with contemporary views of intercultural development as gradual and mediated (Liddicoat, 2022).

In the final stage, learners re-evaluate both the input and their own adapted practices, deciding which perspectives or strategies are appropriate to maintain. This evaluative phase underscores that intercultural learning entails ethical and relational positioning rather than simple imitation of target norms (Byram, 2021). The pathway therefore operates cyclically: learners continuously reinterpret, modify, and refine their

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intercultural practice over time.

This pathway toward developing ICC appears to be an improved version of the Interacting Process of Intercultural Pedagogy (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), presenting a more elaborated process, with particular emphasis on learners' engagement with input, experimentation with output, and iterative refinement through reflection and feedback. Nevertheless, it also presents several limitations when considered for application in specific EFL contexts.

First, there are issues of terminological consistency. In the 2002 pathway, "noticing" is used not only to refer to learners' attention to cultural features in input, but also to describe their awareness of comfort or effectiveness during output production. By contrast, in the Interacting Process of Intercultural Pedagogy (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), "noticing" is more narrowly defined as the observation of cultural differences in incoming input. Such shifts in meaning may lead to conceptual ambiguity and potential confusion for teachers when translating the model into classroom practice. Later discussions of IcLL tend to differentiate more clearly between perceptual noticing and reflective awareness (Liddicoat, 2022), suggesting the need for careful operationalization in pedagogical design.

Second, the pathway appears to be based on relatively idealized learning conditions. It implicitly assumes that learners have sufficient time, sustained exposure to rich and authentic input, and frequent opportunities for meaningful intercultural interaction. These assumptions may not fully align with the realities of many EFL classrooms, particularly in the context of Chinese College English, where instructional time is limited and opportunities for interaction beyond the classroom are constrained. Intercultural learning in such settings is therefore mediated primarily through texts, guided discussion, and structured tasks rather than immersive

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experience.

Third, the boundaries between stages in the pathway are not always clearly operationalized. Similar activities, such as comparison or reflection, may occur at multiple stages, which can make it difficult for teachers to distinguish which phase of the pathway a particular classroom activity is intended to address. This lack of clarity may pose challenges for classroom implementation, especially for teachers seeking concrete guidance on sequencing and scaffolding intercultural learning activities.

Taken together, these limitations indicate the need for contextual adaptation when applying it to specific instructional settings. Therefore, this research combines the pedagogical principles of IcLL (Liddicoat et al., 2003), the interacting process of intercultural pedagogy (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) and the pathway for developing ICC (Liddicoat, 2002), as well as the teaching practice of China College English, and adapts them to the College English teaching context in China (see Figure 2.3). Culture was approached in the College English curriculum in such a way: culture elements related to the units' themes was incorporated into the process of EFL learning, instead of a separate section or program aiming at a comprehensive understanding of the target culture.

Students are first exposed to a range of authentic cultural and linguistic input related to the thematic focus of the course. Through scaffolded tasks, they are encouraged to notice unfamiliar or salient features in communicative practices and to compare these features with their own prior experiences and cultural assumptions. Reflection plays a central role throughout this process, allowing learners to articulate interpretations, question taken-for-granted meanings, and examine their own responses to cultural difference. Intercultural learning is further supported through opportunities for interaction and experimentation, in which learners apply newly noticed forms,

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meanings, or strategies in communicative practice. Subsequent feedback, self-evaluation, and reflection enable learners to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of their communicative choices and to adjust their practices accordingly.

The stages in this pathway are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Different phases of learning may contribute simultaneously to the development of intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. In this sense, the pathway functions as a pedagogical guide for organizing intercultural learning activities in College English, while allowing flexibility in emphasis and classroom implementation.

Considering the College English context, this pathway is a pedagogically guided rather than an experience-driven process. Given the limited contact hours, large class sizes, and students' reliance on text-based input, intercultural learning is primarily mediated through curricular materials and teacher-scaffolded tasks rather than sustained real-world interaction. Reflection and comparison are therefore treated as structured classroom practices, embedded across different stages of instruction, rather than as spontaneous learner responses.

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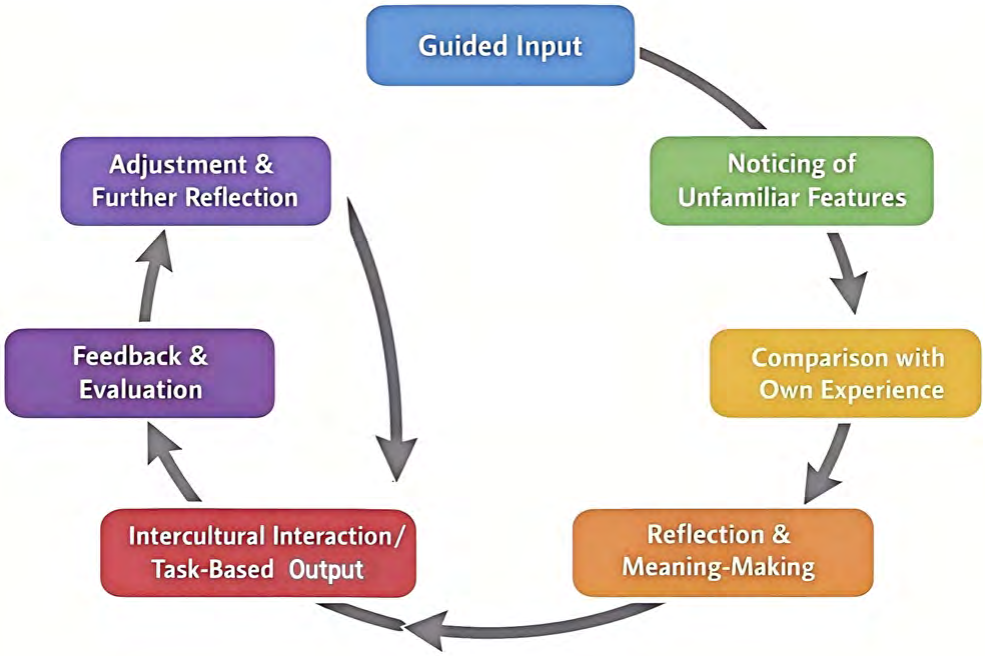

Figure 2.3. An IcLL-Based Pathway for ICC Development in College English (Adapted from Liddicoat (2002) and Liddicoat & Scarino (2013))

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2.5 Related Literature on Developing ICC with IcLL

A substantial body of empirical research on IcLL approaches the development of ICC as a holistic outcome and reports overall improvement in students' ICC following IcLL-based instruction. For example, Tran and Duong (2018) examined an IcLL teaching model implemented in a Vietnamese EFL context and found significant gains in students' ICC alongside improvements in language proficiency. Although ICC was assessed using a standardized instrument, the analysis focused on aggregate scores rather than examining changes across specific dimensions. Similarly, Curtis, Robertson, and Mahony (2019) investigated an IcLL-informed Indonesian language teacher initiative and reported enhanced intercultural engagement, empathy, and sustained intercultural relationships among participants. Recent studies continue to adopt this holistic orientation. Gong et al. (2020), for

instance, explored the impact of integrated language-and-culture instruction on EFL students and concluded that IcLL-oriented pedagogy contributes positively to students' communicative competence and intercultural development.Similar patterns can be found in quasi-experimental studies conducted in Southeast Asian and Australasian contexts, where pre- and post-test designs are used to demonstrate general ICC gains following IcLL interventions (e.g., Menacho-Vargas et al., 2021; Ayunon & Haloc, 2021).

Collectively, these studies provide converging evidence that IcLL can support students' intercultural development in formal language education settings. However, these studies reflects the tendency of the early and transitional stage of empirical IcLL research, where establishing the general effectiveness of the approach has been a primary concern, rather than treating ICC as a set of analytically differentiated dimensions. They investigated ICC as a unified construct and did not examine whether particular aspects of ICC were more responsive to instruction than others.

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In addition to studies reflecting the overall development of ICC through IcLL approach, there are also empirical studies focusing only on the effectiveness of IcLL on a single or two dimensions of ICC. Among the four ICC dimensions, intercultural attitudes and intercultural awareness are consistently identified as the most visible and readily observable aspects of intercultural development resulting from IcLL-oriented instruction. Rather than being explicitly separated as analytical constructs, intercultural attitudes and awareness are often treated as closely related outcomes emerging from students' engagement with cultural content, reflective activities, and intercultural interaction.

Many classroom-based studies indicate that IcLL interventions tend to foster students' openness, tolerance, empathy, and willingness to engage with cultural difference. For

example, Miftakh and Wachyudi (2019), in their case study of elementary EFL classrooms in Indonesia, observed that culturally embedded activities such as songs, stories, and games from both local and target cultures contributed to students' more accepting attitudes toward cultural diversity. Although the study did not operationalize intercultural attitudes as a distinct construct, students' expressions of tolerance and respect for difference clearly aligned with the attitudinal dimension of ICC.

Similar patterns are reported in higher education contexts. Curtis, Robertson, and Mahony (2019), examining an IcLL-informed Indonesian language teacher initiative program in Australia, found that participants developed more empathetic and respectful orientations toward Indonesian interlocutors through sustained intercultural contact and reflection. These changes were primarily discussed in terms of relational sensitivity and intercultural attitudes, rather than through systematic differentiation among ICC dimensions. Attitudinal development was thus inferred from participants' narratives, self-reported reflections, and continued intercultural engagement after the program.

Intercultural awareness, particularly students' awareness of cultural difference and their own cultural positioning, is another frequently highlighted outcome in IcLL research. Kiswaga and Anita (2019), focusing on the role of technology in IcLL, reported that international students' use of digital tools supported a shift from ethnocentric to more ethnorelative perspectives. This shift was interpreted as increased intercultural awareness, evidenced by students' ability to recognize difference and reflect on cultural assumptions. However, awareness was not analytically separated from attitudes; instead, it was embedded within a broader description of students' intercultural sensitivity and openness.

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Recent studies further confirm that reflective and experiential components of IcLL are particularly effective in eliciting changes related to awareness and attitude. Wang (2021), for instance, demonstrated that reflective cultural prompts embedded in language tasks significantly enhanced students' cross-cultural awareness in tertiary EFL settings. Likewise, Gong et al. (2020) found that IcLL-oriented classroom interventions encouraged students to reconsider stereotypes and develop more critical perspectives on both their own and other cultures. These outcomes were primarily captured through self-report measures, reflective writing, and interviews, which naturally foreground students' attitudinal and awareness-related responses.

At the same time, research focusing on teachers' implementation of IcLL also suggests that attitudinal and awareness-related outcomes are more readily addressed than other ICC dimensions. Bal and Savas (2022), in their qualitative study of Turkish EFL teachers, reported that classroom practices such as cultural comparison, role play, and discussion were commonly used to raise students' intercultural awareness. Teachers perceived these practices as effective for fostering openness and sensitivity, yet they expressed uncertainty about how to systematically support deeper intercultural learning beyond awareness-raising activities. Studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic further illustrate this tendency. Sugianto and Ulfah (2020), investigating Indonesian teachers' experiences with IcLL in online contexts, found that teachers' intercultural attitudes and awareness were more developed than their intercultural skills. Online platforms were perceived as conducive to reflection and discussion, which supported awareness-raising, but less effective for sustained intercultural interaction.

Compared with the relatively rich literature on intercultural attitudes and awareness, empirical studies addressing cultural knowledge and intercultural skills within the

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IcLL framework are more limited and often conceptually intertwined. In much of the existing research, these two dimensions are rarely distinguished as separate constructs; instead, they are frequently treated as overlapping components of students' intercultural performance or communicative ability.

In many IcLL-based interventions, cultural knowledge is embedded implicitly within instructional content rather than being examined as an independent learning outcome. For instance, studies adopting culturally themed texts, dialogues, or projects often assume that students' exposure to cultural information naturally leads to increased cultural understanding (e.g., Menacho-Vargas et al., 2021; Razavi & Gilakjani, 2020). While such designs provide students with opportunities to encounter cultural facts, practices, and perspectives, the resulting cultural knowledge is typically inferred rather than systematically assessed. As a result, it remains unclear whether students develop declarative knowledge about cultures, procedural understanding of how cultural norms operate in interaction, or a combination of both.

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Similarly, intercultural skills are frequently discussed in broad terms, encompassing students' ability to interact appropriately, negotiate meaning, or adapt to unfamiliar communicative situations. Curtis et al. (2019), for example, reported that participants in an IcLL-oriented language program demonstrated improved interactional abilities and greater confidence in intercultural encounters. However, these skills were largely identified through self-report and narrative evidence, without being analytically distinguished from attitudinal change or general communicative competence. In this sense, intercultural skills were treated as an extension of positive attitudes rather than as a distinct, learnable dimension requiring targeted instructional support.

Several studies explicitly combine cultural knowledge and skills under a single analytical category. Kiswaga and Anita (2019), examining the role of technology in

IcLL, described students' increased ability to access cultural information and engage with cultural content as evidence of intercultural development. Yet the study did not differentiate between students' acquisition of cultural knowledge and their ability to apply that knowledge in interaction. This pattern reflects a broader tendency in IcLL research to conflate knowing about culture with knowing how to act interculturally.

The conflation of knowledge and skills can also be observed in studies focusing on classroom practices. Bal and Savas (2022) reported that teachers employed activities such as cultural comparison, role play, and project work to promote ICC. While these activities potentially address both knowledge and skills, the outcomes were discussed primarily in terms of general improvement in students' ICC, without clarifying which aspects of learning were affected and through what mechanisms. As a result, it becomes difficult to determine whether observed changes stemmed from increased cultural understanding, improved interactional strategies, or heightened awareness.

The existing IcLL research suggests that while cultural knowledge and intercultural skills are widely acknowledged as important components of ICC, they are seldom examined in a differentiated or systematic manner. The uneven attention to different ICC dimensions in IcLL research can be attributed primarily to methodological and analytical considerations. First, attitudinal and awareness-related changes are more readily observable through commonly used research instruments, such as questionnaires, reflective journals, and interviews (Ngoc Diep et al., 2022; Sheridan et al., 2019). These tools are well suited to capturing students' perceptions, emotions, and reflections, but are less sensitive to changes in intercultural knowledge or skills, which often require task-based assessment or performance data. Second, many IcLL studies rely on short-term interventions and single-method designs. Within such constraints, it is difficult to trace the development of declarative cultural knowledge

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or procedural intercultural skills, which tend to emerge gradually and in situated interaction. As a result, even when multiple ICC dimensions are acknowledged conceptually, empirical analyses often foreground those dimensions that are methodologically easier to access.

Taken together, existing IcLL research has demonstrated the general potential of the approach for supporting intercultural development, while revealing several unresolved issues. Empirical studies tend to prioritize attitudinal and awareness-related outcomes, with comparatively limited attention to intercultural knowledge and skills. Studies within the recent five years also highlight reflection, comparison, and engagement as core learning processes to improve ICC (Fäcke et al., 2024; Garrett-Rucks, 2025). However, studies examining multiple ICC dimensions within a unified empirical design or exploring their differentiated development under the same instructional conditions remain limited. These gaps suggest the need for classroom-based research that adopts a multidimensional perspective on ICC and systematically examines how different dimensions respond to IcLL-informed instruction, particularly in tertiary EFL contexts.

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2.6 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter has reviewed the theoretical and empirical foundations of the present study. It first examined the intercultural turn in EFL, clarifying the relationship between language and culture and the shift from linguistic competence to communicative competence, and finally to ICC, with particular reference to the Chinese College English context. The chapter then conceptualized ICC as a multidimensional construct and reviewed IcLL as a pedagogical approach for fostering ICC, including its principles and developmental pathways. A synthesis of

recent empirical studies revealed that existing IcLL research largely focuses on overall ICC development and attitudinal outcomes, while the differentiated development of ICC dimensions remains underexplored, especially in Chinese tertiary EFL settings. These gaps provide the rationale for the research design and methodology presented in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to examine the impact of an IcLL-based intervention on students' ICC. A quasi-experimental mixed-methods design was adopted to address the research objectives. This chapter elaborates on the rationale for the research design, sampling procedures and the chosen data collection instruments. In addition, the pilot study process and findings are also introduced, which support the suitability of the intervention and reliability and validity of the research instruments. In the following sections, procedures of using these instruments to collect data are elaborated through narrative, tables, and figures. Furthermore, it also describes the data analysis procedures, preliminary data analysis and assumption testing for ANCOVA, and discusses relevant ethical considerations. Together, these elements establish the foundation for ensuring methodological rigor and reliability in the study.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts an embedded two-phase quasi-experimental mixed-methods design to examine the effects of an IcLL approach on the development of students' ICC in College English in China (see Figure 3.1). The choice of this design is driven primarily by the research purpose and the nature of ICC as a complex, multidimensional learning outcome that cannot be adequately captured through a single method of inquiry.

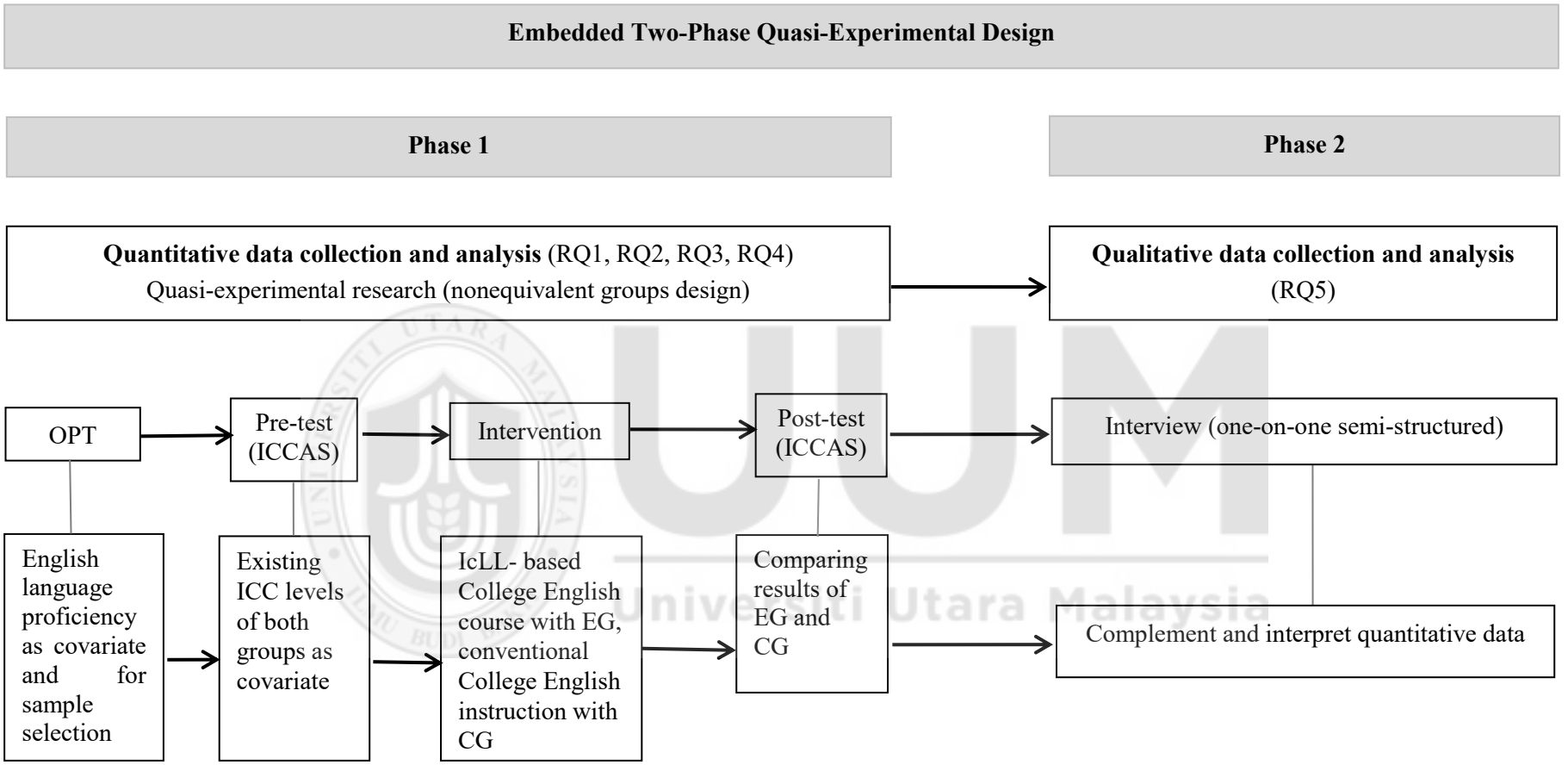

Figure 3.1. Research Flowchart

Note. EG=experimental group; CG= control group

The primary aim of the study is to determine whether an IcLL-based instructional intervention leads to measurable changes in students' ICC, while also exploring how such changes are experienced and perceived by students during the instructional process. On the one hand, quantitative methods are necessary to examine the effectiveness of the intervention and to identify changes in ICC across groups. On the other hand, qualitative data are required to capture students' interpretations, reflections, and meaning-making processes that underlie observable changes in ICC. Relying exclusively on either quantitative or qualitative methods would therefore provide only a partial understanding of ICC development; thus a mixed-methods design is adopted.

The choice of a mixed-methods design is also informed by the nature of ICC itself. Previous research has consistently emphasized that ICC assessment is not a single or subjective act, but a systematic process of measurement and interpretation grounded in clear conceptualization and contextualization (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2009; Dai, 2018). As a multidimensional construct encompassing attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness, ICC cannot be adequately captured through a single method of inquiry (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Dai, 2018). Consequently, many scholars have argued for the complementary use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in ICC research to enhance both validity and interpretability (Fantini, 2009; Deardorff, 2004).

ICC assessment research has shown that quantitative instruments, such as pre- and post-test designs, are effective in identifying overall patterns of change in ICC following instructional interventions (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009). At the same time, qualitative methods, particularly semi-structured interviews, are widely regarded as valuable for capturing the depth, complexity, and contextualized nature

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of intercultural learning, which may not be fully reflected in numerical scores alone (Deardorff, 2006).

In this study, the mixed-methods design is implemented in an embedded two-phase structure, with quantitative data occupying a dominant role, followed by a qualitative phase designed to support interpretation of the quantitative findings (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017) (see Figure 3.1). The qualitative component is embedded after the completion of the instructional intervention and post-test assessment. By embedding interviews after the intervention, students' responses can illuminate how and why changes in ICC occurred, particularly in relation to attitudes, awareness, and intercultural learning processes (Deardorff, 2006; Guetterman et al., 2015). This sequencing aligns with the purpose of a two-phase embedded design, which is to follow up on intervention outcomes by examining students' experiences related to those outcomes (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Within the quantitative phase, a quasi-experimental design was adopted. It investigates the causal relationship between the IcLL-based intervention and changes in students' ICC by comparing an experimental group and a control group using a pre-test-post-test nonequivalent groups design (See Table 3.1). Quasi-experimental design is employed here mainly because it enables the examination of causal relationships between the instructional interventions and learning outcomes in settings where random assignment is impractical or unethical,particularly in classroom-based studies involving intact groups (Campbell & Stanley, 2015; Siedlecki, 2020), which exactly is the contextual condition of this study.

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Table 3.1

Nonequivalent Groups Design

Group	Pretest	Intervention	Posttest
EG	O	X	O
CG	O	-	O

Note. EG=experimental group; CG=control group; O=pretest and post-test; X=intervention; -=non-intervention

In the quasi-experimental design, both the experimental group and the control group followed the same overall data collection sequence, including an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to determine their English proficiency level and a pre-test and a post-test using the Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale (ICCAS). The two groups differed only in instructional approach during the intervention period. The experimental group received instruction based on the IcLL framework, while the control group continued with regular College English teaching in accordance with the existing syllabus, without an explicit intercultural intervention (See Appendix A).

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Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students from the experimental group after the completion of the quantitative phase. This decision was aligned with the explanatory purpose of the qualitative component within the embedded two-phase mixed-methods design. The interviews were intended to explore how changes in ICC occurred among students who directly experienced the intervention. As the control group did not receive IcLL-based instruction, interviewing control group students would not have generated data relevant to the mechanisms of intercultural development targeted in this study. Therefore, the exclusion of the control group in the interview avoided blurring the focus of the study.

This embedded two-phase quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, though aligns with the current research purpose and condition, has its limitations. The study was conducted with intact classes from a single institution, which limits the extent to which the findings can be statistically generalized to other contexts. In addition, the quasi-experimental nature of the design means that full control over all extraneous variables was not possible. Rather than aiming for broad generalization, this design seeks to generate empirically grounded and context-sensitive insights into how IcLL-based instruction influences ICC development in College English classrooms. The embedded mixed-methods approach mitigates some of these limitations by allowing for triangulation across data sources and by situating quantitative outcomes within students' reported experiences.

3.3 The Setting and Population

In the present tertiary-level English teaching system in China, three main categories of English curriculum can be identified: English major courses, College English courses for non-English majors, and English for Specific Purposes. The present study focuses exclusively on College English, which is a compulsory component of undergraduate education for the majority of non-English major students across Chinese universities.

The research was conducted at a comprehensive public university located in Shandong Province, China. This institution was selected because it offers standardized College English courses to all non-English major undergraduates in accordance with the national College English Teaching Guidelines, ensuring that the curriculum design and instructional setting are representative of typical Chinese EFL contexts. In addition, the university has shown increasing interest in curriculum

internationalization and intercultural education, making it an appropriate site for implementing and evaluating an IcLL-based instructional intervention. Accordingly, the target population of this study was defined as non-English major undergraduate students enrolled in College English courses at universities in Shandong Province, China.

3.4 Sample

In educational research, it is neither feasible nor necessary to collect data from an entire target population. As McCombes (2019) notes, empirical studies typically rely on a sample to represent a broader group of interest. The validity of research findings therefore depends largely on how the sample is selected and how well it reflects the characteristics of the target population (Bell & Waters, 2018; McCombes, 2019). In the present study, sampling decisions were made in relation to both the quantitative and qualitative components of the mixed-methods design. Specifically, different sampling strategies were adopted to address the purposes of the quasi-experimental phase and the interview phase.

3.4.1 Quantitative Sampling

At the institutional level, the research site was selected through purposive sampling, guided by the objectives of the study and practical accessibility. The university was chosen because it offers standardized College English courses to all non-English major undergraduates in accordance with national teaching guidelines, providing a typical and appropriate context for examining the effects of an IcLL-based intervention.

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In the quasi-experimental phase, purposive sampling was also adopted for sample assignment. It is often employed instead of random sampling in educational research due to practical and ethical constraints in natural educational settings (Patton, 2015). This method enables researchers to select intact groups or classes based on preexisting characteristics such as teaching schedule, class composition, or administrative arrangements, which cannot be randomly altered (Shadish et al., 2002). Moreover, purposive sampling allows the researcher to control for key variables , such as language proficiency or prior academic background , ensuring greater comparability between groups and improving internal validity (Cohen et al., 2017). This sampling strategy is particularly effective in classroom-based intervention like that in this study where true random assignment is infeasible.

In this phase of this study, two intact classes were selected for comparison: one as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The two groups were comparable in terms of key demographic, academic, and instructional characteristics. Students in both groups were drawn from the same major, Electronic Information, and were enrolled in the second semester of their first academic year. They had already experienced one semester of conventional instruction. This allowed for comparative insight into the impact of the new approach. At the time of the study, students were predominantly aged between 19 and 20 years old. The two groups were taught by the same College English instructor, who had extensive teaching experience and had received prior training related to intercultural language learning.

In addition, the gender distribution across the two groups was relatively balanced, and no notable disparities were observed. With regard to English proficiency, the overall language levels of the experimental and control groups were comparable prior to the intervention, as indicated by OPT results. These similarities suggest that

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the two groups were broadly equivalent at baseline, allowing observed post-intervention differences to be more confidently attributed to the instructional treatment rather than pre-existing group differences.

To determine an appropriate sample size, this study followed the quasi-experimental design principles proposed by Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002). To ensure sufficient statistical power, this study conducted a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1, following the quasi-experimental design guidelines by Shadish et al. (2002). Assuming a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.45; partial η^2 = 0.05) based on prior ICC interventions (Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Berg et al., 2023), with α = 0.05, power = 0.80, and expected R^2 = 0.28 from covariates (OPT and pretest scores), the minimum required sample was N = 100.

The final valid sample was N = 110, 54 students in the control group, and 56 in the experimental group, achieving a post hoc power of 0.83, adequate for detecting moderate effects in ICC dimensions. Bootstrap validation (1,000 iterations) confirmed the robustness of key results. Although smaller effects (d < 0.30) may require a larger sample, this study prioritizes practically meaningful, theory-informed effect sizes (Cohen, 2013).

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3.4.2 Qualitative Sampling

The qualitative sample was drawn exclusively from the experimental group, consistent with the purpose of the qualitative phase as mentioned in Section 3.2. After the intervention, six students from the experimental group were interviewed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the learning outcomes (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This study employed a stratified purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) with embedded maximum variation elements across strata to select students

from the experimental group for semi-structured interview. Purposeful sampling ensures the selection of information-rich cases that are particularly relevant to the research questions, while maximum variation sampling captures a wide range of experiences by selecting students differing in language proficiency and ICC development levels (Patton, 2015).

The sampling design strictly adheres to the protocols of sequential mixed methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2017), focusing on two core stratification dimensions: ICC improvement level and baseline language proficiency, which combines the two features to capture language-culture interactions.

Students were first categorized into three groups based on standardized differences (Cohen's d effect sizes) between post-test and pre-test scores (high improvement: $\Delta \geq +1SD$; moderate improvement: $-0.5SD < \Delta < +0.5SD$; low improvement: $\Delta \leq -0.5SD$). Additionally, students were stratified by their CEFR levels as determined by the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), with B2 and above categorized as high proficiency, B1 as moderate, and A2 or below as low. This stratification is consistent with international CEFR standards and aligns with the mapping of OPT scores to CEFR levels discussed in Section 3.4.3.

After the stratification, students were divided into five groups for theoretically maximum variation and information-rich representation, and one student was randomly selected from each group as the participant for the interview, while two students were selected from moderate language-moderate improvement group because of the group being the mainstream variation. As a result, six students were selected: high language-high improvement (P01), high language-low improvement (P02), moderate language-moderate improvement (P01/P04), low language–high

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improvement (P05), and low language–low improvement (P06) (see Table 3.2). The adequacy of the sample was evaluated using Onwuegbuzie and Collins' (2007) framework, which emphasizes a balance between theoretical saturation and phenomenological depth, particularly in studies with small qualitative samples.

Table 3.2

Stratified Purposeful Sampling Matrix for Qualitative Interviews (N=6)

Sample (ID)	Original Quantitative Code	Language Proficiency (OPT)	ICC Improvement Level	Selection Criteria	Theoretical Rationale
P01	03	B2-C1 (CEFR)	High (Δ ≥ +1SD)	Represents a typical case of maximizing ICC improvement under language advantage	Validates language advantage in ICC development (Byram, 1997)
P02	12		Low (Δ ≤ -0.5SD)	Anomalous case with language advantage but stagnant ICC growth	Identifies intervention barriers in high-OPT populations (Sarwari & Wahab, 2016)
P03, P04	07, 19	B1(CEFR)	Moderate (Δ ±0.5SD)	Reflects ordinary students with dynamic language-ability balance	Captures experiential patterns of mainstream groups (Jackson, 2010)
P05	22	A1-A2(CEFR)	High (Δ ≥ +1SD)	"Breakthrough" student with low language base but significant ICC improvement	Reveals non-linguistic pathways of ICC development (Aifang et al., 2024)
P06	30		Low (Δ ≤ -0.5SD)	Case of intervention failure	Indicates minimum language threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 1976)

The sample size of six students was determined through careful consideration of multiple methodological factors. Guest et al. (2020) found that six to seven

interviews are often sufficient to capture the main themes, particularly when students are relatively homogeneous and the study is focused in scope. Given the exploratory role of qualitative data in this embedded mixed-methods design, the stratified sample provides adequate interpretive depth to support the quantitative findings, while acknowledging the limitations in reaching full theoretical saturation.

3.5 Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study are: Oxford Placement Test (OPT), intervention (IcLL-based College English course), pre-test and post-test (ICCAS), semi-structured interview. The quantitative research instruments include OPT and ICCAS, which are used to answer RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4; while qualitative research instrument is semi-structured interview, which is used to answer RQ5.

3.5.1 Oxford Placement Test

Language proficiency has been shown to significantly impact students' intercultural development and academic performance in second language contexts (Tran & Vong, 2021). Therefore, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was employed to assess students' baseline English proficiency and served as a critical covariate to control for the potential influence of language ability on ICC outcomes. In this study, validating the OPT scores was essential to ensure their appropriateness for between-group comparisons and for inclusion in statistical models such as ANCOVA.

The test was not used as an outcome measure, but rather served two methodological purposes. On one hand, it established baseline equivalence between the experimental and control groups. On the other hand, it functioned as a covariate to control for the potential confounding effect of English language proficiency on the development of

ICC. In this way, the inclusion of the OPT strengthened the internal validity of the quasi-experimental design.

One of the central challenges in quasi-experimental research lies in ensuring comparability between non-randomized groups. Pretest measures or baseline characteristics are crucial to establish baseline equivalence and reduce selection bias in non-randomized group designs (What Works Clearinghouse, 2022). The more comparable the groups are at baseline, the more defensible a causal interpretation becomes, because the risk of confounding due to pre-existing differences is reduced (Anglin et al., 2024). Therefore, demographic variables, such as age, gender, academic major, instructor, and, importantly, language proficiency, were carefully considered during group selection.

Previous studies have shown that students' ability to engage in intercultural interaction, interpret cultural meanings, and reflect critically on cultural practices is partly constrained by their linguistic resources (Huang, 2021; Schauer, 2020). To minimize the influence of language proficiency as an extraneous variable, all students completed OPT prior to the intervention. Two intact classes with comparable mean OPT scores were subsequently selected as the experimental group and the control group.

OPT is a standardized, computer-adaptive language proficiency test developed by Oxford University Press for non-native upper secondary and adult learners. It assesses core language components, including grammar, vocabulary, listening, and reading comprehension, and provides both a numerical score (0–120) and an estimated proficiency level aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ranging from A1 to C2. Automated scoring

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procedures enhance reliability and objectivity in proficiency assessment by reducing human rater variability and ensuring consistent scoring criteria across administrations (Attali & Fraenkel, 2018; Williamson, et al., 2019). Detailed test specifications and sample items are provided in Appendix N.

Although CEFR originated in the European context, it has been increasingly referenced and adopted as a benchmarking framework in English language education and assessment in China, particularly in tertiary education and in large-scale standardized testing initiatives, such as the development and implementation of China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE) (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2018; Jin, 2020; Jin & Wu, 2021). Although CSE provides a nationally developed proficiency framework with a multi-level structure comparable to the CEFR, the present study adopted CEFR levels for proficiency description primarily due to the alignment of the OPT with the CEFR framework. Unlike OPT, which directly reports CEFR-aligned proficiency levels, CSE functions as a national proficiency framework without a single unified CSE-based test. As no officially validated conversion exists between the OPT and CSE levels, the present study retained the CEFR benchmarks provided by the test developer solely for profiling students' overall English language proficiency and facilitating statistical control, rather than for instructional placement or curriculum alignment.

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Table 3.3

OPT Score Corresponding to CEFR Level

Score Range	Level	Criteria
1-19	A1 Break-through	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where they live, people they know and things they have. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
20-39	A2 Waystage	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
40-59	B1 Threshold	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
60-79	B2 Vantage	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
80-99	C1 Advanced	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer clauses and recognize implicit meaning. Can express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
>100	C2 Mastery	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.

Table 3.3 presents the correspondence between OPT score ranges and CEFR levels.

Students OPT scores were mapped to different CEFR levels after the test. These CEFR benchmarks were used to describe the general language proficiency distribution of the sample and to support subsequent statistical analyses, including the use of language proficiency as a covariate in ANCOVA models. They were not used as criteria for instructional differentiation or outcome interpretation.

3.5.2 Pre-test and Post-test

When random sampling is not feasible, quasi-experimental methods are commonly used in educational research to examine causal relationships between interventions and outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In such designs, pre- and post-tests are administered to both the experimental and control groups to measure the effect of the intervention.

In this study, the pre and post-tests are in the form of a self-reported questionnaire. Questionnaire was chosen for this study due to its efficiency in administration, capacity for large-scale data collection, and ability to ensure respondent anonymity (Cohen et al., 2017). Given the limited instructional time in college English classes, the use of questionnaires minimized disruption to the teaching process while maximizing data collection.

For this particular research, there is another important reason for choosing questionnaire for collecting data from the students. Because ICC is a relatively abstract and unfamiliar concept for many college students, self-report questionnaires provided structured cues for students to reflect on their ICC, which might be difficult to express in interviews (Deardorff, 2006; Tran & Nguyen, 2023).

In this study, the Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale (ICCAS) was used as both the pre-test and post-test instrument. Most existing

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models and measurements of ICC reflect Western perspectives, with limited consideration of non-Western cultural contexts. As noted by Deardorff (2011) and Li (2013), this creates a gap in developing culturally responsive ICC frameworks in regions like China. The Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale (ICCAS) for Chinese college students was subsequently created by Wu et al. (2013). The ICC model put forward by Byram (1997) serves as the theoretical base of ICCAS. Wu improved the two scales compiled by Fantini and created a scale with four ICC dimensions and forty items based on the multidimensional ICC model put forth by Byram (1997), the Federal International Life Experience research project assessment scale, and Fantini's (2000, 2007) ICC assessment scale.

Wu et al. (2013) believed that attitude refers to personal characteristics such as being respectful, open-minded, curious, non-judgment and tolerant in intercultural communication. Knowledge means the cultural knowledge about one's own country and other countries that communicators need to master. Skills include two categories: one is intercultural communication skills, and the other is intercultural cognitive skills. Awareness refers to the cultural critical awareness and self-awareness that communicators need to possess.

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Based on the above understanding, Wu et al. (2013) first drew on the two ICC scales compiled by Fantini (2000, 2006), and after merging and screening the items in the four dimensions of knowledge, skills, awareness and attitudes, he initially compiled a scale with 4 dimensions and 40 items. They used exploratory factor analysis to extract 6 factors to form a 28-item scale. The 6 factors include: (1) Knowledge A (local knowledge, 3 items); (2) Knowledge B (other countries' knowledge, 7 items); (3) Attitude (3 items); (4) Skill A (communication skills, 9 items); (5) Skill B (cognitive skills, 3 items); (6) Awareness (3 items). According to the results, Wu et

al. (2013) states that the localized ICC assessment scale has good reliability and validity, and can be used to evaluate the actual situation of Chinese college students' ICC development (see Appendix K).

Table 3.4

ICCAS Matrix (adapted from Wu et al., 2013)

Construct	Sub-construct	Number of items
Intercultural Attitude	Curiosity and openness	2
	Tolerance of other cultures	1
Intercultural Knowledge	Cultural knowledge of one's own and other countries	8
	General knowledge about intercultural communication	2
Intercultural Skills	Skills of interpreting and relating	3
	Skills of discovering and interacting	9
Intercultural Awareness	Critically evaluating cultures of one's own and others'	4

Note. ICCAS =Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scales

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While the original ICCAS by Wu et al. (2013) includes 28 items across six factors, this study adapted the scale into a four-dimensional structure more closely aligned with the reconceptualized version of Byram's (1997) model adopted in this research (see Section 2.6.1). Specifically, the two sub-factors under "Knowledge" and "Skills" were merged respectively, forming a more parsimonious structure: Attitude, Knowledge, Skills, and Awareness. This revision was also supported by Deardorff's (2006) framework that treats ICC as a multidimensional yet integrated construct, and aligns with the theoretical emphasis on treating ICC as a holistic capability in intercultural pedagogy (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

The adapted ICCAS used in this study includes background information (e.g., gender, age, etc.) in the first section, and 29 core items across four dimensions in the second

section (see Table 3.4). Items are presented in Chinese and rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The overall scale result is on interval scale, thus can reveal the level of ICC of a student, and can be used in the following quantitative analysis of ICC levels (See Apendix L).

It is important to note that the classification criteria adapted from Sugianto and Ulfah (2020) were used in this study to determine students' absolute ICC levels based on their total scores in the ICCAS. The original four-level ICC classification from Sugianto and Ulfah (2020) was adapted into a three-tier system (High, Moderate, Low). This modification aimed to ensure sufficient sample sizes within each group and maintain statistical power. The classification in this study uses ±0.75 standard deviations from the overall mean as cut-off points to define the levels (See Table 3.5). However, for the purpose of interview sampling, ICC improvement levels were categorized separately by calculating the standardized difference (Cohen's d) between pretest and post-test scores (see Table 3.2), resulting in three groups: high, moderate, and low level of improvement. These two classification systems serve different analytical purposes and are not interchangeable.

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Table 3.5

Criteria of ICC Level (Adapted from Sugianto & Ulfah, 2020)

ICC Levels	**Interval Scores**
High	$x \geq 3.50$
Moderate	$2.50 \leq x < 3.50$
Low	$x < 2.50$

Note.
High: $x \geq IM + 0.75 \times ISD$
Moderate: $IM - 0.75 \times ISD \leq x < IM + 0.75 \times ISD$
Low: $x < IM - 0.75 \times ISD$
x = actual empirical score
IM = ideal mean, calculated as:

IM = ½ × (ideal maximum score + ideal minimum score)

ISD = ideal standard deviation, calculated as:

ISD = ⅙ × (ideal maximum score – ideal minimum score)

ideal maximum score = 5

ideal minimum score = 1

In the present study, the pre-test and post-test questionnaires were administered in Chinese, the students' first language. This decision was made to ensure accurate comprehension of questionnaire items and to minimize the potential influence of language proficiency on students' responses. As the primary focus of the questionnaire was to measure students' ICC rather than their English language ability, administering the instrument in English could have introduced construct-irrelevant variance related to linguistic difficulty.

The questionnaire was also translated into English for readers' understanding. To ensure the linguistic equivalence and cultural appropriateness of the instrument, a back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970) was conducted. The original ICCAS items, developed in Chinese by Wu et al. (2013), were carefully reviewed and slightly adapted for clarity and consistency with the present research context. Then, the adapted Chinese version was translated into English by a bilingual expert in applied linguistics. A second independent bilingual expert, who was blind to the original version, retranslated the English version back into Chinese. The two Chinese versions were then compared by a panel of three experienced language education researchers. Minor discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus to ensure semantic equivalence, conceptual accuracy, and contextual appropriateness.

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3.5.3 Intervention

In this study, the instructional intervention functions as the core pedagogical condition through which the impact of an IcLL approach on students' ICC is examined. It was operated as the independent variable in the research design, and provides the experiential basis for comparing changes in ICC between the experimental and control groups through pre- and post-test measures, and for eliciting students' reflections and perceptions in the subsequent interview phase.

The IcLL-based intervention was implemented as an integral part of the regular College English course rather than as an independent course or supplementary program. It was embedded into routine College English classroom teaching and aligned with the existing course structure, allowing intercultural learning to unfold alongside language instruction.

IcLL-based instructional design was oriented for the experimental group only, which explicitly integrated cultural learning with language development throughout the intervention. The intervention followed the established IcLL pedagogical framework, which outlines five guiding principles of active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection, and responsibility, and the seven-stage learning process consisting of input, notice, reflect, output, notice, reflect, and output. These principles and processes shaped an IcLL-based pathway for ICC development in College English (see section 2.4.3), which was strictly followed during the actual instructional implementation.

To structure the intervention, a teaching plan was developed at the outset of the intervention to facilitate, standardize, and arrange the teaching procedure (Koro, 2017). Different from conventional College English courses in which English

language proficiency, namely the skills of listening, reading, writing, speaking and translating are the main objectives, in the current course, ICC are as important as language learning, and was explicitly raised as an learning objective.

The core textbook used was *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Course* (4rd Edition) (Zheng, 2023), which is the latest version of a long-standing series that has been widely adopted and nationally endorsed in Chinese undergraduate education, with the usage rate ranks first in College English in China (Luo, 2025). It was launched in accordance with the spirit of the *National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)*, and *Reading and Writing Course* is the main textbook.

Four textbook units was selected for the intervention. The themes of the four units include "Foreign language learning", "Choosing a college major", "Young generation", "Spending habits". They were selected because they each encompass cultural elements relevant to students' lived experiences and communicative needs.

Each unit of the textbook was delivered through nine linguistic modules: pre-reading activities, reading comprehension, language focus, structural analysis and writing, translation, reading skills, collocation, and unit projects. Although the textbook provides rich linguistic input across these modules to improve reading, writing, translation, and vocabulary respectively, cultural learning is not made explicit in any module. To align textbook use with the IcLL principles, the researcher systematically re-analyzed each unit to identify implicit cultural topics embedded in linguistic tasks and integrated them into the teaching sequence of all modules. The order of modules was flexibly adjusted based on the IcLL pathway, ensuring that students first encountered meaningful cultural input, subsequently engaged in noticing and

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comparison tasks, and then progressed toward reflection, output production, and revision. Table 3.6 presents the mapping of linguistic modules and cultural topics for the four units selected for the intervention.

Table 3.6

Mapping of Linguistic Modules and Cultural Themes

Unit	Themes	Unit modules	Linguistic skills	Cultural topics
1	Language in mission	Pre-reading activities	Speaking	Difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language
		Reading comprehension	Reading	Difficulties of learning a foreign language
		Language focus	Vocabulary/ Grammar	—
		Structural analysis and writing	Writing	Difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language
		Reading skills	Reading Vocabulary/ Grammar	Motives and strategies of learning a foreign language
		Stories of China	Reading Translating	Difficulties of learning a foreign language
		Unit projects	Speaking	Foreign language learning strategies
2	Exploring college majors	Pre-reading activities	Speaking	Factors of choosing a college major
		Reading comprehension	Reading	Reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major
		Language focus	Vocabulary/ Grammar	—
		Structural analysis and writing	Writing	Reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major
		Reading skills	Reading Vocabulary/ Grammar	Reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major
		Stories of China	Reading Translating	Reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major
		Unit projects	Speaking	Values and reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major
3	The young generation: making a difference	Pre-reading activities	Speaking	Young Generation
		Reading comprehension	Reading	Young Generation
		Language focus	Vocabulary/ Grammar	—
		Structural analysis and writing	Writing	Young Generation
		Reading skills	Reading Vocabulary/ Grammar	The Odyssey Years
		Stories of China	Reading Translating	Young Generation
		Unit projects	Speaking	Young Generation

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Table 3.6 continued.

4	Striving for financial health	Pre-reading activities	Speaking	College students' spending habits
		Reading comprehension	Reading	Values on save and spend
		Language focus	Vocabulary/ Grammar	—
		Structural analysis and writing	Writing	College students' spending habits
		Reading skills	Reading Vocabulary/ Grammar	Cash advance
		Stories of China	Reading Translating	Values on save and spend
		Unit projects	Speaking	College students' spending habits

Figure 3.2 illustrates how IcLL principles and processes were operationalized in Unit four ("Striving for Financial Health"). The lesson starts with guided input activities, including a short self-survey on students' own spending habits and an authentic article reporting U.S. college students' financial behaviors. Students then complete noticing tasks, during which the teacher draws attention to culturally salient patterns emerging from both the survey data and the article. Subsequent comparison tasks require students to contrast Chinese and Western spending practices using tools such as Venn diagrams. Reflection is facilitated through group discussion and a structured class debate, allowing students to consider underlying cultural values and their implications for communicative behavior.

Learners then produce a comparison-and-contrast essay as the task-based output. In the feedback stage, students share findings from surveys they designed and administered to international students enrolled at the same university, who come from countries in Southeast Asia, North Africa, and other regions. These survey results serve as an additional cultural resource for peer discussion and teacher feedback. Finally, students revise their essays, engaging in a cycle of evaluation and

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modification to consolidate both linguistic outcomes and intercultural learning.

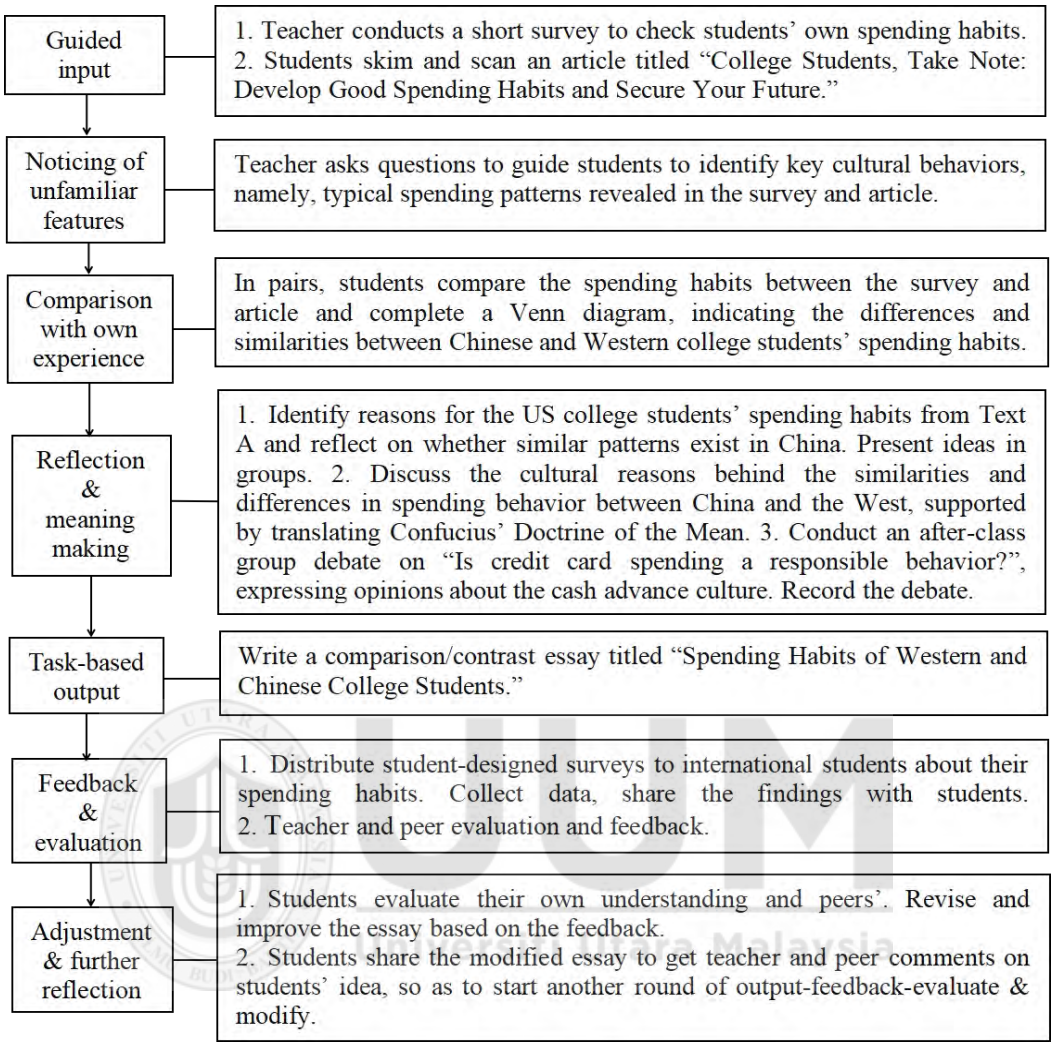

Figure 3.2. An Example of the IcLL Task for the Study

This illustration only explains the IcLL pathway for this unit, but doesn't show how it was embedded in the entire unit teaching process. To make it clear how the instruction was designed to align the IcLL pathway with the unit linguistic modules, specific lesson plans for this unit and the other three units were designed, which can be seen in the Appendix A.

The control group received instruction through the conventional College English approach widely practiced in Chinese tertiary EFL settings. Although the same core

textbook (New Horizon College English: Reading and Writing, 4th Edition) was used for both groups, the instructional orientation in the control group differed substantially from that of the experimental group. In the control group, language development remained the primary focus of teaching, and cultural content embedded in the reading passages was addressed only as background knowledge which supported linguistic comprehension. Cultural learning was therefore incidental rather than planned, and no attempts were made to systematically integrate culture into classroom activities.

Instruction in the control group centered on teacher-centered explanation and demonstration. Lessons typically progressed through vocabulary presentation, text-based comprehension work, sentence pattern analysis, followed by controlled practice tasks such as vocabulary exercises, reading comprehension questions, and translation exercises. Students' participation was largely limited to responding to comprehension questions, completing assigned exercises, and producing short written outputs based on textbook requirements. Interaction was mainly teacher-led, and opportunities for extended peer discussion or reflective meaning-making were relatively limited. Classroom tasks aligned closely with the skill-based modules of the textbook, such as pre-reading, reading comprehension, language focus, structural analysis and writing, translation, collocation, and reading skills, and these modules were followed in the sequence recommended by the textbook rather than reorganized for cultural learning purposes. Unlike the experimental group, the control group did not engage in noticing, comparing, reflecting, or other intercultural tasks, nor were students guided to relate textual content to their own cultural background or to interpret cultural differences.

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Table 3.7

Instructional Differences Between Experimental Group and Control Group

Aspect	Experimental Group	Control Group
Teaching approach	IcLL-based instruction	Textbook-based College English instruction
Cultural focus	Explicit cultural learning	Culture treated as supplementary information
Materials	Textbook + authentic intercultural input	Textbook only
Tasks	Intercultural tasks integrated in linguistic learning	Linguistic tasks
Purpose	ICC development + language improvement	Language improvement only

The conventional teaching plans used for the control group are also presented in Appendix A. The appendix outlines the weekly lesson content, textbook modules covered, and the linguistic objectives emphasized in each class. Although both groups completed the same four textbook units during the semester, the nature of classroom tasks, the learning emphasis, and the instructional intentions differed substantively across groups (see Table 3.7). The control group's instruction thus provides a baseline condition against which the effects of the IcLL-based intervention can be examined.

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3.5.3.1 Input Materials

The input materials used in the intervention served two functions: to provide linguistically appropriate texts for reading and language-focused activities, and to supply culturally rich content that would support the IcLL-based instructional design. Accordingly, the materials were selected and adapted to ensure alignment with the principles of authenticity and intercultural relevance that underpin the IcLL approach.

The core textbook *New Horizon College English: Reading and Writing Course (4th Edition)* was used as the linguistic foundation of the lessons. Since the cultural content embedded in the textbook is limited or implicit, supplementary materials were incorporated to make cultural themes explicit in each unit. The selection of these additional materials followed the criteria proposed by Liddicoat (2004) and Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), emphasizing the connection between language and cultural practices, the presentation of diverse perspectives, and the provision of resources that enable noticing, comparing, and reflecting on cultural meanings.

To support authenticity, real-world materials were integrated into teaching activities. These included news articles about U.S. college students' financial behaviors, short videos depicting university life and spending habits, student-designed surveys administered to international students at the university, and excerpts from online forums where Chinese and international students discuss educational and lifestyle issues. These materials were chosen because they reflect actual communicative situations and cultural practices, and thus encourage students to engage with culturally situated language use.

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Across the four units, these materials were adapted to the specific cultural themes. For example, in Unit 1 ("Language in Mission"), students examined an authentic video and a listening material about language learning experiences from different cultural backgrounds; in Unit 2 ("Exploring College Majors"), they watch authentic interviews about choosing college majors; in Unit 3 ("The Young Generation"), they analyzed media reports and blog posts portraying youth culture in China and abroad; and in Unit 4 ("Striving for Financial Health"), they compared their survey results with the published report about college students' spending patterns in other countries. These materials enabled students to make connections between their own

experiences and those of peers from other cultural contexts, thereby supporting the IcLL principles of active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection, and responsibility.

3.5.4 Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data on students' experiences with the IcLL intervention and their perceived ICC development. Interviews provide access to students' perspectives, enabling deeper insights into their beliefs and experiences (Brinkmann, 2022; Braun et al., 2017). Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility, allowing the interviewer to probe responses for clarity and elaboration (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Interviews of this study followed Byram's (1997) ICC model, covering four dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness. Four question categories were designed:

Category A: Icebreaker questions

Category B: Perceptions of ICC development

Category C: Effective instructional methods and activities

Category D: Reflections on challenges and outcomes

Under each category, there are several themes to guide the development of the interview questions. Sample topics are outlined in Table 3.8. The interview protocol can be seen in the Appendix B, in which both Chinese and English versions are presented.

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Table 3.8

Themes Questions for the Interview

Category	Themes
A. Icebreaker questions	A1: Greetings
	A2: Demographic information
B. Perceptions of ICC development	B1: the development of intercultural attitudes
	B2: the development of intercultural knowledge
	B3: the development of intercultural skills
	B4: the development of intercultural awareness
C. Effective instructional methods and activities	C1: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural attitudes
	C2: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural knowledge
	C3: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural skills
	C4: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural awareness
D. Reflections on challenges and suggestions	D1: challenges encountered in the intervention
	D2: additional comments

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3.6 Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of the research instruments and procedures. Specifically, it aimed to evaluate the clarity of questionnaire items, the effectiveness of interview questions, and the practicality of data collection protocols (Creswell & Clark, 2017, pp. 165–166). The pilot study was conducted in March 2024 before the main study at the same university. But it was a different cohort of 30 first-year non-English majors from the same major with the main study sample. They were randomly selected according to their matric numbers, and it was assured that none would be involved in the main study to prevent potential bias.

All students completed OPT and ICCAS, while five randomly selected students also participated in the pilot evaluation of all the instruments, including the interview protocol. Pilot reliability and validity examination for OPT was also conducted in this phase; since OPT is a fully standardised, publisher-validated official test, all relevant numerical analysis and statistical outcomes of OPT pilot validation are archived in Appendix N rather than presented in this chapter. The results indicated that all instruments were understandable and suitable for the target population, with only minor revisions made according to feedback.

3.6.1 Validation of Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale (ICCAS)

To ensure data quality, a systematic data cleaning procedure was performed among 44 pieces of data. Outliers were examined using box plots and *Z*-scores ($|Z| > 2.5$). Although the box plots indicated no extreme values, *Z*-score analysis identified one case (Case 41, $Z = 2.68$) with suspected response bias (uniform scores of 1 or 5 across all items). Manual inspection confirmed non-serious responding, and the case was excluded. The remaining data was all matched with their corresponding OPT scores, resulted in a final data set of 30 valid responses for subsequent psychometric validation.

3.6.1.1 Item analysis

Item analysis was conducted to examine the psychometric quality of each questionnaire item and ensure alignment with the construct of ICC. This process helps determine whether each item contributes meaningfully to the overall scale in terms of construct validity and internal consistency (Taherdoost, 2019).

Two complementary procedures were used: item-total correlation and critical ratio analysis. Item-total correlation assesses the degree to which an item is consistent with the total score of the scale, thereby indicating its contribution to the measurement of the intended construct (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Critical ratio analysis, on the other hand, evaluates an item's ability to differentiate between high and low scorers by comparing the mean responses of the top and bottom 27% of respondents (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2016).

First, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between individual item scores and the total scale score, identifying items that strongly correlate with the broader construct of ICC. As presented in Table 3.9 and Appendix C, all items exhibited significant positive correlations ($p < .05$) with moderate to strong effect sizes ($r > .3$), indicating strong construct validity. Notably, items such as Q27 ($r = .827$) and Q24 ($r = .783$) demonstrated particularly strong associations with the total score, while Q15 ($r = .335$) showed the lowest but still acceptable correlation. The result indicated satisfactory internal consistency and construct alignment (Boateng et al., 2018).

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Second, independent samples t-tests were used to compare item responses between the top and bottom 27% of mean scorers. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare mean scores between the top 27% (high-scoring group) and bottom 27% (low-scoring group). Large t-values ($p < .05$) and Cohen's d values ($d > .5$) indicated strong discriminative capacity. As shown in Table 3.9 and Appendix C, all items met the retention criteria, with effect sizes ranging from moderate ($d = 1.05$ for Q6) to very large ($d = 1.85$ for Q27). These results confirmed that each item effectively differentiated respondents based on their ICC levels, supporting the questionnaire's suitability for measuring ICC.

Table 3.9

Summary of Item Analysis Results for the ICCAS

Indicator	Result Based on 29 Items	Criterion
Corrected item–total correlation (Pearson's r)	0.335 – 0.827, all $p < .05$	> .30
High–Low group mean difference (t-test)	All items significant ($p < .05$)	$p < .05$
Effect size (Cohen's d)	1.05 – 1.85	> 0.80

Note. Full item-level statistics, including Pearson's r, significance, high–low group means, t-values, p-values, and effect sizes for all 29 items, are provided in Appendix C.

These results suggest that all 29 items are psychometrically sound and suitable for use in the main study without deletion. Minor adjustments were considered for items with relatively lower correlations to improve clarity and response precision.

3.6.1.2 Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the ICCAS questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated for each of the four theoretical dimensions: intercultural attitudes (ICAT), intercultural knowledge (ICKN), intercultural skills (ICSK), and intercultural awareness (ICAW). As shown in Table 3.10, all subscales demonstrated acceptable to excellent reliability, with values exceeding the commonly recommended threshold of $\alpha = .70$ (Taber, 2018).

Specifically, ICSK ($\alpha = 0.865$), ICKN ($\alpha = .850$), and ICAW ($\alpha = .815$) exhibited strong internal consistency, while ICAT ($\alpha = .737$) fell within the acceptable range. This indicated that the instrument is sufficiently reliable for measuring ICC in this context.

Table 3.10

Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Assessment
ICAT	3	0.737	Acceptable
ICKN	10	0.850	Good
ICSK	12	0.865	Good
ICAW	4	0.815	Good
Overall Scale	29	0.737	Acceptable

3.6.1.3 Validity Analysis

Validity analysis was conducted to evaluate whether the ICCAS accurately measures the intended construct of ICC. This section presents results from content validity following established validation protocols (Taherdoost, 2019; Mokkink et al., 2018).

Content validity focuses on the degree to which questionnaire items reflect the target construct's domain (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It involves systematic evaluation of item relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness to ensure they align with the theoretical framework of ICC.

A request letter for validator (See Appendix D) was distributed to three experts to evaluate the items. All three experts had substantial experience in applied linguistics and assessment. Their academic backgrounds, professional titles, and research specializations ensured that the content validity evaluation was carried out by qualified professionals. Following standard CVI procedures, each expert independently rated the relevance and clarity of all 29 items using a five-point scale (see Appendix D). The item-level CVI (I-CVI) and scale-level CVI (S-CVI) were calculated accordingly. Original expert rating sheets, including names and

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designations, are provided in Appendix E.

Following Polit and Beck's (2006) criteria, items with item-level content validity index (I-CVI) ≥ 0.78 were considered valid. The scale-level content validity index (S-CVI/Ave) reached 0.93 (see Appendix E), indicating excellent overall content validity. Minor revisions were suggested for two items (Q14 and Q24) with borderline I-CVI values, primarily to improve clarity and reduce semantic ambiguity.

3.6.2 Trustworthiness of Interview Protocol

In qualitative research, the concepts of reliability and validity are addressed through the broader construct of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness encompasses four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This study adopted multiple strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the interview protocol, following the practical guidance of Robson (2002)and the qualitative research standards of Nowell et al. (2017).

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To enhance credibility, efforts were made to establish a comfortable and non-threatening interview environment, encouraging students to share their perspectives openly and authentically. Member checking was also conducted after each interview: participating students were provided with summaries of their responses and invited to verify the accuracy of interpretation, reducing the risk of misrepresentation. In addition, negative case analysis was employed by revisiting outlier or contradictory responses to ensure the integrity and transparency of the thematic structure.

Dependability was strengthened by conducting expert reviews of the interview protocol. Three researchers in the field of intercultural communication and language education examined the alignment between the questions and the four theoretical

dimensions of ICC, as well as their clarity and relevance, ensuring internal consistency of the instrument. A transparent analytic process was maintained through a documented audit trail, including coding memos, codebook versions, and analytic decisions.

To support transferability, detailed contextual information about the participating students, such as their ICC development levels and language proficiency profiles, was reported. Thick description of the research setting and learning context was provided to help readers judge the applicability of the findings in similar contexts.

Confirmability was addressed through reflexive practices and triangulated interpretation. The use of member checking, expert validation, and a secondary coder for theme verification helped minimize researcher bias and promote intersubjective reliability. Analytic memos were used to track the researcher's reflections and evolving interpretations throughout the analysis process.

These strategies collectively ensured that the qualitative data collection and analysis were conducted in a rigorous and trustworthy manner, supporting the validity of the study's conclusions.

3.6.3 Instrument Evaluation and Revision

The evaluation and revision of research instruments are critical to ensuring their validity, reliability, and suitability for the target population. In this pilot study, a two-pronged approach was adopted to assess the ICC questionnaire, OPT, and interview protocol: expert evaluation for theoretical alignment and student feedback for practical usability. This dual strategy aimed to identify potential ambiguities, biases, or design flaws that might affect data quality in the main study.

3.6.3.1 Expert and Student Feedback

Three experts and five students were invited to evaluate all instruments using the assessment checklist (see Appendix F). The three experts were the same panel who participated in the ICCAS content validity review, all with relevant academic backgrounds in applied linguistics and intercultural communication. The five students were those involved in the pilot study, selected to provide user-level feedback on clarity and usability of the instruments. Experts recommended refining low I-CVI items (Q14, Q24) for clarity (see Section 3.5.1.3), and changing the style of interview questions to avoid leading and suggestive expression. While, students suggested contextual examples for abstract terms (see Appendix F). These insights guided targeted revisions to improve measurement precision and student experience.

3.6.3.2 Revision Implicated

To improve the clarity and construct alignment of the questionnaire, modifications were made to two items (Q14 and Q24). These revisions involved refining ambiguous wording and ensuring that the items more accurately reflected the intended dimensions of ICC (see Appendix G).

The interview protocol was also revised to improve question quality and depth of response (see Appendix G). Abstract or leading questions were restructured into open-ended prompts with situational contexts, allowing for richer, more reflective responses from students. The revisions ensured alignment with the four dimensions of Byram's (1997) ICC model and supported more authentic student expression.

In preparation for the main study, the testing environment for OPT was standardized. Clear, concise instructions were developed to reduce cognitive load, and assessments were conducted in quiet computer labs to minimize distractions. These adjustments

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aimed to reduce test fatigue and improve the reliability and validity of the collected language proficiency data.

3.7 Data Collection

This study involved two phases of data collection: a quantitative phase to measure the impact of the intervention, and a qualitative phase to explore students' experiences in depth. The specific work plan and timeline of data collection can be referred to in the Appendix H.

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data included OPT scores and pre- and post-test results from ICCAS. The experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG) followed the same data collection timeline in the quantitative phase, including OPT administration, pre-test administration, the instructional period, and the post-test administration. The only difference between the two groups lay in the instructional approaches adopted during the intervention phase: the EG received IcLL-based instruction, whereas the CG followed the conventional textbook-based College English curriculum.

OPT was administered to both the experimental and control groups on March 18th, 2024, prior to the intervention. Students were drawn from two intact classes within the same major, taught by the same English instructor to control for instructional variation. The researcher introduced the test via We-chat groups, explaining its format and scoring criteria. The test was conducted online in a university computer lab under supervised conditions to ensure reliability. Results were generated automatically and collected as baseline data. After OPT administration, the two classes were evaluated for equivalence based on their test results. From March 19th

to 23rd, 2024, the researcher collaborated with the course lecturer to finalize instructional preparations.

The duration of intervention may be one threats to external validity (Cohen et al., 2017). From a theoretical point of view, ICC development is considered to be a gradual and dynamic process, as emphasized by Byram (1997) & Liddicoat (2004). Therefore, the intervention cycle should not be too short, otherwise it will be difficult to promote the internalized development of multiple dimensions such as attitudes, awareness and skills. The IcLL intervention was carried out over 12 weeks from March 24th, 2024 to June 12th, 2024, which was designed to align with the regular teaching cycle of a university semester in China, comprising 36 sessions (45 minutes each). One or two culture-related tasks were delivered weekly. Table 3.16 outlines the weekly structure and focus of the quantitative phase, during which the EG and CG learned the same units and followed the same schedule for unit learning, but the EG had the explicit IcLL learning topics and tasks, while the CG followed the textbook tasks (see Appendix A).

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Table 3.11

Schedule for the Quantitative Phase

Week	Program	IcLL-based Tasks	Conventional Textbook-based Tasks
1	a)Sample selection b)Introduction	a)OPT b)Orientation	a) OPT b) Orientation
2	Pretest	Pretest and scoring	Pretest and scoring
3	Unit 1 Language in mission	IcLL culture topics：Difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language	a. Pre-reading activities b. Reading comprehension–Global Reading c. Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading
4	Unit 1 Language in mission	IcLL culture topics: Difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language	a. Language focus b. Structural analysis and writing c. Reading skills

Table 3.11 continued.

5	Unit 1 Language in mission	IcLL culture topics: Difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language	a. Reading skills b. Stories of China c. Unit projects d. Unit review
6	Unit 2 Exploring college majors	IcLL culture topics: Factors of choosing a college major	a. Pre-reading activities b. Reading comprehension–Global Reading c. Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading
7	Unit 2 Exploring college majors	IcLL culture topics: Reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major	a. Language focus b. Structural analysis and writing c. Reading skills
8	Unit 2 Exploring college majors	IcLL culture topics: Values and reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major	a. Reading skills b. Stories of China c. Unit projects d. Unit review
9	Unit 3 The young generation: making a difference	IcLL culture topics: Young Generation	a. Pre-reading activities b. Reading comprehension–Global Reading c. Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading
10	Unit 3 The young generation: making a difference	IcLL culture topics: Young Generation	a. Language focus b. Structural analysis and writing c. Reading skills
11	Unit 3 The young generation: making a difference	IcLL culture topics: The Odyssey Years, Young Generation	a. Reading skills b. Stories of China c. Unit projects d. Unit review
12	Unit 4 Striving for financial health	IcLL culture topics: College students' spending habits	a. Pre-reading activities b. Reading comprehension–Global Reading c. Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading
13	Unit 4 Striving for financial health	IcLL culture topics: Cash advance	a. Language focus b. Structural analysis and writing c. Reading skills
14	Unit 4 Striving for financial health	IcLL culture topics: Values on save and spend, College students' spending habits	a. Reading skills b. Stories of China c. Unit projects d. Unit review
15	Post-test	Post-test and scoring	Post-test and scoring

The ICCAS pre-test was administered to both groups between March 24th and 25th, 2024. The post-test was delivered during the 12th week of instruction, on June 13th

and 14th, 2024. The ICCAS was administered online via the Wenjuanxing platform, a widely used Chinese survey tool (Mei & Brown, 2018). Students accessed the questionnaire outside class time via links shared in We-chat groups, which is a standard mode of communication in this instructional context. To minimize potential distractions, students were required to complete the questionnaire individually within a designated time window, and reminders were sent to ensure timely completion. The researcher provided guidance and clarification when needed and ensured timely collection of responses through the platform.

3.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Following the intervention, the experimental group was stratified and six students were selected. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between June 15th and 22nd, 2024. Students received information about the interview procedure in advance and provided informed consent for audio recording and verbatim transcription.

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Interviews were conducted face-to-face. To ensure clarity of expression and richer responses, interviews were conducted in the students' native language, with each session lasting 10 to 20 minutes. Questions followed a predefined protocol aligned with Byram's (1997) ICC model, covering attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness. Follow-up questions were asked based on students' responses to elicit deeper insights.

To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was employed. After transcription, summaries of each interview were shared with students in the first person for review and correction. Students verified or amended their responses to ensure accuracy. These verified transcripts were then used for subsequent qualitative analysis.

3.7.3 The Role of the Researcher

In quasi-experimental research, the researcher often fulfills multiple roles, including designing the study, organizing procedures, recruiting participants, and administering instruments (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In this study, the researcher's responsibilities varied across the quantitative and qualitative phases.

In the quantitative phase, the researcher designed the data collection plan, selected instruments (OPT and ICCAS), and identified two intact classes from the same major with the same instructor. Students and teachers were contacted via We-chat to obtain consent. The researcher administered OPT and grouped students based on proficiency to ensure baseline comparability.

To minimize potential bias, the intervention was delivered by a College English lecturer rather than the researcher. This separation between instruction and evaluation enhanced objectivity and reduced expectancy effects (Rosenthal, 1976). The researcher served as the instructional coordinator, responsible for preparing the lesson plans, training the lecturer, and monitoring fidelity through regular meetings. ICCAS was administered by the researcher before and after the intervention.

In the qualitative phase, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with six selected students from the experimental group. The interview protocol was developed based on Byram's (1997) ICC model. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted to confirm accurate understanding of student responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Table 3.17 shows the key information of the data collection period, including that of both quantitative and qualitative phases.

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Table 3.12

Data Collection Matrix

Phase	Phase 1 Quantitative Data Collection	Phase 2 Qualitative Data Collection
Research question	RQ1, RQ 2, RQ 3, RQ 4	RQ 5
Instrument	ICCAS, OPT, intervention	Interview protocol, intervention
Tool	Wenjuanxin, We-chat group	Face to face
Types of data	OPT scores, pretest and post-test ICCAS scores, demographic data about the students	Recording and transcribed text about the students' experiences and perceptions of the intervention
Data source	EG and CG	Some students from EG
Sample size	110	6
Role of the researcher	Designer of the quantitative data collection method, lesson plan developer, recruiter of the students, director, trainer, and monitor of the implementation of the intervention, quantitative data collector, communicating with the students.	Designer of the qualitative data collection method, interview protocol developer, interviewer, communicating with the students.
Duration	12 weeks	1 weeks
Timeline (2024)	Mar. 18th- Mar. 23rd: OPT & sample selection Mar. 24th - Mar. 25th: pretest Mar. 26th - Jun. 12th: intervention Jun. 13th - Jun. 14th: post-test	Jun. 15th - Jun. 22nd: interview

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3.7.4 Data Cleaning and Preparation

Data cleaning is a critical step to ensure data quality and improve the reliability of research findings. In this study, quantitative data cleaning involved detecting outliers, handling missing data, and ensuring data completeness to meet the assumptions required for statistical analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

First, to identify outliers, the researchers used SPSS 27 to inspect the data-set, employing the "Identify Duplicate Cases" function and manual screening to detect

potential duplicate or erroneous entries. Additionally, the mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated, and values beyond ±3 *SD* from the mean were removed. Box-plots and *Z*-scores ($|Z| > 3.0$) were also used to confirm the presence of outliers (Field, 2024).

For missing data, the researchers examined the proportion of missing values and determined appropriate handling methods. If the missing rate was below 5%, list-wise deletion was applied to remove cases containing missing data (Graham, 2012). If the missing rate exceeded 5%, mean imputation or regression imputation was considered to minimize the impact of data loss (Little & Rubin, 2019). In this study, the missing data rate was below 5%, and thus, listwise deletion was employed.

The initial sample size was 120. After data cleaning, 10 cases were removed due to missing values or outliers, resulting in a final valid sample size of 110 students: 56 in the experimental group and 54 in the control group. Details of the data cleaning results are shown in Table 3.18.

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Table 3.13

Quantitative Data Cleaning Results

Data Category	**Initial Sample Size**	**Deleted Cases**	**Final Sample Size**
Total Sample	120	10	110
Experimental Group（EG）	60	4	56
Control Group（CG）	60	6	54

Likewise, before conducting the qualitative analysis, all interview transcripts underwent data cleaning to ensure accuracy and consistency (Silverman, 2024). First, transcripts were formatted to remove non-verbal information (e.g., excessive pauses, filler words) and apparent recording errors while retaining meaningful pauses and

discourse markers. Second, all personally identifiable information was anonymized using coded identifiers to protect participants' privacy (Saunders et al., 2015). Third, a consistency check was performed to ensure the uniform use of terms and concepts. Lastly, redundant content unrelated to the research questions was removed, focusing the dataset on the four dimensions of ICC. Students were invited to review the cleaned transcripts to correct semantic inaccuracies, and the acceptance rate reached 92.3% (Hagens et al., 2009). The cleaned data set provided a reliable foundation for the subsequent thematic, comparative, and content analyses.

Table 3.19 presents the demographic background of the six interview students, including their gender, OPT-based language proficiency level, region of origin, international experience, and interview schedule. The sample was purposefully stratified to reflect varied levels of language proficiency and ICC performance for maximal variation.

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Table 3.14

Demographic Information of Interview Students

Student ID	Gender	OPT Proficiency Level	Region (Hometown)	International Experience	Interview Date
P01	Female	C1	Jiangsu	No	2024-06-16
P02	Female	C1	Taian	No	2024-06-18
P03	Female	B1	Qingdao	No	2024-06-16
P04	Male	B1	Taian	No	2024-06-20
P05	Male	A2	Weifang	No	2024-06-18
P06	Female	A2	Guizhou	No	2024-06-20

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was guided by the principles of mixed-methods research, integrating both quantitative and qualitative strands to comprehensively evaluate the

impact of an IcLL-based intervention on students' ICC. The choice of analytical procedures was closely aligned with the two-phase embedded quasi-experimental design (Creswell, 2014), where quantitative data served as the primary evidence, and qualitative insights helped interpret and contextualize the outcomes.

The quantitative analysis began with preliminary analyses to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments and to test the equivalence of groups at baseline. Given the quasi-experimental nature of the study and the presence of potential confounding variables, such as pre-existing differences in language proficiency and ICC, a covariate control strategy was adopted. Specifically, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was selected to isolate the effect of the intervention while statistically adjusting for these covariates (Field, 2024; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Assumption checks, such as normality, linearity, and homogeneity of regression slopes, were conducted to ensure the robustness of the model.

The qualitative data, derived from post-intervention semi-structured interviews, were analyzed using thematic strategy to explore student perspectives on ICC development. These qualitative findings not only enriched the interpretation of the statistical results but also provided contextual depth regarding how different students experienced the IcLL-based instruction.

This section is organized into two major parts: quantitative data analysis, including detailed procedures for ANCOVA and assumption testing, and qualitative data analysis, describing the coding strategy and interpretive framework. Together, these analyses aim to ensure methodological rigor and provide triangulated evidence of the intervention's effectiveness (Creswell, 2014; Hagens et al., 2009).

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3.8.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

This section presents the procedures used to analyze the quantitative data collected from OPT and ICCAS. The aim was to determine the effectiveness of the IcLL intervention on students' ICC development while accounting for the influence of baseline language proficiency. A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods was employed to ensure a robust and valid interpretation of the data. Preliminary analyses were conducted to test data quality, assess group equivalence, and verify assumptions required for subsequent hypothesis testing. Based on the study's quasi-experimental design, One-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was selected as the primary method for evaluating between-group differences while controlling for pre-test scores and English proficiency.

3.8.1.1 Overview of Analytical Approach for Quantitative Data

To assess the effectiveness of the IcLL-based intervention on students' ICC, ANCOVA was adopted as the primary analytical method. ANCOVA is commonly used in quasi-experimental research to compare group outcomes while statistically controlling for baseline differences on covariates such as pretest scores or language proficiency (Field, 2024; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). In this study, both the pretest ICC scores and OPT scores were treated as covariates to increase statistical power and reduce error variance (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017)

However, not all ICC dimensions met the core assumptions required for ANCOVA. In these cases, alternative analytical strategies were employed. Specifically, stratified t-test analysis was used to examine treatment effects within subgroups of comparable language proficiency, and simple effects analysis was conducted to explore post-hoc

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differences where interaction patterns or violations of ANCOVA assumptions emerged (Dimitrov & Rumrill, Jr., 2003; Laerd Statistics, 2022).

This multi-method approach ensures analytic flexibility while maintaining the validity of findings, aligning with best practices in applied educational and intervention research (Mertens, 2019). The final model selection for each dimension was based on the results of assumption testing, which are reported in Section 3.8.1.4.

3.8.1.2 Data Suitability Check for ANCOVA

This section presents two essential preliminary checks prior to hypothesis testing. First, demographic equivalence testing was conducted to examine whether the experimental and control groups were comparable in terms of basic characteristics. Second, the relationships between the selected covariates (i.e., pre-test ICC scores and language proficiency) and the dependent variable (post-test scores) were examined to verify the statistical appropriateness of including them in the ANCOVA models.

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3.8.1.2.1 Demographic Equivalence Testing

Prior to the intervention, demographic variables, including gender, overseas experience, and age, were examined for baseline equivalence between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG). Chi-square tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were used to determine whether significant differences existed between the groups. These methods are widely adopted in experimental studies to ensure baseline comparability between groups (Field, 2024; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

Both the EG and CG groups had an equal proportion of male students, and similar

proportions of female students. Chi-square tests were used to compare gender distributions between the groups. To strengthen analytical robustness, Fisher's exact test was also computed to complement the chi-square assessment when relevant statistical assumptions needed verification. The Chi-square tests indicated no significant difference in gender distribution between groups. Fisher's exact test also yielded a non-significant result, further supporting gender balance across the groups.

In terms of overseas experience, most students in both the experimental and control groups had no overseas experience. A chi-square test was conducted to examine group equivalence in overseas experience. Results indicated no significant difference in overseas experience between the two groups. The Fisher's exact test further supported the equivalence.

For age distribution, normality tests were first conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine whether the age data were normally distributed. Results showed that the data significantly deviated from normality in both the CG and the EG, indicating that the assumption of normality was violated. Then, a non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney U test) was employed instead of the independent samples t-test to compare age differences between groups. The results indicated no significant age difference between the two groups, further supporting their baseline comparability and providing a sound basis for subsequent analyses.

Overall, the demographic equivalence tests showed no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of gender, overseas experience, and age. This indicates that the random assignment of participants was effective and that both groups were comparable at baseline, thereby enhancing the reliability of subsequent analyses on the effects of the intervention. Detailed numerical information of all demographic tests is presented in Appendix C.

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3.8.1.2.2 Verification of Covariate Correlations

In experimental research, the selection of covariates is crucial to ensuring the validity of statistical analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). To examine the relationship between language proficiency (as measured by the total score of OPT, denoted as OPT_total) and ICC, this study employed Pearson correlation analysis to calculate the correlation between OPT_total and the pretest scores of the four dimensions of ICC. According to previous research, higher language proficiency is generally associated with stronger ICC (Byram, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to verify this relationship before proceeding with further analyses to determine whether OPT_total should be included as a covariate.

The correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between OPT_total and the Total ICC Score, with significant correlations across all four ICC dimensions. Among them, the strongest correlation was found between OPT_total and Intercultural Skills, supporting the notion that language proficiency facilitates individuals' adaptation and communication in intercultural contexts (Deardorff, 2006). Moderate correlations were found for awareness and knowledge, indicating that improvements in language proficiency may enhance individuals' cognitive understanding and knowledge accumulation in intercultural settings. Although the correlation with Attitudes was weaker, it remained statistically significant, indicating that language proficiency may modestly influence positive intercultural attitudes.

According to the principles of ANCOVA, a covariate should be significantly correlated with the dependent variable but not highly correlated with the independent variable (i.e., the experimental treatment) (Field, 2024). The correlation analysis in this study revealed significant relationships between OPT_total and the pre-test scores of all four dimensions of ICC. Therefore, it is statistically justifiable to include

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OPT_total as a covariate to control for its potential influence on the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups.

Furthermore, to confirm the suitability of OPT_total as a covariate, the correlation between OPT_total and the experimental condition (i.e., the Group variable: experimental group vs. control group) was examined. The results showed a weak correlation between OPT_total and Group, indicating that language proficiency did not differ significantly between the two groups and would not confound the causal interpretation of the intervention effects. Thus, OPT_total satisfies the assumptions for ANCOVA and can be included as a covariate in the subsequent analyses to enhance the statistical power of the findings. Detailed statistics of covariate correlations is presented in Appendix C.

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3.8.1.3 Assumption Testing for ANCOVA

Before conducting ANCOVA, it is essential to ensure that the data meet its underlying assumptions to guarantee the reliability of the results and the validity of interpretations. The key assumptions of ANCOVA include: a linear relationship between the covariate (OPT_total) and the dependent variable (post-test scores), a relationship between pre-test and post-test scores of the ICC dimensions, normality, homogeneity of variance, baseline equivalence of the covariate, and the homogeneity of regression slopes. Violating any of these assumptions may lead to biased results and compromise the credibility of the study's conclusions (Field, 2024; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). This section details the procedures and results of the assumption testing.

3.8.1.3.1 Linearity Between OPT Total Scores and ICC Post-test Scores

To satisfy ANCOVA assumptions, there must be a linear relationship between the covariate (OPT_total) and the dependent variables (post-test scores of ICC). If this relationship deviates from linearity, ANCOVA may not accurately adjust for variability in the dependent variable, reducing the effectiveness of the analysis (Field, 2024; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). In this study, Pearson correlation coefficients and scatter-plots were used to test the linearity between OPT_total and each dependent variable.

The results indicate significant positive correlations between OPT_total and the post-test scores of all four dimensions of ICC (see Appendix C). The strongest correlation was observed with intercultural skills, while the correlation with intercultural attitudes was relatively lower. These findings suggest that students with higher language proficiency demonstrated greater improvement in intercultural skills and awareness, whereas the influence on intercultural attitudes was less pronounced.

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In addition, scatter-plots were generated to visually inspect the linearity between OPT_total and each dependent variable (see Appendix C). The plots revealed an overall linear pattern with no apparent curvilinear or nonlinear trends, further supporting the linearity assumption. Thus, it is reasonable to assume a linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variables, satisfying one of the key ANCOVA assumptions.

3.8.1.3.2 Linearity Between Pre- and Post-test Scores

Before performing ANCOVA, it is also necessary to verify that the pretest scores of ICC are significantly correlated with the corresponding post-test scores. This ensures that pretest scores can be used as covariates to control for individual differences. If

the correlation between pre- and post-test scores is weak, the predictive value of the pretest diminishes, which may affect the accuracy of ANCOVA results. Therefore, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the four dimensions, and scatter-plots were used to examine the distribution of the data.

The results show significant positive correlations between pretest and post-test scores across all dimensions. The strongest correlation was found in intercultural skills, indicating a high predictive value of pretest scores. Similarly, intercultural knowledge and intercultural awareness also showed strong predictive relationships. Although the correlation for intercultural attitudes was comparatively lower, it remained statistically significant.

To further validate the linearity between pre- and post-test scores, scatter-plots were examined (see Appendix C). The plots revealed a clear linear trend, suggesting that pretest scores are good predictors of post-test performance. Therefore, it is reasonable to include the pretest scores as covariates in ANCOVA to control for individual differences prior to the intervention.

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3.8.1.3.3 Normality Test

The evaluation of normality for residuals is a foundational step in validating parametric statistical analyses. This study assessed the residuals of four post-intervention variables (*Mean_Post_ICAT*, *Mean_Post_ICKN*, *Mean_Post_ICSK*, and *Mean_Post_ICAW*) using descriptive statistics, graphical methods, and inferential tests. The theoretical rationale for normality testing stems from the assumption that parametric methods, such as linear regression or ANOVA, require residuals to approximate a normal distribution to ensure unbiased parameter estimates and accurate confidence intervals (Field, 2024). While the central limit

theorem supports robustness to mild non-normality in large samples ($n > 30$), formal evaluations remain essential for rigorous inference (Lumley et al., 2002).

The assessment framework integrated three approaches. First, descriptive statistics, including skewness, and kurtosis. Skewness and kurtosis values within ±2 and ±7, respectively, were deemed acceptable for normality (West et al., 1995). Second, inferential tests, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) tests, were applied. The K-S test, though sensitive to sample size, was interpreted with Lilliefors correction to account for estimated parameters (Lilliefors, 1967), while the S-W test, preferred for smaller samples (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965), provided complementary evidence. A significance threshold of $p > 0.05$ indicated retention of the null hypothesis (normality). Last, a visual inspection of histograms and Q-Q plots were analyzed.

The residuals for all variables demonstrated characteristics consistent with normality. For *Mean_Post_ICAT*, the skewness and kurtosis fell within acceptable ranges, as did the values for *Mean_Post_ICKS*, *Mean_Post_ICSK*, and *Mean_Post_ICAW*. The 95% confidence intervals for the means of all residuals included zero suggesting symmetry. Furthermore, the trimmed means and medians closely aligned with the arithmetic mean , indicating minimal distortion from outliers.

Graphical evidence further corroborated these findings. Histograms and Q-Q plots (See Appendix C) of the residuals displayed approximately bell-shaped distributions, with data points clustered around the mean and tapering symmetrically toward both tails. This visual pattern aligns with the statistical results, reinforcing the conclusion of normality.

Overall, the residuals for all post-intervention variables met the criteria for normality.

Descriptive statistics, inferential tests, and graphical evaluations collectively support the validity of parametric analyses. The findings align with methodological recommendations by Field (2024) and West et al. (1995), who emphasize multi-method assessments to mitigate risks of Type I/II errors in normality testing.

3.8.1.3.4 Homogeneity of Variance Test

Homogeneity of variance is a key assumption of ANCOVA, requiring that the residual variances of the dependent variables be equal across the experimental and control groups. Violation of this assumption may compromise the accuracy of the *F* statistic and increase the risk of Type I error (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Levene, 1960).

In this study, Levene's Test was conducted on the post-test scores of the dependent variables to examine whether the variances were equal between the experimental group and the control group. The null hypothesis (H_0) of Levene's Test states that there is no significant difference in error variances between the groups. A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met.

The results indicated no significant differences in residual variances between the experimental and control groups for any dimension of ICC. Thus, the homogeneity of variance assumption is satisfied. Based on the results of Levene's Test, the data meet the homogeneity of variance assumption required for ANCOVA. Therefore, ANCOVA can be appropriately applied to analyze the effects of the IcLL-based intervention.

3.8.1.3.5 Baseline Equivalence of Covariates

Baseline equivalence testing is a key step in quasi-experimental research, as it

ensures that any observed post-intervention differences can be more confidently attributed to the intervention rather than pre-existing group differences (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to assess the baseline equivalence of the covariates, including the Oxford Placement Test total score (OPT_total) and the pre-test scores of the four dimensions of ICC: Intercultural Attitude (ICAT_Pre), Intercultural Knowledge (ICKN_Pre), Intercultural Skills (ICSK_Pre), and Intercultural Awareness (ICAW_Pre).

The testing procedure included: Homogeneity of variance check using Levene's Test to determine whether to apply equal-variance or Welch-adjusted t-tests (Field, 2024); Mean difference testing, including t-value, degrees of freedom (*df*), and significance level (*p*), with α set at .05; Effect size estimation, where Cohen's *d* was calculated to evaluate the magnitude of group differences ($|d| < .2$ = negligible, $.2 \leq |d| < .5$ = small, $.5 \leq |d| < .8$ = medium).

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The results of the baseline comparison revealed no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on any covariates, including OPT scores and pre-test scores of all ICC dimensions. Additionally, all effect sizes indicated minimal practical differences between groups. These results support a high degree of baseline equivalence, suggesting that the two groups were comparable prior to the intervention.

Although Levene's Test indicated a violation of homogeneity of variance for ICAW_Pre, the Welch-adjusted t-test still showed no significant difference between groups, and the effect size was negligible. This suggests that the observed variance difference had little practical impact. To further validate the equivalence, a bootstrap

analysis with 1,000 resamples was conducted for ICSK_Pre, the variable with the largest effect size, and the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference included zero, reinforcing the conclusion of no meaningful group differences. The combination of conventional statistical testing, effect size estimation, and bootstrap verification strengthens the internal validity of the study and confirms the appropriateness of using ANCOVA for analyzing treatment effects in this design.

3.8.1.3.6 Test of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

The homogeneity of regression slopes assumption requires that the relationship between the covariate (OPT_total) and the dependent variable (post-test scores on each ICC dimension) is consistent across the experimental and control groups. If this assumption is violated, i.e., if the covariate influences the dependent variable differently in each group, the use of ANCOVA becomes inappropriate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). To test this, a General Linear Model (GLM) was constructed including the group, covariates (OPT_total and Mean_Pre_Dimension), and their interaction terms. A non-significant interaction would support the assumption.

The following regression model was used to examine the interaction between the covariate and group membership:

$$Mean_Post_ICC = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Group) + \beta_2(OPT_total) + \beta_3(Mean_Pre_ICC) + \beta_4 (Group \times OPT_total) + \beta_5 (Group \times Mean_Pre_ICC) + \varepsilon$$

The term Group × OPT_total was used to test whether the effect of placement test scores (OPT_total) differed between the two groups, and Group × Mean_Pre_Dimension was used to examine whether the influence of pre-test scores on post-test outcomes varied by group.

The homogeneity of regression slopes was largely supported for ICAW and ICKN, with all interaction terms non-significan. For ICAT, while the Group × OPT_total interaction was non-significant, the Group × Mean_Pre_ICAT interaction was significant, indicating that the predictive power of pre-test scores on post-test outcomes differed across groups. For ICSK, the opposite pattern emerged: a significant interaction between Group and OPT_total, but a non-significant interaction with Mean_Pre_ICSK, suggesting the impact of language proficiency on skills varied by group.

Specifically, in ICAT, the slope for pre-test scores was weaker in the experimental group than in the control group, suggesting the intervention may have reduced the dependence on prior attitudes and facilitated greater change. For ICSK, the stronger influence of OPT_total in the experimental group implies that students with higher language proficiency may have gained more from the skills training. These findings suggest that while the ANCOVA assumptions hold for ICAW and ICKN, careful interpretation is needed for ICAT and ICSK, where covariate effects differ by group.

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Overall, when OPT_total is used as a covariate, its impact on post-test scores is consistent in the ICAW and ICKN dimensions but differs by group in the ICAT and ICSK dimensions. Therefore, in the ICAT dimension, the influence of pre-test scores should be carefully controlled in the analysis. For ICSK, further investigation into the specific patterns of how OPT_total affects skill development is warranted to ensure the accuracy of ANCOVA results.

3.8.1.4 Final Model Specification for Quantitative Data

Given that most ANCOVA assumptions were satisfied, post-test comparisons between the experimental and control groups were conducted while controlling for

OPT and ICC pre-test scores (Field, 2024). This approach adjusts for initial group differences and increases the precision of the estimated treatment effects (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

However, two violations of the homogeneity of regression slopes were identified: the ICAT dimension showed a significant interaction between group and pre-test scores, and ICSK showed a significant interaction between group and OPT_total . Therefore, alternative analytical strategies were adopted for these two dimensions. For the ICSK dimension, simple effects analysis was conducted, whereas stratified t-tests were used for the ICAT dimension.

Simple effects analysis was applied to the intercultural skills (ICSK) in the case that ANCOVA main effects alone do not provide sufficient insight into the nature of group differences, as the treatment effect is moderated by the covariate (Aiken et al., 1991). The prerequisite of simple effects analysis is that the covariate is categorical, allowing researchers to examine the effect of an independent variable at each level of another variable (Field, 2024). In this study, CEFR levels of OPT results served as a categorical variable in the ICSK analysis, making simple effects analysis via ANCOVA appropriate.

The OPT score was typically categorized into low, medium, and high proficiency groups using CEFR levels. Within each level, post-test ICSK scores were compared between the experimental and control groups. This allowed for the identification of whether and how the IcLL-based intervention had different effects on students with varying levels of language proficiency. Such analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the conditional effects of interventions, especially in educational research involving diverse learner profiles (Aiken et al., 1991).

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However, in the ICAT dimension, ICC pre-test scores are continuous. Converting a continuous variable into categories for simple effects analysis can lead to loss of information and statistical power (MacCallum et al., 2002; Pedhazur, 1982). Therefore, rather than imposing artificial categories, a stratified independent samples t-test was used. Students were divided into tertiles based on their ICC pre-test scores using the classification criteria established in 3.4.2 (see Table 3.5). Specifically, students were classified into low, moderate, and high levels of intercultural attitudes. Within each level, independent samples t-tests were used to compare post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. This approach reduced the confounding influence of baseline ICAT differences and allowed for meaningful comparisons (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). This multi-model strategy ensured methodological rigor and analytic flexibility in response to data characteristics, enhancing the trustworthiness of the statistical conclusions.

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3.8.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative component of this study was designed to address Research Question 5 and 6. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing students to reflect on their learning experiences in depth and provide narrative evidence on the development of ICC. This approach complements the quantitative findings and provides richer contextual understanding (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using the voice-to-text function in WeChat, followed by manual verification to correct transcription errors. The researcher ensured the accuracy of all transcripts through repeated listening and checking with a peer researcher.

Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis as conceptualized by Braun and

Clarke (2022), which emphasizes the active role of the researcher in identifying, interpreting, and constructing themes within the data. This approach is particularly suitable for theoretically informed yet flexible analyses of meaning across a data set.

The analysis followed six recursive phases as presented in Figure 3.7. The first step is the familiarization with the data. The researcher engaged deeply with the transcripts through repeated reading, noting down preliminary ideas, points of interest, and emerging meanings. The second step is to generate initial codes. Data were coded inductively and deductively, informed by both students' expressions and the ICC framework (Byram, 1997). Codes were developed flexibly rather than mechanically applied. The next step is to construct candidate themes. Codes were reviewed and grouped to form meaningful patterns of shared meaning: candidate themes that captured important features relevant to the research question. The fourth step is reviewing and refining themes. Candidate themes were refined to ensure internal coherence and external distinction. Data extracts within themes were re-evaluated to enhance clarity and relevance. The fifth step is defining and naming themes. Each theme was clearly defined in terms of its core concept and contribution to understanding students' ICC development. The last step is to produce the report. A narrative was constructed to explain and illustrate the final themes, supported by vivid data excerpts.

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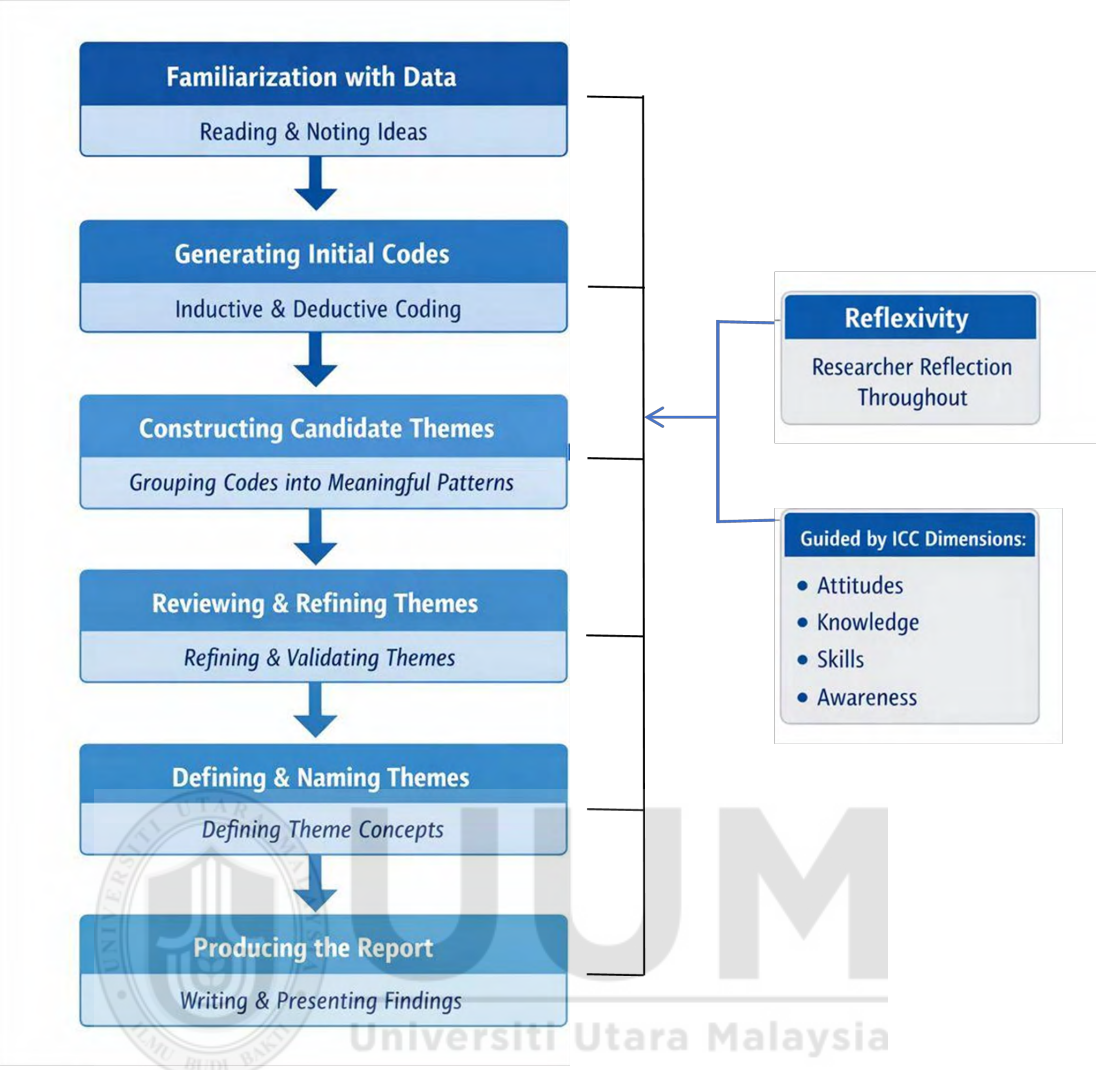

Figure 3.3. Process of Thematic Analysis

Throughout the process, reflexivity was maintained by the researcher to acknowledge their interpretive role in the analytic process, consistent with the principles of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Both inductive insights and theoretical guidance from Byram's (1997) four dimensions of ICC, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, were used to shape the interpretation of data. This approach enabled a nuanced understanding of students' intercultural development and how they perceived the role of IcLL-based instruction in facilitating that growth.

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3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance is crucial in educational research, encompassing principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; BERA, 2018). Before starting data collection, informed consent was obtained from university administrators and participants (see Appendix I), following the principles of respect for persons (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Consent forms clearly stated the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, and risks, and were presented in an accessible language (Bryman, 2016).

To ensure transparency, detailed information sheets (see Appendix J) about the ICLL approach were distributed to all relevant parties (Johnson & Christensen, 2024). Additionally, power differentials between the researcher and student participants were addressed by explicitly informing students that the study was non-evaluative and had no bearing on their academic outcomes (BERA, 2018). A clear boundary was maintained between the researcher's teaching and research roles.

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Data protection was a priority. Questionnaire data was anonymized, and interview data was assigned pseudonyms, following the General Data Protection Regulation and contemporary research ethics (Suri, 2020). The researcher, trained in research ethics, managed and collected all data, using secure storage and limiting access. In conclusion, this study integrated ethical safeguards throughout the research process, protecting students' rights and maintaining research integrity.

3.10 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter outlined the methodological framework employed to investigate the effectiveness of an IcLL approach in enhancing university students' ICC. A

quasi-experimental design with an embedded explanatory component was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to capture both the outcomes and student experiences of the intervention. Detailed descriptions were provided regarding student selection, research instruments, pilot study procedures, data collection protocols, and the intervention curriculum.

Furthermore, the chapter elaborated on the validation and refinement of research instruments through pilot testing, including the ICCAS, Oxford Placement Test, and interview protocol. Data analysis strategies were also specified, including assumptions testing and ANCOVA modeling for quantitative data, as well as reflexive thematic analysis for qualitative data. These methodological decisions were carefully made to ensure the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the study findings, laying a solid foundation for the presentation and interpretation of results in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which investigates the effects of an IcLL-based intervention on the development of students' ICC in College English classrooms. Both quantitative and qualitative results are presented to address the research questions concerning the effects of the IcLL–based intervention on students' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, as well as students' perceived changes and learning experiences during the IcLL-based instructional process.

The findings are organized explicitly according to the research questions. Sections 4.2 to 4.5 present the quantitative findings addressing RQ 1 to 4 separately, including descriptive and inferential statistical results, followed by a concluding summary responding to each research hypothesis. To further support the credibility of the quantitative findings, supplementary analyses, including effect size calculation and sensitivity analysis, are reported in Appendix O. Sections 4.6 and 4.7 present the qualitative findings addressing RQ 5 and 6. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive empirical account of the outcomes of the intervention, informing the detailed discussion in the following chapter.

4.2 Students' Intercultural Attitudes after IcLL-Based Intervention

This section reports the quantitative findings addressing Research Question 1, the purpose of which is to examine the effect of the IcLL-based intervention on students' intercultural attitudes (ICAT). To assess the differential effects of the IcLL-based

intervention under the condition that the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption was violated for the ICAT dimension, descriptive analysis and stratified independent samples t-tests were employed. This analytic strategy enables more precise comparisons by accounting for variability in students' baseline intercultural attitudes, thereby minimizing the confounding influence of initial group differences.

Students were classified into three levels (low, moderate, and high) based on their pre-test scores on the ICAT dimension, using the standardized cutoff criteria adapted from (Sugianto & Ulfah, 2020) and introduced in Section 3.4.2 (see Table 3.5). Specifically, scores below 2.50 were categorized as "low", scores from 2.50 to below 3.00 were categorized as "moderate," and scores at or above 3.00 were classified as "high." Upon applying this classification to the dataset, no students were identified in the "low" category, indicating that all students exhibited at least a moderate level of intercultural attitudes prior to the intervention. Therefore, subsequent analysis was conducted on the moderate and high groups only.

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4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics for Intercultural Attitudes

Table 4.1 illustrates the descriptive statistics for intercultural attitudes. The pre-test scores were similar for EG (M = 3.87, SD = 0.57) and CG (M = 3.82, SD = 0.57). Post-intervention, both groups improved, but the EG (M = 4.33, SD = 0.45) showed greater gains than the CG (M = 4.09, SD = 0.57), suggesting larger observed improvements in intercultural attitudes in the experimental group.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for ICAT

Group	N	Pre-test Mean ± SD	Post-test Mean ± SD
EG	56	3.87 ± 0.57	4.33 ± 0.45
CG	54	3.82 ± 0.57	4.09 ± 0.57

Further classification of ICAT scores using the three-tiered level standard (High ≥ 3.5; Moderate = 2.5–3.49; Low < 2.5) revealed that neither group had students classified at the "Low" level in either the pre- or post-test (see Table 4.2). However, the proportion of students at the "High" level increased slightly after the intervention. In the CG, the number of students in the "High" category rose from 29 to 49, while in the EG, this number increased from 32 to 53. These results suggest that students in both groups improved over time, with the experimental group achieving a slightly larger gain in high-level intercultural attitudes.

Table 4.2

Distribution of ICAT Levels Before and After the Intervention by Group

Group	Time	High (≥ 3.5)	Moderate (2.5–3.49)	Low (< 2.5)	Total
CG	Pre-test	29	25	0	54
CG	Post-test	49	5	0	54
EG	Pre-test	32	24	0	56
EG	Post-test	53	3	0	56

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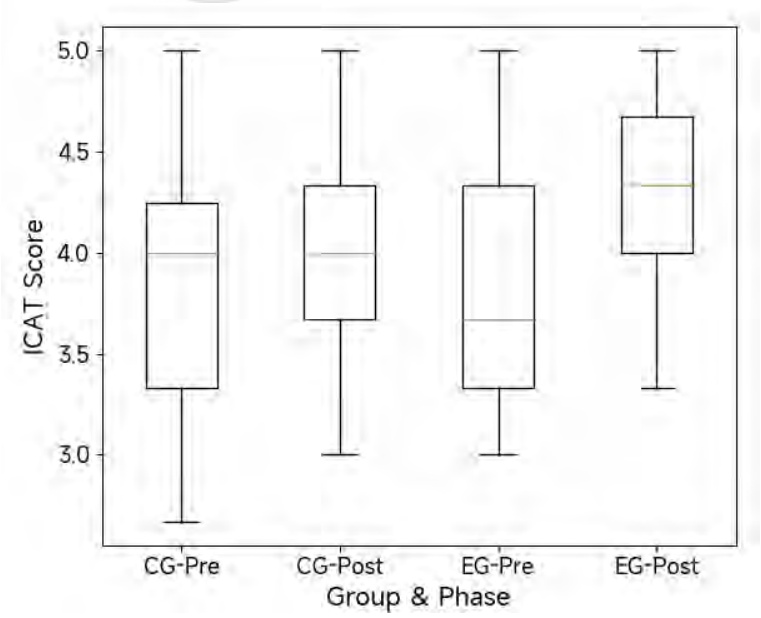

Figure 4.1. Box-plot of ICAT Scores by Group and Phase: Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons

The box-plot (see Figure 4.1) illustrates the comparative performance of the two student groups (EG vs. CG) in intercultural attitudes assessment. Both groups show upward shifts in median scores post-intervention, with the experimental group demonstrating a more pronounced improvement. Notably, the experimental group's post-test box appears narrower compared to its pre-test dispersion, indicating greater score consistency after the intervention, while the control group maintains similar variability. All groups share identical minimum scores, but the experimental group achieves the highest maximum, suggesting some exceptional performers emerged through the treatment. These visual patterns align with the descriptive statistics showing reduced standard deviations in the experimental group (0.57→0.45) and increased high-level category percentages (EG: 32→53, CG: 29→49) as presented in the frequency distribution table. Overall, the box-plot provides a visual representation of group differences observed in the descriptive statistical results reported above.

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4.2.2 Stratified independent samples t-tests of Intercultural Attitudes

To further examine whether the effects of the IcLL-based intervention varied according to students' initial levels of intercultural attitudes, a stratified post-hoc analysis was conducted. In the moderate group, the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) each consisted of 16 students. The post-test results (see Table 4.3) showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The EG achieved a higher mean score (M = 4.21, SD = 0.53), compared to the CG (M = 3.52, SD = 0.40), with t (30) = -4.12, $p < .001$. The effect size was large, Cohen's d = 1.46, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -2.23 to -0.66. These findings indicate a robust difference in post-test performance, suggesting that the intervention was

particularly effective among students who began with a moderate level of intercultural attitudes.

Table 4.3

Independent Samples t-Test Results for ICAT (Moderate Group)

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	t	df	*p*	Cohen's *d*	95% CI
Mean_Post_ICAT	CG	16	3.52	0.40	-4.12	30	<.001	1.46	[-2.23, -0.66]
	EG	16	4.21	0.53					

In the high group, 38 students from the CG and 40 from the EG were included in the analysis (see Table 4.4). The post-test mean score for the EG was 4.38 (*SD* = 0.41), slightly higher than that of the CG (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = 0.44). However, the difference was not statistically significant, *t* (76) = -0.61, *p* = .546, with a small effect size of Cohen's *d* = 0.14 (95% CI [−0.58, 0.31]). These results indicate that, within the high baseline group, the IcLL-based intervention did not yield a substantial measurable difference in post-test intercultural attitudes.

Table 4.4

Independent Samples t-Test Results for ICAT (High Group)

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	t	df	*p*	Cohen's *d*	95% CI
Mean_Post_ICAT	CG	38	4.32	0.44	-0.61	76	.546	0.14	[-0.58, 0.31]
	EG	40	4.38	0.41					

In response to Research Question 1, the above findings indicate that the IcLL-based intervention had a differentiated effect on students' intercultural attitudes, producing statistically significant improvement among students with moderate initial levels, but

no significant impact among those with high baseline attitudes. Accordingly, Research Hypothesis 1 was rejected for students with moderate initial levels of intercultural attitudes, whereas it failed to be rejected for those with high baseline attitudes. Taken together, the hypothesis was partially rejected, indicating that the intervention effect varied depending on students' initial levels of intercultural attitudes. These findings address the intercultural attitudes dimension of ICC as specified in the conceptual framework, providing empirical evidence for how intercultural attitudes developed under the IcLL-based instructional intervention.

4.3 Students' Intercultural Knowledge after IcLL-Based Intervention

This section presents the quantitative findings addressing Research Question 2, which examines the effect of the IcLL-based intervention on students' intercultural knowledge. To address this question and examine Research hypothesis 2, a One Way Analysis of Covariance was conducted. This analysis examined the effect of group membership (experimental vs. control) on students' post-test scores in the intercultural knowledge dimension, with OPT_total (language proficiency) and Mean_Pre_ICKN (prior knowledge) as covariates.

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Intercultural Knowledge

Table 4.5 presents the descriptive statistics for intercultural knowledge scores in both the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) before and after the IcLL-based intervention. At the pre-test stage, the two groups exhibited comparable levels of intercultural knowledge (EG: M = 3.01, SD = 0.56; CG: M = 3.13, SD = 0.51), indicating initial equivalence.

Following the intervention, the EG showed a greater increase in post-test scores (M =

3.83, *SD* = 0.47) compared to the CG (*M* = 3.75, *SD* = 0.44), suggesting larger observed gains in intercultural knowledge of cultural practices, perspectives, and comparisons. The standard deviations across both tests were relatively small and consistent across groups, indicating a stable and normally distributed dataset without substantial variability or outliers. Inferential analysis in the next section will assess whether this observed improvement is statistically significant.

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for ICKN in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	**N**	**Pre-test (M ± SD)**	**Post-test (M ± SD)**
EG	56	3.01 ± 0.56	3.83 ± 0.47
CG	54	3.13 ± 0.51	3.75 ± 0.44

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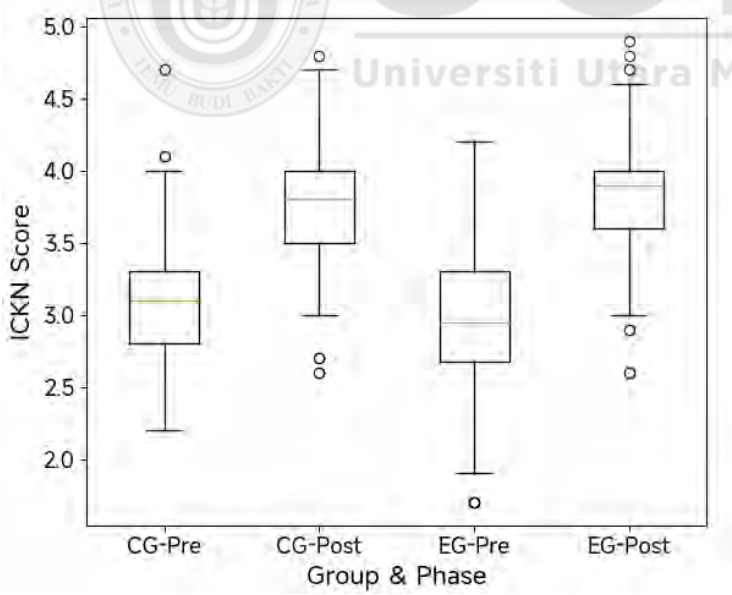

Figure 4.2. Boxplot of ICKN Scores by Group and Phase: Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons

Boxplot of ICKN (See Figure 4.2) shows minimal change across both groups and

time points in intercultural knowledge. Medians remain stable (~3.5–3.7), with only slight upper-quartile expansion. The presence of outliers in both "Pre" and "Post" phases suggests individual differences in baseline knowledge persist over time.

The levels of ICKN were further classified into Low, Moderate, and High (see Table 4.6) based on ideal score distributions (IM = 3.00, ISD = 0.67), following adapted criteria from Sugianto & Ulfah (2020) (See Section 3.4.2).

Table 4.6

ICKN Level Distribution Before and After Intervention

Group	Time	High (≥ 3.50)	Moderate (2.50–3.49)	Low (< 2.50)	Total
EG	Pre-test	12	39	5	56
EG	Post-test	45	11	0	56
CG	Pre-test	12	39	3	54
CG	Post-test	44	10	0	54

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As shown in the table, both groups exhibited similar distributions across ICKN levels at the pre-test stage. However, after the intervention, there was a marked increase in the number of students reaching the "High" level in both groups, particularly in the experimental group. Additionally, the "Low" level category was nearly eliminated. While changes were observed in both groups, the distributional shifts alone do not indicate whether these differences can be attributed to the intervention, which is examined through inferential analyses in the following section.

4.3.2 ANCOVA Analysis of Intercultural Knowledge

To evaluate the impact of the IcLL-based intervention on students' intercultural knowledge, ANCOVA was conducted to compare post-test scores between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG), while controlling for pre-test

scores and language proficiency (OPT_total). Table 4.7 summarizes the results of the test of between-subjects effects.

Table 4.7

ANCOVA Results for Post-test Scores of Intercultural Knowledge

Variable	**F**	***p***	**Partial η²**
Group	2.805	.097	.026
OPT_total	39.229	<.001	.270
Mean_Pre_ICKN	9.567	.003	.083

The group variable did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance (p = .097), though the observed effect size (partial η^2 = .026) indicates a small practical difference. This indicates that, after controlling for pre-test intercultural knowledge and language proficiency, the between-group difference in post-test ICKN scores was not statistically significant.

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In contrast, the covariates had significant effects. Language proficiency (OPT_total) was the strongest predictor, accounting for 27.0% of the variance in post-test scores (p < .001). Pre-test intercultural knowledge (Mean_Pre_ICKN) also significantly contributed to the model (p = .003), explaining an additional 8.3% of the variance. These findings highlight the important roles of both English proficiency and prior knowledge in shaping students' intercultural learning outcomes.

The overall model demonstrated good explanatory power, with the model's adjusted R^2 = 0.528, indicating that over half of the variance in post-test ICKN scores was accounted for by the combination of group variable and the covariates, which shows a good overall model fit (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4.8 presents parameter estimates for the model, showing the specific contribution of each variable. The parameter estimates indicate that for every one-point increase in OPT_total, the predicted post-test ICKN score increased by 0.018 points. Likewise, for every one-point increase in Mean_Pre_ICKN, the post-test score increased by 0.224 points, controlling for other factors. Both covariates were significant predictors of post-test outcomes, with language proficiency (OPT_total) demonstrating a stronger impact.

Table 4.8

Parameter Estimates for the ANCOVA Model of ICKN

Variable	**B**	***p***
Intercept (EG)	-0.102	.097
OPT_total	0.018	<.001
Mean_Pre_ICKN	0.224	.003

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The adjusted post-test score for the experimental group, reported in Table 4.9, remained slightly higher than that of the control group (M_EG = 3.84, M_CG = 3.74) after controlling for the covariates. However, this difference did not reach statistical significance (p = .097), indicating that the observed advantage for the experimental group cannot be conclusively attributed to the intervention. Moreover, OPT_total showed a strong explanatory power, explaining 27% of the variance, while prior knowledge (Mean_Pre_ICKN) explained 8.3%. These results emphasize that language ability and baseline knowledge were the dominant predictors of students' performance in intercultural knowledge post-tests.

Table 4.9

Adjusted Means of Post-test Scores for ICKN by Group

Variable	Group	Adjusted Mean (SE)	F	*p*	Partial η²
ICKN	EG	3.84 (0.042)	2.79	.097	.026
	CG	3.74 (0.043)			

Figure 4.3 visually presents the estimated marginal means of post-test intercultural knowledge scores (Mean_Post_ICKN) by group, adjusted for covariates. The plot shows that both groups' values falling within a narrow range between 3.74 and 3.84 on the scale, which is consistent with the non-significant group difference observed in the ANCOVA results.

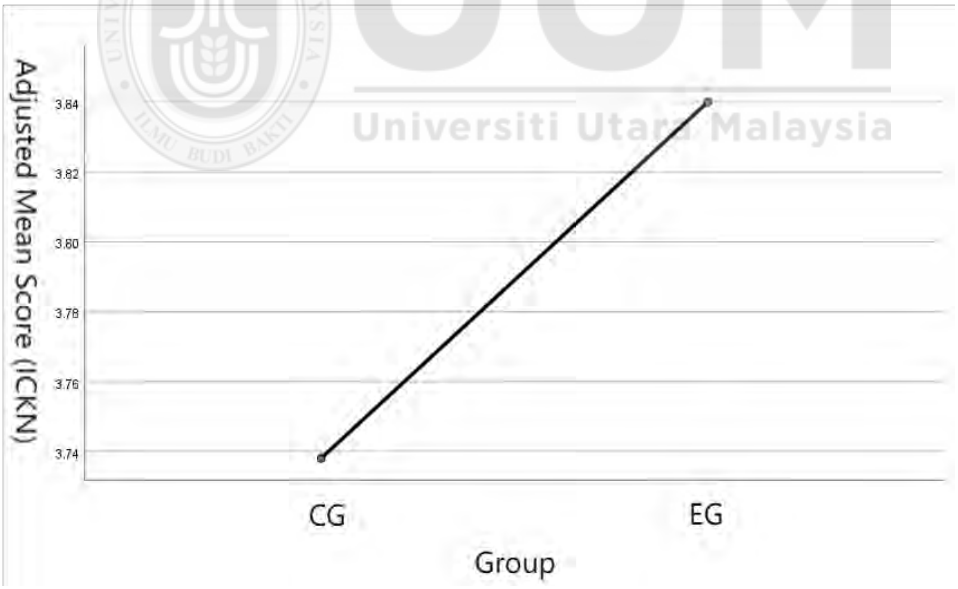

Figure 4.3. Estimated Marginal Means of Mean_Post_ICKN by Group

In response to Research Question 2, the quantitative findings indicate that the IcLL-based intervention did not result in a statistically significant improvement in students' intercultural knowledge when compared with the control condition.

Accordingly, Research Hypothesis 2 was not rejected, as the group difference in post-test ICKN scores failed to reach statistical significance after controlling for language proficiency and pre-test knowledge. Taken together, these results suggest that students' intercultural knowledge development was more strongly associated with language proficiency and prior knowledge than with the intervention itself. These findings correspond to the knowledge dimension of ICC in the conceptual framework, illustrating the extent to which intercultural knowledge was shaped by the IcLL-based intervention and relevant learner variables.

4.4 Students' Effect of Intercultural Skills after IcLL-Based Intervention

This section presents the quantitative findings addressing Research Question 3, which examines the effect of the IcLL-based intervention on students' intercultural skills. To address Research Question 3, a simple effects analysis was conducted following the detection of a significant interaction between the instructional group and language proficiency (OPT_total). Students were stratified by CEFR-aligned language proficiency levels for subsequent ANCOVA analyses. This approach enables examination of intervention effects within proficiency strata while controlling for pre-test intercultural skills.

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Intercultural Skills

The intercultural skills dimension also showed progress following the intervention. As shown in Table 4.10, the EG had a pre-test mean of 3.32 (*SD* = 0.51) and a post-test mean of 4.01 (*SD* = 0.51), while the CG had a slightly higher pre-test mean (*M* = 3.43, *SD* = 0.54) but a lower post-test mean (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 0.32). These descriptive results indicate changes in ICSK scores over time in both groups.

Table 4.10
Descriptive Statistics for ICSK

Group	N	Pre-test Mean ± SD	Post-test Mean ± SD
EG	56	3.32 ± 0.51	4.01 ± 0.51
CG	54	3.43 ± 0.54	3.96 ± 0.32

Further classification of ICSK scores using the three-tiered level standard (High ≥ 3.5; Moderate = 2.5–3.49; Low < 2.5) revealed that no students in either group were classified at the "Low" level during either the pre- or post-test (see Table 4.11). In the control group (CG), the number of students in the "High" category increased from 42 to 50, while those in the "Moderate" category decreased from 12 to 4. In the experimental group (EG), the number of students at the "High" level rose more substantially, from 45 to 54, with only 2 students remaining at the "Moderate" level after the intervention. These distributional changes describe shifts in ICSK levels across time and groups.

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Table 4.11

Distribution of ICSK Levels Before and After the Intervention by Group

Group	Time	High (≥ 3.5)	Moderate (2.5–3.49)	Low (< 2.5)	Total
CG	Pre-test	42	12	0	54
CG	Post-test	50	4	0	54
EG	Pre-test	45	11	0	56
EG	Post-test	54	2	0	56

The boxplot (see figure 4.6.) clearly shows the intervention's positive impact on students' intercultural skills. After the intervention, the experimental group's median score increased notably, and the scores became more concentrated, indicating both

higher performance and greater consistency. In contrast, the control group showed less improvement, with scores remaining widely spread. This figure provides a visual description of group-level patterns observed in the descriptive statistics.

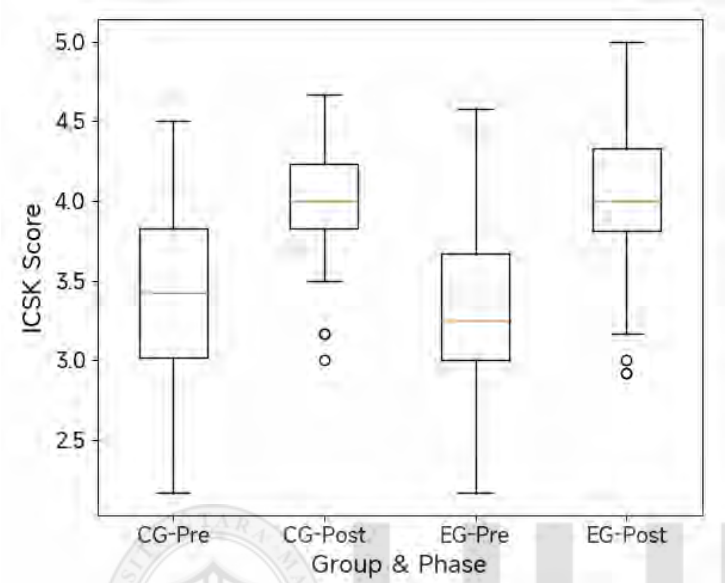

Figure 4.4. Boxplot of ICSK Scores by Group and Phase: Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons

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4.4.2 Simple Effects Analysis of Intercultural Skills

students were first stratified into three CEFR levels based on their OPT scores: low (A1–A2, OPT < 40), moderate (B1, OPT = 40–59), and high (B2–C1, OPT ≥ 60). The initial ANCOVA model included the intervention (Group), OPT (CEFR_Level), and their interaction term (Group × CEFR_Level) as fixed factors, and the pretest sore of intercultural skills (Mean_Pre_ICSK) as the covariate.

The Levene's test for error variance homogeneity was non-significant (p = .100), suggesting that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. The model as a whole was statistically significant, F (6,103) = 20.919, p < .001, with an adjusted R^2 of .523, indicating that approximately 52.3% of the variance in post-test ICSK scores

was explained by the model. Importantly, the interaction effect between Group and CEFR_Level was significant, F (2,103) = 8.106, p = .001, partial η^2 = .136, justifying the use of a stratified approach for further interpretation. The covariate, Mean_Pre_ICSK, also had a significant effect, F (1,103) = 7.256, p = .008, partial η^2 = .066, confirming the need to adjust for pre-test differences across groups.

As shown in Table 4.12, unadjusted post-test means suggest an overall improvement in ICSK across both groups. The experimental group (EG) showed higher average ICSK scores in the high proficiency group (M = 4.34, SD = 0.39), compared to the control group (CG) (M = 4.08, SD = 0.22). In the low and moderate levels, the mean differences were smaller.

Table 4.12

Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test ICSK Scores by Group and Language Proficiency

Group	CEFR Level	N	Mean	SD
CG	Low	6	3.39	0.33
CG	Moderate	17	3.93	0.27
CG	High	31	4.08	0.22
EG	Low	4	3.13	0.22
EG	Moderate	23	3.75	0.31
EG	High	29	4.34	0.39

Given the significant interaction, simple effects analyses were conducted using pairwise comparisons of estimated marginal means, adjusted for the covariate. After adjusting for pre-test scores, the marginal means presented in Table 4.13 show that students in the high CEFR level who received the IcLL-based intervention scored significantly higher (M = 4.298, SE = 0.057) than their counterparts in the control

group (M = 4.020, SE = 0.058). At the moderate proficiency level, the EG scored lower (M = 3.801, SE = 0.064) than the CG (M = 3.973, SE = 0.073). At the low proficiency level, the marginal means of M = 3.497 (CG) and M = 3.284 (EG), suggested limited intervention impact in this subgroup.

Table 4.13

Estimated Marginal Means of Post-test ICSK by Group and CEFR Level (Controlling for Pre-test Scores)

Group	CEFR Level	Adjusted Mean	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
CG	Low	3.497	0.127	3.245	3.748
	Moderate	3.973	0.073	3.828	4.119
	High	4.020	0.058	3.905	4.135
EG	Low	3.284	0.159	2.969	3.598
	Moderate	3.801	0.064	3.674	3.929
	High	4.298	0.057	4.185	4.411

Note. Covariate: Mean_Pre_ICSK = 3.3750.

Pairwise comparisons (see Table 4.14) revealed that for the high proficiency group, the difference in adjusted post-test scores between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant, mean difference = 0.278, SE = 0.077, with a Bonferroni-adjusted p = .000, 95% CI [0.126, 0.430]. In contrast, no statistically significant differences were observed in the low or moderate proficiency groups. For the low proficiency group, the mean difference between groups was 0.213 (p = .269), not statistically significant. For the moderate group, the mean difference between groups was 0.172 (p = .071), neither reaching the conventional threshold for statistical significance.

Table 4.14

Pairwise Comparisons of Adjusted ICSK Means between Groups across CEFR Levels

CEFR Level	Group Comparison	Mean Difference	*SE*	*p*	95% CI
Low	EG – CG	-0.213	0.191	.269	[-0.592, 0.167]
Moderate	EG – CG	-0.172	0.094	.071	[-0.360, 0.015]
High	EG – CG	0.278	0.077	.000	[0.126, 0.430]

In response to Research Question 3, the findings indicate that the effect of the IcLL-based intervention on intercultural skills varied by language proficiency level. Specifically, a statistically significant intervention effect was observed among students with high language proficiency, whereas no significant effects were found for students with low or moderate proficiency levels after controlling for pre-test intercultural skills. Accordingly, Research Hypothesis 3 was rejected for the high proficiency group but failed to be rejected for the low and moderate proficiency groups. Taken together, these results demonstrate a differentiated intervention effect on intercultural skills, corresponding to the skills dimension of ICC in the conceptual framework.

4.5 Students' Intercultural Awareness after IcLL-Based Intervention

This section presents the quantitative findings addressing Research Question 4, which examines the effect of the IcLL-based intervention on students' intercultural awareness. To address Research Question 4, a One Way Analysis of Covariance was conducted. This analysis examined the effect of group membership (experimental vs. control) on students' post-test scores in the intercultural knowledge (ICAW) dimension, with OPT_total (language proficiency) and Mean_Pre_ICAW (prior

awareness) as covariates. The analytical results, including between-subjects effects, parameter estimates, and adjusted post-test means, are reported in the following subsections.

4.5.1 Descriptive Statistics for Intercultural Awareness

Table 4.15 presents the descriptive statistics for intercultural awareness in both the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) before and after the IcLL-based intervention. At the pre-test stage, both groups demonstrated similar levels of intercultural awareness (EG: M = 3.43, SD = 0.67; CG: M = 3.45, SD = 0.51), suggesting baseline equivalence. Following the intervention, the EG showed greater improvement in post-test scores (M = 4.34, SD = 0.47) compared to the CG (M = 4.00, SD = 0.43). These descriptive results indicate changes in ICAW scores over time in both groups.

Table 4.15

Descriptive Statistics for ICAW

Group	N	Pre-test (M ± SD)	Post-test (M ± SD)
EG	56	3.43 ± 0.67	4.34 ± 0.47
CG	54	3.45 ± 0.51	4.00 ± 0.43

The boxplot (see Figure 4.5) clearly shows how students' intercultural awareness scores changed after the intervention. The experimental group's median score increased after the intervention, with a narrower interquartile range, while the control group showed smaller changes with comparable dispersion. The figure provides a visual description of group-level patterns observed in the descriptive statistics.

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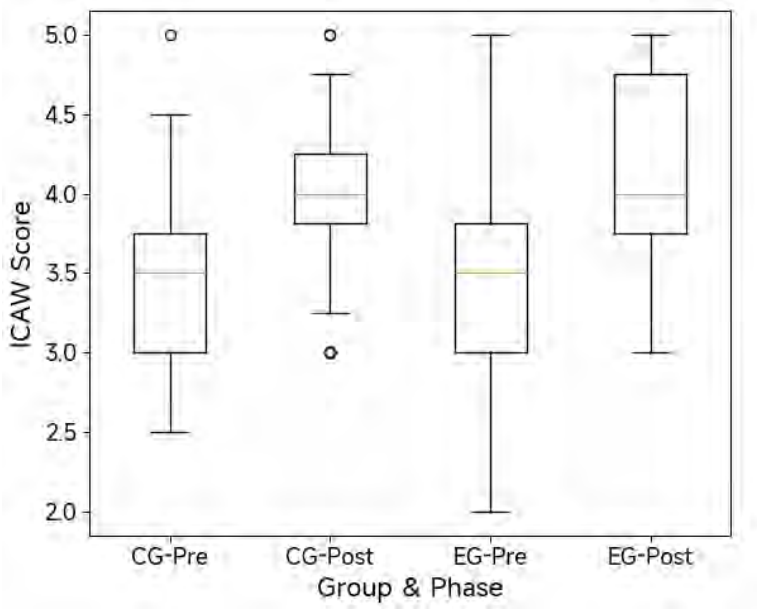

Figure 4.5. Boxplot of ICAW Scores by Group and Phase: Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons

Further classification of ICAW scores using the three-tiered level standard (High ≥ 3.5; Moderate = 2.5–3.49; Low < 2.5) revealed that neither group had students classified at the "Low" level in either the pre- or post-test (see Table 4.16). The proportion of students at the "High" level increased in both groups from pre-test to post-test. These distributional changes describe shifts in ICAW levels across time and groups.

Table 4.16

Distribution of ICAW Levels Before and After the Intervention by Group

Group	Time	High (≥ 3.5)	Moderate (2.5–3.49)	Low (< 2.5)	Total
CG	Pre-test	29	25	0	54
CG	Post-test	49	5	0	54
EG	Pre-test	32	24	0	56
EG	Post-test	53	3	0	56

4.5.2 ANCOVA Analysis of Intercultural Awareness

To evaluate the effect of the IcLL-based intervention on students' intercultural awareness, a one-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. The post-test ICAW score served as the dependent variable, with group (experimental vs. control) as the fixed factor, and OPT_total (English proficiency) and Mean_Pre_ICAW (baseline ICAW score) as covariates. This analysis aimed to determine whether the intervention had a statistically significant impact on students' ICAW levels after adjusting for individual differences in language proficiency and prior awareness.

Table 4.17 presents the results of the ANCOVA between-subjects effects. The group variable yielded a statistically significant main effect, F (1,106) =6.417, p=.013, with a partial eta squared of .058, indicating a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). This result suggests that the experimental group, after adjusting for covariates, achieved higher ICAW post-test scores than the control group. Additionally, OPT_total showed a highly significant effect on ICAW scores (F=30.706, p<.001), accounting for 22.4% of the variance. This highlights the strong influence of English proficiency on students' intercultural awareness. The pre-test ICAW score also had a statistically significant effect (p = .044; partial η^2 = .038), explaining 3.8% of the variance, suggesting a degree of stability and continuity in students' awareness levels from pre-test to post-test.

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Table 4.17

ANCOVA Results for Intercultural Awareness: Between-Subjects Effects

Variable	F value	*p* value	Partial η^2
Group	6.417	.013	.058
OPT_total	30.706	<.001	.224
Pre-test (Mean_Pre_ICAW)	4.164	.044	.038

The adjusted R^2 for the model was 0.457, indicating that the group variable and covariates together accounted for 45.7% of the variance in the post-test scores. This suggests a good overall fit and supports the statistical robustness of the model.

Table 4.18

Parameter Estimates for ANCOVA Model of ICAW

Variable	B value	*p* value
Intercept (EG)	-0.174	.013
OPT_total	0.019	<.001
Pre-test (Mean_Pre_ICAW)	0.155	.044

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Table 4.18 summarizes the unstandardized regression coefficients (B values) for each predictor in the model. The intercept for the experimental group was significant (p = .013), reflecting the baseline difference after centering on the covariates. Language proficiency (OPT_total) had a positive effect: each additional point in OPT_total was associated with a 0.019-point increase in ICAW post-test scores (p < .001). Similarly, each point increase in the pre-test ICAW score predicted a 0.155-point increase in the post-test score (p = .044), indicating a moderate carry-over effect from baseline awareness.

Table 4.19

Adjusted Means of Post-test Scores for ICAW by Group

Variable	Group	Adjusted Mean (SE)	F value	*p* value	Partial η²
ICAW	EG	4.17 (0.048)	6.37	.013	.057
	CG	3.99 (0.049)			

As shown in Table 4.19, the adjusted means after controlling for covariates were 4.17 for the experimental group and 3.99 for the control group, with a significant group difference (ΔM = 0.17, p = .013). These results indicate that, after controlling for language proficiency and baseline awareness, the experimental group achieved higher ICAW post-test scores than the control group.

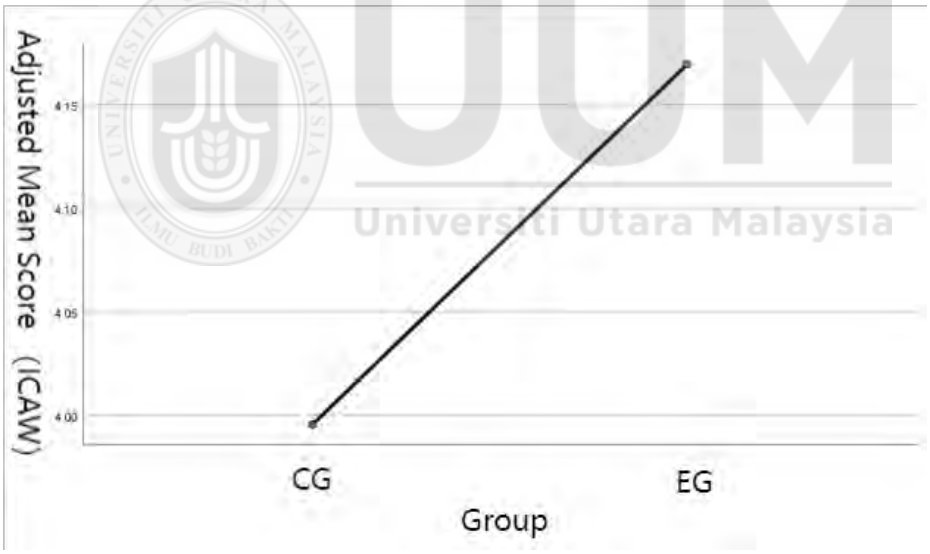

Figure 4.6. Estimated Marginal Means of Mean_Post_ICAW by Group

Figure 4.6 visually confirms the ANCOVA findings, with the experimental group (*M*=4.15) demonstrating a clear advantage over the control group (*M*=4.00) after adjusting for covariates. The 0.15-point difference between groups aligns with the statistically significant effect identified in the ANCOVA (*F* [1,106] =6.417, *p*=.013),

while the tight confidence intervals (EG: ±0.05, CG: ±0.05) reflect the model's precision in estimating true population differences after accounting for English proficiency (OPT_total) and baseline awareness (Mean_Pre_ICAW). The graphical representation complements Table 4.19, reporting higher adjusted means for EG (EG=4.17, CG=3.99).

In response to Research Question 4, the findings indicate that the IcLL-based intervention produced a statistically significant improvement in students' intercultural awareness compared with the control condition after controlling for language proficiency and pre-test awareness. Accordingly, Research Hypothesis 4 was rejected, as the group difference in post-test ICAW scores reached statistical significance. Taken together, these results demonstrate a positive intervention effect on intercultural awareness, corresponding to the awareness dimension of ICC in the conceptual framework.

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4.6 Students' Perceived Changes in ICC after the IcLL-based Intervention

This section reports the qualitative findings addressing Research Question 5, focusing on students' perceived changes in ICC following the IcLL-based intervention. A reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was employed to examine interview data, with analysis guided by Byram's model of ICC and the four core dimensions of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness.

The qualitative findings are therefore organized according to the four ICC dimensions. While these dimensions provided an analytical framework, the analysis remained open to students' own interpretations of change, allowing sub-themes to be identified inductively from the data. The themes presented in this section therefore represent patterns in how students perceived their development across different

dimensions of ICC, rather than externally imposed categories. An overview of the identified themes and sub-themes related to students' perceived changes is presented in Table 4.20, which provides a structural map for the analysis reported in the following sections.

Table 4.20

Thematic Distribution of Students' Perceived Changes

Core Theme	Sub-theme
Changes in Intercultural Attitudes	Increased interest
	Enhanced willingness to explore cultural differences
	Negative attitudes
Acquisition of Intercultural Knowledge	Enhanced understanding of other cultures
	Re-examining own culture
	Increased dual-perspective cognition
	Limitations in intercultural knowledge acquisition
Development of Intercultural Skills	Improved cultural interpretation skills
	Development of cultural information acquisition skills
	Changes in communication skills
	Performance of special groups
Growth in Intercultural Awareness	Enhanced Awareness of Multi-perspective Cultural Evaluation
	Enhanced Perspective-Taking Awareness
	Limitations in awareness development

The coding was conducted manually in six interview transcripts. The researcher first familiarized with the data and generated initial codes based on experiential statements. These were reviewed, collated, and developed into candidate themes. A second round of analysis refined these themes for clarity and coherence. The final output comprised four overarching themes, Changes in Intercultural Attitudes, Acquisition of Intercultural Knowledge, Development of Intercultural Skills, Growth

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in Intercultural Awareness, with corresponding sub-themes identified to reflect the complexity of learner experiences (see Table 4.20).

4.6.1 Changes in Intercultural Attitudes

This theme captures students' affective responses to the IcLL-based intervention. Most interviewed students reported noticeable improvements after the course. Students generally showed enhanced interest in cultural exploration and an increased willingness to actively engage with cultural differences. Through activities such as group discussions and cultural comparisons, some students shifted from a vague awareness of foreign cultures to a more systematic consideration of cultural similarities and differences, and in some cases began to initiate comparisons between Chinese and foreign values independently. However, a small number of students with weaker English proficiency experienced cognitive overload, which was associated with negative attitudes toward engaging with abstract cultural concepts and a tendency to withdraw from participation.

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a) Increased Interest

This sub-theme captures students' reported growth in interest toward foreign cultures, reflecting heightened curiosity and openness stimulated by IcLL activities. All six interviewed students indicated that their interest in foreign cultures increased after participating in the IcLL-based College English course. This perceived change was reflected in students' descriptions of moving from superficial or fragmented knowledge toward a more sustained curiosity about cultural topics.

> "I feel more interested than before. Previously I just had a rough idea, but through learning in the English course, I found that there are many interesting aspects in other cultures." (P01)
>
> "I feel I'm more interested in other countries' cultures. I had only

> heard a bit about them before, but now I've learned some pretty interesting things in class and really want to know more." (P03)
>
> "My interest in foreign cultures has clearly increased. I used to know very little, but now I really want to learn more." (P05)

These responses suggest that the intervention contributed to the development of positive intercultural attitudes, particularly by fostering curiosity and openness toward learning about other cultures. Such changes reflect the attitudinal dimension of ICC, especially students' growing interest and willingness to engage with cultural diversity.

b) Enhanced Willingness to Explore Cultural Differences

This sub-theme reflects students' increased readiness to actively engage with and explore cultural differences rather than avoiding or overlooking them. Several interviewed students reported a stronger willingness to actively explore how people from different cultural backgrounds perceive the same issues. This willingness was often expressed through reflective thinking and perspective-taking when encountering culturally related topics.

> "I'm more willing to learn now. When I encounter a topic related to culture, I start thinking about how foreigners might see it differently from us, and I try to understand their perspective." (P01)
>
> "I'm more open to exploring now. When I read things like CET-4 reading passages, I can feel the differences in viewpoints, and sometimes I even go online to look them up." (P05)

These accounts indicate that students were not only more interested in cultural content but also more inclined to engage cognitively with cultural differences, suggesting a shift toward a more active and reflective stance in intercultural learning.

However, this change was not uniform across all students. For example, P06 expressed uncertainty regarding such development, stating, "A little bit, I guess,"

which suggests that increased willingness to explore cultural differences may depend on individual learner factors.

c) Negative attitudes

Despite the overall positive trend, one negative case emerged. P06, who had a low OPT score and minimal improvement in ICC, reported difficulty in understanding different cultural viewpoints and consequently paid limited attention to them.

> "Maybe a little. I'm not quite sure how to put it. Most of the time, I can't really understand those viewpoints; it's kind of difficult for me, so I didn't pay much attention to this." (P06)

This response indicates that insufficient language proficiency may constrain students' ability to engage with intercultural content, leading to frustration and reduced motivation. Such negative attitudes highlight the uneven nature of attitudinal development and suggest that intercultural attitude change may be mediated by students' linguistic readiness.

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Overall, the findings related to intercultural attitudes indicate that the IcLL-based intervention was associated with increased interest in foreign cultures and a stronger willingness to explore cultural differences among most students, while a small number of students experienced limited or negative attitudinal change. In response to Research Question 5, these results suggest that students' perceived attitudinal development was generally positive but differentiated by individual language proficiency and learning capacity.

4.6.2 Acquisition of Intercultural Knowledge

This theme reflects students' perceived development in intercultural knowledge. The interviewed students generally reported a deeper understanding of both foreign and

local cultures after the IcLL-based intervention. Specifically, they gained more concrete knowledge related to curriculum themes such as consumption values and educational systems in different cultural contexts. Through comparative learning, many students also developed a renewed awareness of the distinctiveness of their own culture. However, this growth was largely confined to surface-level cultural elements, including behaviors and lifestyles. Students' understanding of deeper cultural dimensions, such as value systems, belief traditions, and artistic aesthetics, remained limited. In addition, psychological and linguistic factors contributed to resistance or difficulty in acquiring intercultural knowledge for some students.

a) Enhanced Understanding of Foreign Cultures

This sub-theme represents students' reported gains in concrete knowledge about foreign cultures, particularly in relation to curriculum-based cultural topics. Most students reported that their knowledge of foreign cultures increased following the intervention, particularly with regard to concrete cultural practices and social phenomena discussed in class.

> "I've learned a lot more about this. In the unit on the 'younger generation', I gained insights into the lifestyles and values of young people in different countries; it was quite rewarding." (P01)
>
> "Yes, I've definitely increased my understanding of other cultures… For example, I now know more about what motivates American students to choose their majors." (P03)
>
> "I think a little bit. I learned about some cultural aspects in other countries, like how their consumption values differ from ours. For instance, they tend to favor spending in advance and using loans." (P06)

These responses indicate that students' intercultural knowledge development primarily involved acquiring factual and experiential information about foreign societies, such as educational choices and consumption patterns. Such gains reflect

the knowledge dimension of ICC, particularly students' expanding awareness of social practices and everyday cultural norms in other cultures.

b) Re-examining own culture

In addition to learning about foreign cultures, students commonly reported a renewed and deeper understanding of their own culture through comparison and reflection.

> "I think my understanding improved as well. Through comparing with other cultures, I developed a new perspective on our own culture." (P01)
>
> "Yes, I gained more understanding. By comparing with foreign cultures, I came to know more about Chinese culture." (P03)

The students' reflections suggest that intercultural learning was not unidirectional. Instead, engagement with foreign cultural content prompted students to reconsider familiar cultural assumptions and practices, thereby strengthening their awareness of their own cultural context. This comparative process contributed to a more reflective form of intercultural knowledge.

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c) Increased dual-perspective cognition

The sub-theme of increased dual-perspective cognition emerged from students' accounts of changes in how they understood both Chinese perspectives on foreign cultures and foreign perspectives on Chinese culture. Five students reported that interaction with teachers, peers, and international students helped them recognize that cultural perceptions are neither fixed nor homogeneous.

> "I feel I now understand more about how people in our country view other cultures.....Yes, I've gained more understanding. For example, at the English Corner, the foreign teacher shared how people from other countries see Chinese culture. I learned that they are very interested in traditional Chinese culture but still unfamiliar with modern aspects." (P01)

> "Yes, I've learned more. Especially through interacting with the foreign teacher and international students, I heard their views on Chinese culture." (P03)

These accounts indicate that students began to move beyond a single cultural standpoint and developed an emerging awareness of multiple perspectives. Such bidirectional understanding reflects an important aspect of intercultural knowledge development, as students became more sensitive to how cultural meanings are constructed differently across social and cultural contexts.

d) Limitations in Intercultural Knowledge Acquisition

Despite overall improvements, several students reported clear limitations in their acquisition of intercultural knowledge, particularly when engaging with deeper cultural concepts. One student with an intermediate OPT level and moderate ICC improvement (P03) noted that while comparison activities facilitated understanding at a surface level, deeper cultural analysis was challenging:

> "There was a culture comparison chart, I think. We compared Chinese and foreign cultural differences in a table format, which made them easy to see. Then the teacher asked us to think about the deeper ideas behind those differences, like ideologies, values, social or economic factors, and that part was a bit hard for me." (P03)

Similarly, a student with low language proficiency and minimal ICC improvement (P06) reported difficulty participating effectively in discussions related to intercultural knowledge:

> "The teacher had us do a group discussion about a cultural phenomenon, something like why people in certain countries tend to choose business or law majors. After the discussion, we understood how others viewed the issue. But… teacher, can I be honest? I didn't really understand what my classmates were saying." (P06)

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These responses suggest that limitations in language proficiency and cognitive readiness constrained some students' ability to engage with more abstract and analytical aspects of intercultural knowledge, thereby restricting the depth of their learning.

Overall, the findings related to intercultural knowledge indicate that students perceived meaningful gains in understanding foreign cultures and re-evaluating their own cultural context, particularly at the level of observable practices and social phenomena. However, deeper cultural knowledge remained difficult to acquire for some students, especially those with lower language proficiency. In response to Research Question 5, these results suggest that students' perceived development in intercultural knowledge was partial and uneven, shaped by both instructional input and individual learner factors.

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4.6.3 Development of Intercultural Skills

This theme focuses on students' reported development of intercultural skills. Students reported noticeable progress in instrumental abilities, particularly in interpreting cultural phenomena and acquiring cultural information through independent inquiry. Several students indicated that they could now use English-language resources to explore cultural topics beyond classroom input. However, when engaging in actual intercultural communication, limitations in language proficiency and insufficient communicative practice continued to pose challenges, increasing the risk of misunderstanding or incomplete expression.

a) Improved cultural interpretation skills

This sub-theme reflects students' perceived improvement in interpreting cultural phenomena by linking behaviors and texts to their underlying cultural contexts. More

than half of the interviewees reported improvement in their ability to interpret cultural phenomena, including texts, behaviors, and events, especially when relevant background knowledge had been introduced in class.

> "I feel my ability to interpret things has greatly improved. Now, when I read English texts, I can better understand the cultural meanings behind them." (P05)

Others perceived more moderate or conditional progress. For example, P03 and P04 noted that interpretation was easier when the cultural context was familiar, but remained difficult when texts were complex or culturally unfamiliar.

> "I feel like I've made some progress. Like with that thing about foreigners learning Chinese and nodding, I didn't get it at first. But when the teacher showed us a video, I realized it was because of the tones in Chinese. Still, when I read some English texts, even if I understand the words, it's hard to interpret the deeper meaning. But it's easier if I've just learned about the topic." (P03)
>
> "I think I've made some progress. For simple texts or common behaviors, I can try to interpret them from a cultural perspective. But it's still hard when the texts are complex or the cultural background is unfamiliar." (P04)

These responses suggest that students' cultural interpretation skills developed unevenly and were strongly influenced by the availability of contextual knowledge and linguistic support. Such findings reflect partial development within the skills dimension of ICC, particularly in interpreting cultural meanings embedded in texts and behaviors.

b) Development of Cultural Information Acquisition skills

Most interviewees reported increased awareness of how to access cultural information through various channels, including English-language websites and online resources.

> "Yes, I have more methods to learn about them now. Through the course, I learned how to search for materials and discovered channels to acquire cultural knowledge." (P01)
>
> "I feel more adept at discovering and acquiring new cultural knowledge from other countries." (P05)

At the same time, some students indicated that language barriers limited their ability to independently process information, leading them to rely heavily on teachers' explanations.

> "I think to some extent! I know how to access foreign cultures, but I can't understand some English materials and need translations, so I mainly rely on the teacher's explanations." (P02)

These accounts indicate that while procedural skills for information acquisition improved, effective use of such skills was constrained by students' English proficiency, resulting in varying degrees of autonomy in intercultural learning.

c) Changes in Communication Skills

With regard to intercultural communication, students reported a two-sided pattern of development. On the one hand, many felt more confident discussing cultural topics that had been explicitly addressed in class.

> "Yes, my communication skills have improved. I can better understand others and express my views, especially on cultural topics we studied. I'd find it easier to discuss these with foreigners now." (P01)
>
> "I think my communication skills have improved, at least for topics we've studied. When talking to foreign teachers, I felt more confident." (P05)

Some students also reported heightened awareness of potential misunderstandings and a more cautious communicative stance.

> "Conflict is unlikely, and after this semester's course, I feel even less

likely to have conflicts when communicating with foreigners." (P02)

On the other hand, students acknowledged that limited spoken English proficiency and incomplete comprehension still restricted effective interaction, leaving room for misunderstanding.

> "I think about potential missteps when communicating with foreign teachers and try to avoid conflicts, though I still only grasp part of what they say, so misunderstandings may occur." (P05)

This pattern suggests that the intervention contributed to increased communicative awareness and confidence, but did not fully overcome linguistic barriers affecting real-time intercultural interaction.

d) Performance of Special Groups

Not all students experienced improvement in intercultural skills. Two interviewees (P02 and P06) reported little or no progress in interpreting cultural phenomena.

> "Interpreting texts and events, my ability hasn't improved much. I can't analyze those English texts or events from a cultural angle." (P02)

> "I don't think there's much impact! I really can't understand those English articles, let alone analyze them." (P06)

Similarly, P06 indicated no improvement in cultural information acquisition and continued reliance on the teacher:

> "I don't think so! I'm not good at finding resources, and I can't understand the English materials I find, so I can only rely on the teacher's explanations." (P06)

In practical communication, these students continued to face significant challenges related to limited English proficiency.

> "My communication skills are still poor; my spoken English is even worse. I don't think interacting with foreigners will improve this;

misunderstandings are likely." (P06)

These cases highlight that the intervention did not uniformly improve intercultural skills across all students, particularly for students with lower language proficiency.

Overall, the findings indicate that students perceived partial development in intercultural skills following the IcLL-based intervention, particularly in interpreting cultural phenomena and acquiring cultural information. However, gains in communicative performance were constrained by language proficiency and limited practice opportunities. In response to Research Question 5, these results suggest that perceived development in intercultural skills was uneven and closely mediated by individual linguistic readiness.

4.6.4 Growth in Intercultural Awareness

This theme captures changes in students' intercultural awareness. Most students reported initial development in evaluating cultures from multiple perspectives and engaging in perspective-taking. Many students demonstrated emerging awareness of the limitations of a single cultural stance and began to recognize the need for more balanced and comparative evaluation. High-level students showed relatively stable perspective-taking awareness and were able to adjust their cultural viewpoints in two-way interpretation. However, for some students, comprehensive and objective cultural evaluation remained difficult due to insufficient cultural knowledge, language limitations, or cognitive inertia.

a) Enhanced Awareness of Multi-perspective Cultural Evaluation

This sub-theme reflects students' increased capacity to evaluate cultural issues from multiple perspectives rather than relying on single or fixed viewpoints. Overall, the

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IcLL-based English course appeared to foster students' awareness of evaluating cultural issues from multiple perspectives. Several interviewees reported that classroom activities, particularly comparisons and discussions, helped them move beyond one-sided judgments.

> "I think there's been some improvement. Through various comparisons and discussions, I've learned to view cultural issues from multiple angles." (P01)
>
> "Yes, I believe so. Through various analyses and discussions in class, I've learned to view cultural issues from multiple dimensions." (P05)

These responses indicate that students began to develop a more inclusive and multidimensional approach to cultural evaluation. Such changes reflect growth within the intercultural awareness dimension of ICC, particularly in students' recognition that cultural phenomena can be interpreted from different, and sometimes competing, perspectives.

b) Enhanced Perspective-Taking Awareness

This sub-theme captures students' developing awareness of how cultures, including their own, may be perceived differently by people from other cultural backgrounds. Students' accounts suggest partial development in perspective-taking awareness, especially in relation to viewing their own culture through others' eyes. Several interviewees reported that interactions with foreign teachers and exposure to alternative cultural viewpoints prompted reflective reconsideration of familiar cultural assumptions.

> "I think this awareness developed after the course. When communicating with foreign teachers and learning about other cultures, I consider their views on Chinese culture, which helps me better understand our own culture." (P01)
>
> "Yes, I'm more conscious of viewing my own culture from others'

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perspectives." (P05)

These accounts suggest that the intervention helped trigger perspective-taking awareness, particularly in guided or interactional contexts. However, this awareness often depended on external prompts rather than spontaneous or self-initiated reflection.

c) Limitations in awareness development

Despite these positive changes, some students reported limited progress in developing stable and independent intercultural awareness. One student (P02) acknowledged understanding the instructional goal of objective cultural evaluation but struggled to apply it consistently in practice.

> "I know the teacher wants to cultivate our ability to objectively evaluate our own and foreign cultures, and I'm aware of this goal, but I find it hard to be comprehensive and objective." (P02)

Similarly, another student (P06) reported reliance on teacher-provided analytical frameworks, with limited ability to extend evaluation independently.

> "I can't evaluate in English, but when the teacher had us fill out cultural analysis tables, she provided frameworks to guide our analysis from specific aspects." (P06)

In terms of perspective-taking, these students remained at a largely passive stage. While they could consider others' viewpoints when such perspectives were explicitly presented, they lacked initiative in applying perspective-taking independently.

> "There's a slight positive effect, but I can't do it easily. When foreign teachers share their views, I can think from their perspective, but I don't initiate it myself." (P02)
>
> "A little, but I can't do it actively. I think from their perspective when foreign teachers speak, but I don't take the initiative." (P06)

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These findings suggest a disconnect between emerging awareness and sustained application. Although classroom activities facilitated initial recognition of multi-perspective evaluation and perspective-taking, some students remained constrained by language proficiency and limited cultural knowledge, preventing the development of stable and proactive intercultural awareness.

Overall, the findings indicate that students perceived initial growth in intercultural awareness following the IcLL-based intervention, particularly in recognizing the value of multi-perspective cultural evaluation and perspective-taking. However, this awareness was not uniformly stable or proactive across learners. In response to Research Question 5, the results suggest that perceived development in intercultural awareness was uneven and contingent on students' linguistic readiness and depth of cultural understanding.

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4.7 Students' Experience in the IcLL-based Intervention

This section addresses Research Question 6, which explores how students described their learning experience in the IcLL-based College English course. While the previous section focused on students' perceived changes in different dimensions of ICC, the present section shifts attention to students' accounts of the learning process itself.

Table 4.21

Thematic Distribution of Students' Experience in the IcLL-based Intervention

Core Theme	Sub-theme
Facilitators	Comparison and Interaction as Catalysts for Intercultural Interest
	Comparison, Interaction and Input as Drivers of Intercultural Knowledge Development
	Integrated Input-Reflection–Interaction Cycle Enhancing Intercultural Skills
	Output, Reflection, Interaction and Comparison as Facilitators of Intercultural Awareness
	Teaching approach and engagement aligning with learning needs and interest
Barriers and Challenges	Psychological barriers
	Cognitive Constraints
	Insufficient training
	Motivational bias
	Task difficulty
	Class size
	Communicative Challenges Rooted in Low Language Proficiency
Student Suggestions and Reflections	Reduction of task difficulty
	Strengthening language support
	Desire for more real-life interaction
	Expanding Cultural Diversity

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Through reflective thematic analysis of the interview data, three interrelated themes emerged from students' accounts: factors perceived to facilitate intercultural development (Facilitators), barriers and challenges encountered during the learning process (Barriers and challenges), and students' reflections and suggestions regarding the IcLL-based intervention (Student suggestions and reflections) (see Table 4.21).

4.7.1 Facilitators

This theme identifies instructional and experiential factors that students perceived as facilitating their intercultural development during the IcLL-based intervention. Not only did various culture-based classroom activities play a direct role in shaping

students' learning experiences, but the alignment between instructional practices and students' learning needs and interests also proved to be an important facilitating factor.

a) Comparison and Interaction as Catalysts for Intercultural Interest

This sub-theme reflects how comparative and interactive classroom activities functioned as key drivers of students' interest in foreign cultures. Most students highlighted comparative activities as particularly effective, while some emphasized interactive activities. students with lower ICC improvement levels tended to stress the importance of input-based activities, whereas a student with a high level of ICC improvement described an integrated input–comparison–reflection pathway.

P01, P03, and P04 believed that interactive and comparative activities increased their interest in foreign cultures. For example, P01 and P04 mentioned group discussions and cultural presentations, while P03 referred to a cultural quiz game. In contrast, P02 and P06 emphasized exposure to foreign cultures through reading materials and videos, particularly those produced by foreigners.

Student P05 offered a more process-oriented explanation, highlighting how the sequencing of activities contributed to sustained cultural interest:

> "I think it's the theme of each unit! Previously, teachers didn't approach each unit as a cultural topic for us to explore; they just had us read the text, understand it, and then learn vocabulary and grammar. But this semester, the teacher introduced each unit from a cultural perspective, guiding us to understand and compare Chinese and foreign cultures, and reflect on why there are differences, like in terms of ideas or systems. So from one topic, we extended to cultural issues, and the more I learned, the more I noticed contrasts with what I had thought before, which made it feel fresh and interesting." (P05)

This account illustrates how students' intercultural interest was not triggered by isolated activities but emerged through a structured process that encouraged comparison and reflection across cultural contexts.

Regarding increased willingness to explore cultural differences, P03 and P05 emphasized in-class group discussions:

> "I remember the teacher asked us to discuss the differences between Chinese and Western views on consumption, and each group presented their ideas." (P03)
>
> "For example, in the unit on choosing a college major, the teacher had us compare how Chinese and foreign students make their choices… So now, when I encounter such value differences, I think we shouldn't just assume they're wrong or weird!" (P05)

Similarly, students P01 and P02 noted that cultural comparison activities, such as debates and questionnaires, enhanced their curiosity and openness toward differing cultural values.

b) Comparison, Interaction and Input as Drivers of Intercultural Knowledge Development

In terms of intercultural knowledge, students consistently identified comparative activities as the most influential, followed by interactive and input-based activities. Students with lower language proficiency relied more heavily on structured input to access cultural information.

Students P05, P02, P04, and P06 highlighted supplementary readings and videos as key sources of cultural knowledge:

> "I remember that in the units about learning foreign languages and choosing a college major, we had background readings or videos that gave me more understanding of other countries." (P05)

P04 further explained that teacher-provided materials extended beyond the textbook and offered more in-depth cultural perspectives, though sometimes difficult to understand. These responses suggest that intercultural knowledge development was closely linked to the availability of enriched and credible cultural input, especially when textbook content was perceived as insufficient.

Comparative activities also played a central role in enhancing students' understanding of their own culture. All interviewees reported that comparison with other cultures enabled them to see their own culture through a new lens and appreciate its uniqueness in contrast to others:

> "Through comparing with other cultures, I found some unique features of our own and better understood the cultural background of certain phenomena." (P05)

Regarding activities helping enhance their dual-perspective cultural understanding, most students identified interactive activities such as discussions class discussions, peer sharing, and questionnaires as key in understanding how Chinese people perceive foreign cultures. Exchanges with foreign teachers helped them better understand how people from other countries perceive Chinese culture:

> "Through classroom discussions and sharing, I realized that our views on other cultures are quite diverse.
> Conversations with the foreign teacher were also very helpful. Cultural exchange activities helped me learn how people from other countries view China." (P01)

c) Integrated Input-Reflection–Interaction Cycle Enhancing Intercultural Skills

Students reported that their intercultural skills, particularly cultural interpretation, information acquisition, and communication, were most effectively developed through an integrated cycle of input, reflective cultural exploration, and interactive

classroom activities. Rich input (e.g., videos, articles, and teacher-guided tasks) built foundational cultural awareness and stimulated interpretive thinking, while reflective exploration activities, such as research assignments and reflective writing, encouraged them to independently seek, evaluate, and synthesize authentic cultural information, which enhanced their information acquisition skills. Interactive activities, including role-plays, discussions, and foreign teacher exchanges, then enabled students to practice and refine their intercultural communication in real-life or simulated scenarios.

Most students attributed the improvement in their interpretive abilities to increased cultural knowledge, particularly through videos, reading materials, and teacher-led activities that encouraged cultural exploration and reflection:

> "I didn't realize that when foreigners first learn Chinese, they nod to help with tone pronunciation. When the teacher showed us a mimicry video, I was shocked; I thought the guy was doing it on purpose, but actually, it was to pronounce tones better. It helped me see that there's cultural context behind behaviors, like how their language doesn't have tones." (P01)

> "The more we knew about foreign cultures, the easier it was to interpret these things." (P05)

Students attributed their improved cultural information acquisition skills primarily to reflective cultural exploration activities where teachers guided them on research channels before and after tasks:

> "The teacher asked us to read texts, such as the one about university major selection, which introduced 'Advanced Placement Courses', a concept we didn't know before, as it doesn't exist in China. The teacher also asked us to search for authentic cultural knowledge on English websites like Quora, where foreigners share their cultures directly." (P03)

Students highlighted four types of interactive classroom activities, role-playing, foreign teacher interactions, group discussions, and debates, as most effective for improving intercultural communication. Role-playing helped students master practical expressions and cultural taboos by "simulating real communication scenarios" (P01 and P03), with teachers providing feedback on issues during activities. Foreign teacher interactions exposed students to native pragmatic habits, though their impact was limited by low frequency (P03). Group discussions and debates strengthened language output through idea exchange (P04).

> "Interactions with foreign teachers, though rare, more opportunities would help! Role-playing also taught me common expressions and taboos, with the teacher pointing out issues during feedback. Group discussions in English improved my speaking skills." (P03)

P05 emphasized that smooth communication relies on cultural knowledge gained through the activities, such as cultural reading, comparisons, interactive discussions, and output tasks (presentations or writing):

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> "Effective communication is based on cultural knowledge, not just knowing cultural phenomena and differences, but also their underlying ideologies. Activities like reading, comparing, group discussions, presentations, and writing made me more familiar with topic-related vocabulary, facilitating communication." (P05)

Students' accounts indicate that intercultural skills were not developed through isolated practices but through the cumulative effect of interconnected learning activities. Moreover, students at different proficiency levels engaged differently with this cycle: higher-level students focused more on critical interpretation and reflection, while lower-intermediate students benefited more from teacher-scaffolded input and structured interactive support.

d) Output, Reflection, Interaction and Comparison as Facilitators of Intercultural Awareness

Students' growth in intercultural awareness was primarily facilitated through a combination of reflective comparison, interactive dialogue, and output-oriented tasks. These activities encouraged students to view cultural issues from multiple angles and to consider how their own culture is perceived by others.

Regarding classroom activities that enhanced multi-perspective cultural evaluation awareness, most students (P01, P03, P05, and P04) highlighted output activities (such as writing) as helping them analyze cultural strengths and weaknesses from multiple angles. For example, P01 "deeply analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of different cultures" through writing, while P04 "considered the impacts of cultural differences from multiple aspects" in case discussions. Additionally, comparative activities (such as case analysis) and interactive activities (such as group discussions) prompted some students (P03 and P05) to break through cognitive limitations. P03 admitted, "After hearing classmates' opinions, I realized my own views were incomplete," and P05 learned to systematically deconstruct problems using the "analytical angles" suggested by the teacher. Beyond comparison, interaction, and output, teachers also guided students to reflect on their viewpoints.

The intervention positively influenced most students' ability to understand their own culture from others' perspectives through interactive activities (such as foreign teacher interactions and cross-cultural discussions) and comparative activities (such as case contrast analysis). Most students (P01/P03/P05/P04) triggered perspective-taking passively in specific scenarios. For example, P01 understood Chinese culture multifacetedly through "listening to classmates share communication

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experiences," P03 attempted to understand "foreign teachers' feelings about Chinese culture" during dialogues, and P05, through analyzing video cases of Sino-foreign language learning differences, realized "foreigners find Chinese tones more difficult than we anticipate," revising her cultural presuppositions. Some students (like P04) clearly perceived "cultural differences in others' eyes" (such as foreign teachers' confusion about Chinese customs).

e) Teaching approach and engagement aligning with learning needs and interest

Beyond specific activities, students emphasized the importance of instructional style and emotional engagement. students who showed notable improvement described the IcLL-based classroom as aligning with their learning interests and motivating sustained engagement.

> "I really like the teacher's style; it suits me well. This semester, we discussed a lot about culture, which I'm naturally interested in. Classes are no longer just boring vocabulary and grammar. Our teacher puts a lot of effort into teaching, so I wanted to cooperate with this interview since it's about the course." (P05)

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This finding suggests that students' positive learning experiences were shaped not only by activity design but also by the perceived relevance and affective support embedded in the teaching approach.

Overall, students described their experiences in the IcLL-based College English course as being facilitated by a combination of culturally oriented instructional activities, structured opportunities for comparison and reflection, interactive classroom practices, and supportive teaching approaches. These facilitators worked together to enhance students' engagement, deepen cultural understanding, and support learning across different dimensions of ICC development, thereby providing a clear response to Research Question 6.

4.7.2 Barriers and Challenges

This theme highlights the psychological, cognitive, linguistic, and contextual constraints that limited some students' engagement and development of ICC. These challenges reflected an interplay of psychological, cognitive, linguistic, and contextual factors, highlighting why ICC development was uneven across learners despite shared instructional experiences.

a) Psychological barriers

This sub-theme highlights psychological factors, such as anxiety and lack of confidence, that constrained students' engagement in intercultural learning activities. Despite having a high level of language proficiency, a student demonstrated limited development in ICC due to psychological factors. Student P02, who scored highly on the OPT but showed minimal ICC improvement, reported experiencing language anxiety and cultural unfamiliarity. These factors, coupled with a lack of initiative, inhibited her willingness to engage in intercultural interactions. Her response suggests suggests an avoidance-oriented psychological response when faced with uncertainty and perceived communication risk.:

> ".....I'm worried the foreign teacher won't understand me. Plus, I don't know them and they're foreigners, so it feels kind of distant. I'm not very proactive about talking to them." (P02)

Similarly, P03 noted that nervousness remained a significant barrier to effective communication. Her experience reflects the ongoing challenge of emotional self-regulation in intercultural encounters:

> "I think there's some improvement, but I still get a bit nervous when talking to foreigners, and sometimes I can't express myself clearly." (P03)

Together, these cases highlight how psychological barriers, including language anxiety, low self-efficacy, and emotional discomfort, can significantly undermine the potential benefits of IcLL, even when students possess sufficient linguistic ability.

b) Cognitive Constraints

Several students' limited development in ICC stemmed from cognitive constraints related to insufficient cultural knowledge. These constraints affected students' ability to interpret cultural phenomena, engage in meaningful comparison, evaluate cultural practices objectively, and adopt others' perspectives.

Student P02 exemplified this challenge. Despite relatively high language proficiency, she demonstrated limited willingness and ability to engage in perspective-taking, which appeared to be rooted in inadequate understanding of foreign cultures. She expressed skepticism toward the value of perspective-taking, attributing it to what she perceived as foreigners' superficial understanding of Chinese culture:

> "I know too little about foreign cultures to understand their thoughts, let alone view our culture from their perspective. I don't see why I should; their understanding of our culture seems superficial to me." (P02)

This response illustrates how limited cultural knowledge can constrain students' cognitive flexibility. Without sufficient background knowledge of other cultures, students may struggle to construct informed comparisons or engage in reflective evaluation, leading to cognitive closure and resistance to alternative viewpoints. Such constraints not only restrict interpretive depth but may also perpetuate ethnocentric orientations and reduce motivation for further intercultural engagement.

Notably, P02 acknowledged that effective cultural evaluation requires substantive understanding of other cultures and societies, recognizing her own limitations in this

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regard:

> "It's my own limitation. Objective evaluation requires a deep understanding of the other culture and society, which I lack. I need to learn more before I can interpret effectively." (P02)

Even when linguistic resources are adequate, like P02, the absence of a robust cultural knowledge base may limit students' capacity to engage critically and reflexively with cultural complexity.

c) Insufficient training

Another reported barrier to ICC was a lack of sufficient instructional training, particularly in tasks requiring cultural interpretation and analysis. Student P02 noted that the absence of repeated exposure and structured analysis hindered the development of associative thinking skills necessary for deeper cultural interpretation:

> "...probably because we didn't do enough of this analysis to form an associative ability." (P02)

Furthermore, some students expressed concerns about the limited availability of authentic communication opportunities with people from other cultural backgrounds.

> "Not many chances to communicate with foreigners, so I'm not sure if I can do it." (P04)

This suggests that without practical application in real-life settings, students felt uncertain about transferring classroom knowledge to actual intercultural interactions.

d) Motivational bias

Students' underlying motivations for studying English also influenced their engagement with IcLL tasks. For instance, student P02, despite having a relatively high level of language proficiency, reported minimal improvement in ICC. Her

learning orientation was primarily utilitarian, focused on academic performance and examination outcomes rather than real-world communicative competence. As a result, she showed limited interest in interacting with foreigners, and her engagement in intercultural activities, such as conversations with foreign teachers, was often superficial or passive:

> "My spoken English isn't good, and I rarely communicate with foreigners. I study English mainly for academics and the postgraduate exam. I probably won't need to communicate with foreigners in the future." (P02)

This response reflects a motivational bias that prioritizes instrumental goals over communicative or cultural ones, which in turn may restrict students' openness to and participation in intercultural learning experiences.

e) Task difficulty

Task complexity emerged as a significant barrier to IcLL engagement for several students, particularly those with limited language proficiency. The content was perceived as overwhelming according to P06, and unclear instructions further contributed to his disengagement:

> "The class content felt difficult. I had trouble keeping up. English classes are just too hard for me! .....When the teacher organized activities, I sometimes didn't even know what we were supposed to do. I don't really understand the teacher's English either." (P06)

Similarly, P04 acknowledged the value of comparative activities such as case analyses and classroom discussions in promoting intercultural understanding, yet noted that excessive task difficulty could diminish his willingness to explore cultural differences:

> "In the college major unit, we discussed how Chinese and foreign students differ in choosing their majors.....these activities were a bit

> difficult. Sometimes, it was hard to follow or understand, so I wasn't that motivated to explore further." (P04)

P06 self-identified as struggling with English, reported that the cognitive demands of class activities, combined with linguistic challenges, undermined his ability and motivation to participate in IcLL tasks. Therefore, these accounts suggest that both linguistic and cognitive complexity of tasks must be carefully calibrated to students' proficiency levels to avoid disengagement.

f) Class size

In addition to low language proficiency and task-related challenges, class size emerged as an important contextual barrier to intercultural engagement for some students. P06, whose ICC improvement was minimal across all dimensions, identified large class size as a factor that limited his active participation in intercultural learning activities. His account suggests that the group-based structure and limited teacher oversight in a crowded classroom contributed to disengagement and passive learning:

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> ".....there were eight or nine people in my group, and many groups in total. We sat at the back, and honestly, I didn't really participate. Usually, only one roommate would speak on behalf of our group, and the rest of us… kind of zoned out. If the teacher didn't come over, there wasn't much discussion." (P06)

This reflection illustrates how logistical factors such as group size and classroom dynamics can influence students' willingness and opportunity to engage in intercultural communication. Without close facilitation or accountability, students, particularly those with lower proficiency, may become passive observers rather than active participants, thus undermining the effectiveness of interaction-based learning tasks.

g) Communicative Challenges Rooted in Low Language Proficiency

A recurrent challenge reported by students concerned difficulties in interactive communication during intercultural learning activities. These challenges were closely linked to students' English language proficiency and were reflected in their limited ability to express culturally nuanced ideas, comprehend authentic materials, and sustain intercultural interaction.

For many students, interactive communication, particularly during discussions with foreign teachers and group presentations, posed substantial difficulty. Students frequently reported that limited vocabulary, grammatical insecurity, and fear of miscommunication prevented them from articulating their cultural viewpoints clearly. As P01 noted, "Discussing with foreigners was challenging because it involved a lot of vocabulary and complex ideas, and I sometimes couldn't express myself clearly."

These communicative difficulties were further intensified when students encountered culturally embedded language. Several students emphasized that understanding and using culturally loaded expressions required not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural contextualization. P04 explained that such expressions "can't be interpreted literally; you need to know the cultural context behind them". These accounts suggest that limited linguistic resources constrained students' ability to engage with intercultural meaning-making beyond surface-level comprehension.

Low English proficiency emerged as a fundamental constraint underlying these communicative challenges, especially for lower- or intermediate-level students. P06 repeatedly attributed his limited participation in intercultural tasks to his weak language foundation, noting that he often could not understand classroom content or express his ideas during discussions. He remarked, "It's probably because my

English is weak. I couldn't really understand". For such students, limited language proficiency not only restricted interaction but also impeded higher-order intercultural processes such as interpretation, comparison, and reflection.

Communicative challenges were not confined to students with low OPT scores. Even students with relatively higher OPT scores reported difficulties when tasks required the oral expression of abstract cultural viewpoints. P05 noted that intercultural discussions and presentations were cognitively demanding due to linguistic load and limited speaking practice, and that without sufficient scaffolding, students often reverted to Chinese or disengaged from discussion:

> "Classroom presentations and interactions with foreign teachers were challenging due to language barriers..... I think we should first build a foundation in English vocabulary and grammar before engaging in intercultural activities.....Group activities are usually dominated by a few students; those with weaker English participation are low, and I sometimes switch to Chinese when stuck." (P05)

These findings indicate that communicative challenges during IcLL-based instruction were deeply rooted in limited language proficiency that shaped students' willingness and ability to participate in intercultural interaction. Without adequate linguistic support and graduated task design, communicative demands risked becoming barriers rather than facilitators of intercultural development.

Overall, students' accounts indicate that their IcLL experiences were constrained by a combination of psychological, cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and contextual challenges. These barriers operated both independently and interactively, shaping students' engagement with IcLL activities and mediating their development across different ICC dimensions. In particular, limited language proficiency and psychological factors emerged as foundational constraints that influenced students'

ability and willingness to participate in intercultural learning, while insufficient cultural knowledge, task difficulty, and classroom conditions further restricted opportunities for interpretation, comparison, reflection and evaluation.

4.7.3 Student Suggestions and Reflections

This theme presents students' reflections on the intervention and their suggestions for improving IcLL experiences in future instruction. These suggestions primarily revolved around enhancing language support, modifying task design, and expanding cultural content.

a) Reducing Task Difficulty

This sub-theme captures students' suggestions to simplify intercultural tasks in order to reduce cognitive and linguistic load. Some students felt that the complexity of cultural materials limited their engagement. Simplifying content and incorporating bilingual support were proposed as potential strategies for improving accessibility.

> "Maybe use simple cultural materials with Chinese-English comparison to make activities more accessible for me." (P06)

b) Strengthening Language Support

A number of students suggested prioritizing foundational English skills, particularly vocabulary acquisition, as a prerequisite for meaningful intercultural learning.

> "I think we should have more basic English learning first." (P06)
> "I was wondering… if there are any good methods to quickly improve my English vocabulary? It feels like vocabulary is limiting my cultural learning." (P03)

c) Desire for Real-Life Interaction

Students also expressed interest in more authentic communicative opportunities with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, such as

international students.

> "I was wondering if future courses can include more face-to-face interactions with foreign students? I think this would better improve our intercultural communication skills." (P01)

d) Expanding Cultural Diversity

A higher-level student emphasized the importance of going beyond mainstream cultural content, suggesting the inclusion of cultures from smaller or less commonly studied countries.

> "Can the course include more content on lesser-known countries' cultures? Currently, we mainly learn about mainstream countries." (P05)

These suggestions reveal a dual emphasis on linguistic preparedness and meaningful intercultural exposure, with lower-proficiency students focusing more on language scaffolding, while more advanced students seek broader cultural horizons and deeper interaction.

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Overall, the findings of Section 4.7 address Research Question 6 by showing that experimental group students described their experiences in the IcLL-based intervention as both enabling and constrained, rather than uniformly positive. Their accounts reveal that these experiences were shaped by the perceived pedagogical affordances of IcLL activities, alongside individual and contextual barriers, as well as students' own reflections and expectations for improvement. Taken together, these experiential descriptions align with the study's conceptual framework by illustrating how IcLL mediates students' ICC development through the interaction of instructional design and learner-related factors across attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness.

4.8 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter reported the findings of the study in relation to Research Questions 1 to 6, presenting the results of the IcLL-based intervention on students' ICC through quantitative analyses, supplemented by qualitative evidence from student interviews.

The quantitative findings (RQ1–RQ4) demonstrated that the IcLL-based intervention exerted differential effects across the four dimensions of ICC, with outcomes strongly mediated by students' English language proficiency. Statistically significant intervention effects were observed in intercultural awareness, indicating that structured IcLL activities effectively supported students' development of multi-perspective cultural evaluation and perspective-taking. In contrast, intercultural skills (ICSK) showed a significant intervention effect only among students with high language proficiency, highlighting a clear interaction between instructional treatment and linguistic readiness. For intercultural attitudes, the intervention produced significant gains among students with moderate baseline levels but not among those with already high attitudinal scores, suggesting a ceiling effect. No statistically significant direct intervention effect was found for intercultural knowledge (ICKN) after controlling for language proficiency and prior knowledge, with variance in this dimension largely explained by students' linguistic competence and baseline cultural knowledge.

Research Questions 5 and 6 were addressed through qualitative analyses, which provided insight into students' perceived changes in ICC and their learning experiences during the IcLL-based intervention. The findings identified three interrelated aspects of students' experiences. First, students reported several facilitators that supported their intercultural development, including culture-based classroom activities involving cultural input, comparison, reflection, interaction, and

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output. Second, students also described a range of barriers and challenges, such as psychological, motivational and cognitive factors, task difficulty, communicative challenges rooted in low language proficiency, insufficient training, and constraints related to classroom conditions, which in some cases restricted their engagement and development. Third, students offered suggestions and reflections for improving the intervention, emphasizing the need for clearer language support, more accessible task design, and increased opportunities for authentic intercultural interaction.

Taken together, the findings of this chapter indicate that the IcLL-based intervention contributed to students' ICC development in specific and differentiated ways. While quantitative results demonstrated selective effects across ICC dimensions, qualitative findings helped explain how classroom activities, learner engagement, and perceived challenges shaped students' learning experiences. These findings provide an empirical basis for the discussion in the following chapter, which further interprets the results in relation to the theoretical framework and pedagogical implications of intercultural language learning.

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CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and conclusion of the study, aiming to interpret and contextualize the findings in relation to the research questions and the conceptual framework. Drawing on an embedded mixed-methods design, the chapter explains the patterns of ICC development identified in the quantitative phase and examines how these patterns were experienced and interpreted by students participating in the IcLL-based College English course.

The chapter begins with a concise summary of the main quantitative and qualitative findings. It then discusses the results in relation to the four dimensions of ICC, intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, followed by an examination of students' perceived changes and learning experiences during the intervention. Building on these dimension-specific discussions, a subsequent section synthesizes the findings to explore the interplay among the four ICC dimensions, highlighting how development in one dimension may support, constrain, or interact with development in others. Throughout the discussion, qualitative evidence is embedded to explain and contextualize quantitative patterns, in line with the mixed-methods design adopted in the study.

Based on the discussion of findings, the chapter then elaborates on the theoretical and practical implications of the study, with particular attention to the application of IcLL-oriented pedagogy in the Chinese tertiary EFL context. This is followed by a consideration of the study's limitations and a set of recommendations for pedagogical practice and future research. The chapter concludes by summarizing the study's

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overall contributions and reflecting on its significance for intercultural language education in theory and practice.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

This section reported the findings of the study by addressing six research questions concerning the effects of an IcLL-based College English intervention on students' ICC. The first four research questions focused on the quantitative effects of the intervention on intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness, while the last two research questions explored EG students' perceived changes and learning experiences through qualitative inquiry.

Regarding Research Questions 1 to 4, quantitative analyses revealed differentiated effects of the IcLL-based intervention across the four ICC dimensions. For intercultural attitudes (RQ1), a statistically significant improvement was observed among students with moderate baseline attitudes, with the experimental group outperforming the control group, whereas no significant difference was found among students with high baseline attitudes, suggesting a ceiling effect. For intercultural knowledge (RQ2), although the experimental group demonstrated slightly higher post-test scores than the control group, the difference did not reach statistical significance after controlling for language proficiency and pre-test scores. For intercultural skills (RQ3), a significant intervention effect was identified only among students with high language proficiency, indicating that the effectiveness of the intervention on skills development was moderated by students' linguistic readiness. For intercultural awareness (RQ4), the experimental group showed significantly greater gains than the control group, demonstrating a clear advantage of the IcLL-based instruction over conventional teaching.

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With regard to hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis for intercultural awareness was rejected. The null hypotheses for intercultural attitudes and intercultural skills were partially rejected. In contrast, the null hypothesis for intercultural knowledge was not rejected, as no statistically significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups after controlling for relevant covariates (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Summary of Quantitative Findings and Hypothesis Testing Results

Research Question	ICC Dimension	Main Quantitative Finding	Hypothesis Result
RQ1	Intercultural Attitudes	Significant improvement for EG at moderate baseline level; no significant difference at high level	H1 partially rejected
RQ2	Intercultural Knowledge	No statistically significant difference between EG and CG after controlling for covariates	H2 not rejected
RQ3	Intercultural Skills	Significant effect only for high-proficiency EG students; no significant difference at other level	H3 partially rejected
RQ4	Intercultural Awareness	EG showed significantly greater gains than CG	H4 rejected

With respect to Research Questions 5 and 6, qualitative findings provided complementary insights into EG students' perceived ICC development and learning experiences during the IcLL-based course. Students reported changes across all four ICC dimensions; however, attitudinal and awareness-related changes were reported more consistently across students. In particular, most students described increased interest in cultural topics, greater willingness to engage with cultural differences, and an emerging awareness of evaluating cultures from multiple perspectives. In contrast, reported changes in intercultural knowledge and skills were more uneven. While students acknowledged gains in surface-level cultural knowledge and

information-seeking strategies, limitations remained in deeper cultural understanding and in applying intercultural skills in authentic communication, particularly under linguistic constraints.

In addition to perceived changes, students articulated clear experiential patterns, identifying instructional activities such as input, comparison, interaction, reflection, and output as key facilitators, while also reporting barriers including language proficiency, task difficulty, psychological and motivational factors, and limited opportunities for real-life intercultural interaction. Their reflections further generated concrete suggestions related to language scaffolding, task design, and expanded opportunities for authentic intercultural communication.

Overall, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative strands indicate that the IcLL-based intervention supported students' development of ICC in differentiated ways. The most consistent intervention effect was observed in intercultural awareness, while changes in intercultural attitudes and intercultural skills were evident only for specific learner subgroups. In contrast, intercultural knowledge development did not show a statistically significant overall group difference. Together, these findings delineate both the potential and the boundaries of the IcLL-based approach in the present context and provide an empirical foundation for the discussion of theoretical and pedagogical implications in the subsequent chapter.

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5.3 Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses the findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to the six research questions of the study. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the discussion explores how the IcLL-based College English intervention influenced the development of students' ICC, covering its four core dimensions: intercultural

attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness. Each subsection below corresponds to a specific research question and dimension of ICC, with references to relevant theoretical frameworks and prior empirical studies.

5.3.1 Effects of IcLL-Based College English on Intercultural Attitudes

The findings of this study indicate that the IcLL-based College English intervention exerted a conditional rather than uniform effect on students' intercultural attitudes. Statistically significant improvement was observed among students with moderate baseline levels of intercultural attitudes, whereas no significant change was detected among those who had already demonstrated high attitudinal dispositions prior to the intervention. This pattern suggests that the effectiveness of the IcLL approach in fostering intercultural attitudes is closely related to students' initial attitudinal readiness and is subject to a ceiling effect at more advanced levels.

From the perspective of Byram's ICC framework, intercultural attitudes are conceptualized as a dispositional and developmental component rather than a discrete, skill-based outcome. Byram (2021) points out that attitudes such as curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend taken-for-granted assumptions develop along a continuum and are shaped by students' prior experiences, identities, and learning histories. As such, attitudinal change is more likely to occur among students whose attitudes have not yet stabilized, while those who already exhibit high levels of openness may show limited measurable change over a short instructional period. This theoretical positioning provides a plausible explanation for the differentiated pattern observed in the present study.

The conditional effect on intercultural attitudes can also be interpreted through the lens of IcLL framework. IcLL emphasizes processes of noticing, comparing, and

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reflecting on cultural practices as central mechanisms for fostering students' understanding of difference and adjusting intercultural attitudes (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Subsequent theoretical elaborations further highlight that such pedagogical processes primarily target students' orientations toward difference rather than immediate behavioral transformation (Liddicoat, 2022). In the present intervention, tasks involving cultural comparison, guided reflection, and discussion were designed to prompt students to question assumptions and attend to alternative perspectives. These processes are particularly effective for students who are still developing their intercultural stance, but they may be insufficient to generate observable attitudinal shifts among students whose dispositions are already well established.

The pattern observed in the present study aligns with a substantial body of IcLL-related empirical research. Like some of the studies emphasizing on attitudinal outcomes, such as Kiswaga and Anita (2019) and Wang (2021), this study do not claim that attitudinal change represents the strongest effect of IcLL interventions. Rather, they all illustrate that such changes are more readily observable within short-term, classroom-based designs.

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Classroom-based studies conducted in diverse EFL contexts have shown that IcLL interventions frequently foster students' openness, tolerance, curiosity, and willingness to engage with cultural difference, particularly through comparative and reflective activities (e.g., Miftakh & Wachyudi, 2019; Curtis, Robertson, & Mahony, 2019; Gong et al., 2020). For instance, Miftakh and Wachyudi (2019), in their qualitative case study of Indonesian elementary EFL classrooms, reported that culturally embedded activities fostered students' tolerance and respect toward cultural diversity. Similarly, Curtis, Robertson, and Mahony (2019), examining an IcLL-oriented Indonesian language teacher education program in Australia, found

that participants developed more empathetic and respectful orientations toward cultural others through sustained intercultural engagement and reflection.

However, these studies, tend to interpret attitudinal change at an aggregate level and rarely differentiate students according to their initial attitudinal profiles. By introducing baseline-level distinctions, the present study extends this body of research by demonstrating that attitudinal development under IcLL is conditional rather than universal. While earlier studies reported overall positive shifts in attitudes, the current findings indicate that such shifts are most evident among students with moderate initial attitudes, whereas students with already high attitudinal readiness exhibit limited measurable change over a short instructional period. This refinement resonates with observations in higher education contexts, where attitudinal gains have been shown to plateau when students enter intercultural programs with prior exposure or advanced openness (Curtis et al., 2019).

The ceiling effect observed among students with already high pre-test ICAT scores can be further illuminated by comparable empirical evidence from intercultural education research. A recent study by Lindmeier et al. (2023) examined students who participated in a second intercultural course after completing an earlier intervention. Their findings showed that students with higher initial levels of intercultural development, gained through prior coursework, did not exhibit significant attitudinal growth during the subsequent course, whereas peers with lower initial levels demonstrated substantial gains. This pattern closely mirrors the differentiated outcomes observed in the present study.

Importantly, Lindmeier et al. (2023) interpret this plateau not as a limitation of intercultural pedagogy itself, but as an indication that attitudinal development at

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advanced stages requires qualitatively different learning conditions. Specifically, they argue that students with already high intercultural attitudes may need exposure to more complex, ambiguous, or emotionally challenging intercultural scenarios in order to sustain further growth. Viewed in this light, the absence of significant attitudinal gains among high-baseline students in the present study does not undermine the effectiveness of the IcLL-based intervention; rather, it highlights the need for differentiated task design that responds to students' prior intercultural experiences and developmental stages.

Qualitative evidence from this study further helps to explain the differentiated attitudinal outcomes. Some students with lower language proficiency reported experiencing cognitive overload when engaging with abstract cultural topics, which occasionally led to frustration or disengagement. This suggests that linguistic demands may mediate students' affective engagement with intercultural content, echoing earlier arguments that limited language resources can constrain students' capacity to process and respond to cultural complexity. At the same time, students who already possessed strong intercultural attitudes tended to describe the IcLL activities as affirming rather than transformative, which helps to explain the observed ceiling effect in the quantitative results.

When situated within the context of College English education in China, these findings carry particular significance. English instruction at the tertiary level has traditionally prioritized linguistic accuracy and examination performance, with cultural components often occupying a marginal position. Against this backdrop, the observed attitudinal gains among students with moderate baseline levels suggest that embedding IcLL principles into regular language instruction can meaningfully influence students' orientations toward cultural difference, even within a relatively

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short intervention. At the same time, the ceiling effect observed among highly receptive students underscores the need for differentiated task design and sustained intercultural engagement if attitudinal development is to be supported beyond an initial stage.

To sum, the findings of this study indicate that the IcLL-based intervention was effective in fostering intercultural attitudes under specific conditions, particularly among students whose attitudinal dispositions had not yet reached an advanced level. This conditional effect aligns with contemporary theoretical understandings of intercultural attitudes as developmental and context-sensitive, and it highlights the importance of attending to students' initial profiles when evaluating the impact of IcLL-oriented pedagogy. Rather than suggesting a uniform transformation of attitudes, the results point to a nuanced and defensible account of how, for whom, and under what conditions intercultural attitudes may develop in the Chinese College English context.

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5.3.2 Effects of IcLL-Based College English on Intercultural Knowledge

The findings of this study indicate that the IcLL-based College English intervention did not produce a statistically significant overall group effect on students' intercultural knowledge. Although the experimental group demonstrated slightly higher post-test scores than the control group after controlling for language proficiency and pre-test performance, the difference did not reach statistical significance. This result suggests that, unlike intercultural attitudes and awareness, intercultural knowledge may be less immediately responsive to short-term IcLL-based instruction and may develop in a more cumulative and incremental manner.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding can be understood in light of Byram's conceptualization of intercultural knowledge as involving both knowledge of social groups, products, and practices, and understanding of how such knowledge is interpreted and constructed in interaction (Byram, 2021). In contrast to affective dispositions, intercultural knowledge requires sustained exposure, cognitive elaboration, and opportunities for consolidation. While the IcLL intervention in this study provided cultural input and encouraged comparison, it appeared to support students' understanding primarily at a surface level (e.g., daily behaviors and lifestyles), rather than facilitating deeper engagement with abstract cultural dimensions such as values, belief systems, and aesthetic orientations.

These findings are further supported by Liddicoat (2022), who argues that intercultural knowledge should not be treated as static information but as the outcome of interpretive work and meaning negotiation. In this view, students must engage in intercultural mediation, developing the ability to construct understanding across cultural boundaries, rather than simply absorbing factual content. The limited gains in deep cultural knowledge observed here may reflect a need for more opportunities to engage in such interpretive practices.

Language proficiency and prior knowledge also emerged as decisive factors in post-test performance. Both variables significantly predicted intercultural knowledge outcomes, suggesting that students' existing linguistic and cognitive resources strongly mediate their capacity to internalize complex cultural content. This finding aligns with research indicating that higher language proficiency facilitates access to culturally embedded meanings and supports deeper cultural interpretation (Fantini, 2020). It also echoes concerns that, in EFL contexts such as China, limited linguistic

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resources may constrain students' ability to move beyond descriptive cultural understanding.

As highlighted by Deardorff (2020), sustained linguistic and cultural engagement is critical for ICC development, whereas short-term interventions show limited efficacy. The limited statistical gain in intercultural knowledge in the current study may also be attributed to the relatively brief duration of the intervention, which may have been insufficient for fostering deeper cultural insights. Additionally, the control group may have benefited from natural exposure or general course progression, reducing the observable gap between the two groups, a potential instance of regression to the mean (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

A number of IcLL-oriented empirical studies report overall improvement in ICC while treating intercultural knowledge as part of holistic development rather than as a distinct learning outcome (e.g., Tran & Duong, 2018; Curtis, Robertson, & Mahony, 2019). Where knowledge-related outcomes are discussed, they are often inferred from students' engagement with cultural materials rather than systematically assessed, which mirrors the limited quantitative gains observed in the present study. Recent work in the Chinese EFL context similarly suggests that students tend to demonstrate stronger recall of factual cultural content than interpretive or perspective-based understanding (Qian, 2024).

Qualitative findings from this study further illuminate the quantitative results. Students frequently reported increased familiarity with observable cultural practices, yet many expressed difficulty in interpreting deeper cultural meanings or adopting alternative perspectives. Some students also displayed hesitation or resistance when asked to view their own culture from an external standpoint, indicating that

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intercultural knowledge development may challenge students' existing identities and belief systems. This observation resonates with more recent arguments that intercultural learning often involves discomfort and affective tension, particularly when students are required to confront perspectives that challenge their existing cultural assumptions and identities (Kramsch, 2020; Byram, 2021; Dervin, 2022).

When situated within the context of College English education in China, the findings point to an additional pedagogical concern. Several students' reflections suggested exposure to cultural content that remained at a symbolic or surface level, without sufficient critical framing. This pattern is consistent with critiques of "cultural tokenism" in language education, where culture is introduced through isolated symbols or topics without sustained analytical engagement (Xiong et al., 2022). Under such conditions, students may acquire fragmented cultural knowledge that lacks coherence or transformative potential.

Taken together, the findings suggest that intercultural knowledge development is shaped by multiple interacting factors, including instructional duration, linguistic readiness, and students' prior cultural schemas. While the IcLL-based intervention successfully initiated cognitive engagement with cultural content, its short-term implementation limited the depth of knowledge development. These results underscore the need for sustained, scaffolded instructional designs that integrate cultural content systematically and provide students with repeated opportunities for interpretive practice if significant gains in intercultural knowledge are to be achieved.

5.3.3 Effects of IcLL-Based College English on Intercultural Skills

The findings of this study indicate that the IcLL-based College English intervention

exerted a conditional and language-proficiency-dependent effect on students' intercultural skills rather than a uniform effect across the whole cohort. While no significant overall group difference was identified, students with higher English proficiency (CEFR B2 and above) in the experimental group demonstrated significantly stronger gains in intercultural skills than their counterparts in the control group. This pattern suggests that the development of intercultural skills through IcLL-based pedagogy is contingent upon students' linguistic readiness to engage with complex intercultural tasks.

From the perspective of Byram's ICC framework, intercultural skills, particularly skills of interpreting, relating, and interacting, are inherently performative and relational, requiring students to mobilize linguistic, cognitive, and cultural resources simultaneously. In his later reflections, Byram (2021) emphasizes that such skills are not acquired through exposure alone, but through sustained engagement in meaning negotiation and intercultural mediation. This theoretical positioning helps explain why measurable gains in intercultural skills were observed primarily among students with higher language proficiency in the present study: these students possessed the linguistic capacity necessary to participate more fully in interpretive and interactional processes.

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The IcLL principles underpinning the intervention further illuminate this conditional pattern. IcLL conceptualizes intercultural learning as an iterative process involving noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), with recent theoretical elaborations stressing that interactional engagement plays a decisive role in skills development (Liddicoat, 2022). In practice, the IcLL tasks implemented in this study required students to analyze cultural phenomena, articulate interpretations, and respond to alternative perspectives. While such tasks align well

with the development of intercultural skills, they also impose substantial linguistic and cognitive demands. As a result, students with higher proficiency were better positioned to translate intercultural awareness into observable skills, whereas lower-proficiency students were more likely to experience difficulty sustaining interaction and meaning negotiation.

This language-proficiency-conditioned effect resonates with patterns identified in prior empirical. Existing IcLL studies have frequently reported stronger outcomes in attitudinal and awareness-related dimensions, while intercultural skills remain less consistently developed and are often subsumed under broader notions of communicative competence. Studies conducted in tertiary EFL contexts have similarly reported that gains in intercultural skills tend to be uneven and strongly mediated by students' language proficiency and task affordances (Nguyen & Newton, 2020; Yang & Fleming, 2023). Similar results can also be found in China's context; for example, Huang (2021) reported that students with advanced English proficiency demonstrated stronger intercultural skill development after participating in culture-integrated language instruction.

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Qualitative evidence from this study further contextualizes the quantitative findings and helps explain the proficiency-mediated pattern of intercultural skills development. Students with higher language proficiency reported greater confidence in interpreting cultural meanings, accessing English-language sources, and sustaining interaction during intercultural tasks. In contrast, students with lower proficiency frequently described difficulties articulating nuanced perspectives and maintaining intercultural interaction, indicating that limited language resources may constrain the enactment of intercultural skills even when attitudinal readiness is present.

One noteworthy pattern emerging from the quantitative results was that some students with the moderate English proficiency level (B1) showed weaker outcomes in the EG than in the CG. This may reflect the challenge of IcLL tasks for students at a transitional language stage: they may possess sufficient linguistic resources to comprehend task requirements, yet lack the mediational capacity needed to manage the combined linguistic and intercultural demands of IcLL activities. This aligns with recent pedagogical frameworks emphasizing that mediation-based intercultural tasks, such as interpreting perspectives, negotiating meaning, and reflecting on cultural difference, are especially demanding for students whose linguistic control is not yet stable, and that insufficient scaffolding may lead to cognitive overload rather than productive intercultural engagement (Council of Europe, 2020). The intermediate students are particularly sensitive to task complexity when linguistic support is limited, as attentional resources must be split between language processing and higher-order meaning construction (Sato & Loewen, 2022). This shows the importance of calibrating intercultural task demands and providing graduated scaffolding to support intercultural skill development at transitional proficiency levels.

When situated within the context of College English education in China, these findings acquire particular relevance. Previous studies have noted that limited opportunities for authentic intercultural interaction and an exam-oriented curriculum may restrict the development of practical intercultural skills, even when cultural awareness is emphasized (Zhang & Zhou, 2022; Li & Yuan, 2023). While the IcLL model supports advanced students in acquiring practical skills for intercultural encounters, lower-proficiency students may require adapted materials and gradual task progression. As Valiandes et al. (2018) observed, strategic pedagogical

differentiation based on students' linguistic level is critical to maximizing the benefits of ICC-focused instruction.

Taken together, the absence of a significant overall group effect in the present study does not contradict the effectiveness of IcLL-based pedagogy, but rather highlights its conditional efficacy. Intercultural skills development is a gradual and context-sensitive process, shaped by the interaction between pedagogical design, language proficiency, and instructional context, and often requiring extended exposure and iterative practice beyond short-term instructional cycles (Byram, 2021; Deardorff, 2020). Consistent with recent calls for differentiated and developmentally sensitive ICC pedagogy (Byram, 2021; Porto & Houghton, 2022), the present study underscores the need to calibrate intercultural skills tasks to students' linguistic readiness and offer sufficient scaffolding if IcLL is to support more inclusive and sustained skill development in Chinese College English classrooms.

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5.3.4 Effects of IcLL-Based College English on Intercultural Awareness

The findings of this study indicate that the IcLL-based College English intervention had a statistically significant and robust effect on students' intercultural awareness. After controlling for pre-test awareness and language proficiency, students in the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher post-test ICAW scores than those in the control group, with a moderate effect size. This result suggests that intercultural awareness was one of the ICC dimensions most responsive to the IcLL-based instructional design implemented in this study.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding is well aligned with contemporary conceptualizations of intercultural awareness within the IcLL framework. Liddicoat (2022) emphasizes that intercultural awareness extends beyond the recognition of

cultural difference and involves a reflective and interpretive capacity developed through intercultural mediation. Such awareness requires students to decenter from their own cultural assumptions, evaluate perspectives relationally, and engage in dialogic meaning-making. The IcLL pedagogy adopted in the present study, particularly the use of guided comparison, reflective discussion, and perspective-oriented tasks, directly targeted these processes, thereby creating conditions conducive to awareness development.

This pattern can also be interpreted in light of the pedagogical sequencing advocated in IcLL theory. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) propose that intercultural learning unfolds through iterative cycles of noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting, with awareness emerging as students begin to critically examine cultural meanings rather than merely accumulate information. Recent elaborations of this framework further stress that awareness is especially sensitive to reflective pedagogical input, as it relies on students' capacity to interpret experience rather than perform linguistically complex actions (Scarino et al., 2025). In this sense, intercultural awareness may develop more readily than skills-oriented dimensions within short-term instructional interventions.

Empirical research provides converging support for this interpretation. Multiple IcLL-informed classroom studies have reported that awareness-related outcomes, such as heightened sensitivity to cultural difference, increased perspective-taking, and recognition of cultural relativity, are among the most visible instructional effects, particularly in higher education contexts. For example, Wang (2021) demonstrated that reflective prompts embedded in language tasks significantly enhanced tertiary EFL students' intercultural awareness, while Huang (2023) found that inquiry-based cultural tasks promoted students' ability to evaluate cultural practices using explicit

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interpretive criteria. Importantly, these studies emphasize visibility and accessibility rather than claiming that awareness represents the strongest or most advanced dimension of ICC development. The present study extends this line of research by providing quantitative evidence of a significant group effect while also situating awareness development within a broader, multidimensional ICC framework.

Qualitative findings from the present study further illuminate how intercultural awareness developed through the IcLL-based intervention. Many students reported that they began to perceive culture as dynamic, contextual, and internally diverse, and several described an increased ability to consider issues from multiple cultural perspectives. These reflections suggest an emerging capacity for evaluative and interpretive judgment, which corresponds to what Byram (2021) conceptualizes as critical cultural awareness. At the same time, students with higher language proficiency were generally more able to articulate their reflections in depth, whereas some lower-proficiency students expressed awareness implicitly but struggled to verbalize their insights fully. This pattern reinforces the view that awareness development is conceptually accessible but communicatively mediated.

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When situated within the context of College English education in China, the significance of these findings becomes particularly clear. Conventional English instruction has tended to emphasize linguistic accuracy and knowledge transmission, with limited attention to reflective or interpretive engagement with culture. The significant gains in intercultural awareness observed in this study suggest that even within a relatively short intervention, IcLL-oriented pedagogy can shift students' evaluative orientation toward culture by foregrounding reflection, comparison, and mediation. At the same time, the findings indicate that sustaining and deepening awareness development may require continued opportunities for reflective dialogue

and progressively more complex intercultural encounters.

In sum, the present study demonstrates that intercultural awareness is a developmentally sensitive and pedagogically responsive dimension of ICC. The significant gains observed among experimental group students support theoretical claims that awareness can be effectively fostered through IcLL principles emphasizing reflection and mediation. Rather than representing the culmination of intercultural development, these gains should be understood as a critical foundation upon which more advanced intercultural knowledge and skills can be built in the Chinese tertiary EFL context.

5.3.5 Students' Perceived Changes in ICC after the IcLL-based Course

With respect to Research Question 5, qualitative findings provided insight into how students in the experimental group perceived changes in their ICC after the IcLL-based learning process. Rather than indicating uniform development across all dimensions, students' accounts revealed differentiated and dimension-specific perceptions of change, shaped by instructional focus, task design, and individual learner conditions.

Across interviews, students most frequently reported perceived changes related to intercultural attitudes and intercultural awareness. Many described becoming more interested in cultural topics, more willing to engage with cultural difference, and more conscious of the need to view issues from multiple perspectives. These perceived changes were often associated with comparative and reflective tasks, through which students were encouraged to examine both their own cultural values and those embedded in other cultural contexts. Such perceptions align with Byram's (2021) view that early ICC development is often marked by shifts in students'

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orientations toward difference rather than by immediate behavioral transformation.

Several students also reported that they had begun to recognize culture as dynamic rather than static, and that they became more cautious about making generalized judgments about people from other cultures. These perceptions suggest an emerging capacity for perspective-taking and evaluative reflection, which is not only consistent with Byram's concept of critical cultural awareness, but also corresponds to what Liddicoat (2022) conceptualizes as intercultural mediation. Importantly, students framed these changes as gradual realizations rather than as complete transformations, indicating that awareness development was experienced as an ongoing process.

In contrast, perceived changes in intercultural knowledge were more uneven. While students frequently mentioned gaining familiarity with cultural practices, lifestyles, and everyday behaviors, fewer reported confidence in understanding deeper cultural values or belief systems. Some students explicitly acknowledged that their knowledge remained "surface-level," despite feeling more aware of cultural complexity. This perception mirrors patterns identified in IcLL research reviewed in Chapter 2, where students often report noticeable growth in awareness and attitudes while expressing uncertainty about the depth of their cultural knowledge (Deardorff, 2020; Liddicoat, 2022).

Perceived changes in intercultural skills were the least consistently reported. A small number of students, particularly those with higher language proficiency, described improvements in interpreting cultural information, sourcing materials independently, or managing intercultural interaction. However, many students noted persistent difficulties in expressing themselves clearly, negotiating meaning, or sustaining intercultural communication in English. These accounts suggest that, from the

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students' perspective, skill development was constrained by linguistic demands and did not progress at the same pace as attitudinal or awareness-related change (Byram, 2021; Fantini, 2020).

Importantly, students' perceptions also reflected an awareness of uneven development across ICC dimensions. Some students explicitly contrasted their increased openness and awareness with their continued struggles in communication or interpretation, indicating a growing metacognitive understanding of ICC as a multifaceted construct. This perception supports the multidimensional conceptualization of ICC adopted in this study and reinforces the view that students themselves can recognize differential developmental patterns within their intercultural language learning (Byram, 2021).

Taken together, the qualitative findings indicate that students primarily perceived changes in affective and reflective dimensions of ICC, while viewing knowledge and skills development as more limited and conditional. These perceptions complement the quantitative results by illustrating how students experienced the intervention internally, without claiming that perceived change necessarily equates to objectively measured competence. In doing so, the findings address RQ5 by highlighting not only what students perceived as changing, but also how they understood the nature and limits of their ICC development within the IcLL-based course (Deardorff, 2020).

5.3.6 Students' Experiences in the IcLL-based Course

With respect to Research Question 6, the qualitative findings illuminate how students in the experimental group experienced the IcLL-based College English course as a learning process. Rather than focusing on measurable gains, students' accounts emphasized how they engaged with classroom activities, how they responded to

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intercultural tasks, and how they handle the combined linguistic and cognitive demands of intercultural tasks during the course. Overall, students tended to describe the IcLL-based classroom as more engaging and thought-provoking than their previous English learning experiences, while also acknowledging its increased cognitive and linguistic demands.

While students' learning experiences involved a range of facilitators and barriers, including task design, psychological factors, motivation, classroom conditions, and language proficiency, etc., the present discussion focuses only on those experiential patterns that emerged most consistently across cases and were most directly connected to students' engagement with IcLL-based College English course. In particular, reflective and comparative learning processes are discussed as central facilitators of intercultural learning, while language proficiency is treated as a cross-cutting constraint that shaped the depth and quality of students' engagement with these processes. Other experiential factors, such as anxiety, task difficulty, and class size, etc., are acknowledged as context- and learner-dependent conditions that influenced individual learning experiences rather than defining the overall learning pattern.

A prominent aspect of students' learning experiences was the perceived value of comparative and reflective activities. Many students described classroom tasks that required them to compare cultural practices, discuss contrasting perspectives, or reflect on their own assumptions as particularly meaningful. These activities were often seen as different from conventional language exercises, as they required students to think beyond vocabulary and grammar and to engage with cultural meanings. Such experiences resonate with core principles of IcLL, which emphasize noticing, comparison, interaction and reflection as central to ICC development

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(Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liddicoat, 2022). From the students' perspective, these tasks created opportunities to reconsider familiar cultural practices and to recognize the diversity and complexity of cultural perspectives.

At the same time, students' learning experiences also revealed several challenges embedded in the IcLL-based approach. A recurring concern involved the linguistic demands of intercultural tasks, especially those requiring oral interaction or abstract reflection in English. Some students reported difficulty articulating their thoughts, negotiating meaning, or sustaining discussion, which occasionally led to hesitation or reduced participation. Others noted that complex tasks could feel overwhelming when limited language proficiency coincided with unfamiliar cultural content. These experiences are consistent with recent research suggesting that intercultural pedagogy often intensifies cognitive and linguistic load, particularly for students operating below an advanced proficiency threshold (Fantini, 2020; Galante, 2022).

Taken together, students' accounts portray the IcLL-based College English course as a learning experience characterized by both engagement and challenge. On the one hand, students valued opportunities to explore cultural difference and reflect on perspectives; on the other, they encountered constraints related to language proficiency, task complexity, psychological constrains and classroom conditions. Importantly, these experiences suggest that IcLL should not be understood as an effortless or uniformly positive approach, but rather as a pedagogy that requires students to operate simultaneously at the levels of language use, cultural interpretation, and self-reflection, a feature widely noted in recent discussions of intercultural language education (Byram, 2021; Liddicoat, 2022). In this sense, the findings contribute a process-oriented understanding of how IcLL is experienced by

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students in the Chinese College English context, complementing the outcome-focused analyses presented earlier.

5.3.7 Interplay among the Four Dimensions of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The findings of this study suggest that ICC did not develop as a set of parallel or uniformly progressing components, but rather as an interrelated and condition-dependent system in which attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness mutually enabled or constrained one another. This pattern is consistent with Byram's view of ICC as a holistic yet internally differentiated construct, in which development across dimensions is uneven, contingent, and shaped by students' engagement with intercultural experience rather than by linear accumulation of abilities (Byram, 2021).

From Byram's theoretical perspective, intercultural attitudes function as a foundational condition for intercultural engagement, creating openness to difference and willingness to suspend taken-for-granted assumptions. Intercultural knowledge provides the cognitive resources necessary for interpreting cultural practices and perspectives, while intercultural skills enable students to act, interpret, and interact in intercultural situations. Intercultural awareness, in turn, emerges through reflective evaluation of self and other and represents an integrative outcome rather than an isolated skill. Crucially, Byram (2021) emphasizes that these components interact dynamically: progress in one dimension may support, expose, or even destabilize development in another, rather than guaranteeing balanced advancement across all dimensions.

The present findings offer empirical support for this dynamic view. Qualitative data

indicated that students with stronger intercultural attitudes tended to engage more actively with intercultural tasks, participate more readily in discussion, and express greater interest in cultural comparison. However, positive attitudinal orientation alone did not ensure corresponding development in intercultural knowledge, skills, or awareness. Several students demonstrated openness and curiosity while simultaneously reporting difficulty interpreting cultural meanings, evaluating perspectives, or articulating reflections. This pattern illustrates that while attitudes enable engagement, they do not automatically generate higher-level ICC without sufficient cognitive and interpretive support.

Intercultural knowledge emerged as a critical mediating factor in this interplay. Students who reported limited cultural knowledge frequently described difficulties in reflection, perspective-taking, and evaluation. In such cases, attempts to compare cultures or reflect on difference were limited by insufficient conceptual resources, leading to superficial understanding or stalled reflection. This finding aligns with Byram's argument that intercultural awareness depends on students' ability to draw on relevant cultural knowledge when engaging in evaluation and judgment (Byram, 2021). Without such knowledge, reflective processes are weakened, even when students display positive attitudes toward cultural difference.

Intercultural skills further revealed the conditional nature of ICC development. Some students reported that engaging in intercultural interaction or interpretation made them more aware of their own limitations, particularly when attempting to express complex cultural ideas. Rather than indicating failure, these experiences often triggered heightened awareness of cultural complexity and the limits of one's understanding. This suggests that skills-related challenges can serve as a catalyst for awareness development by exposing gaps between intention, knowledge, and

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performance. At the same time, when such challenges were perceived as overwhelming, especially in linguistically demanding tasks, students' engagement with reflective processes was reduced, illustrating how constraints in one dimension may inhibit development in others.

These patterns can be further illuminated through the lens of IcLL. IcLL conceptualizes intercultural development as emerging through iterative processes of noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liddicoat, 2022). In this study, students' accounts suggest that noticing and comparing often initiated awareness of difference, while reflection allowed some students to reconsider assumptions about culture. However, when students lacked sufficient cultural knowledge or interpretive support, the reflective process did not always progress beyond surface comparison. In such cases, the IcLL process was interrupted rather than completed, limiting the extent to which awareness and skills could be consolidated.

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Importantly, the findings indicate that interplay among ICC dimensions was not uniformly positive or reinforcing. In some instances, increased awareness of cultural complexity heightened students' sense of uncertainty, particularly when they recognized gaps in their knowledge or communicative ability. This tension underscores that intercultural development involves cognitive and affective challenge, and that awareness may initially outpace skills or knowledge. Such asymmetry is consistent with recent interpretations of ICC development as a non-linear and sometimes disorienting process rather than a steady progression toward competence (Deardorff, 2020).

Situated within the Chinese College English context, these findings carry particular significance. Students' prior learning experiences, which often emphasize linguistic accuracy and content mastery, may limit opportunities for sustained intercultural reflection and mediation. As a result, IcLL-based instruction appears more effective in first activating attitudinal openness and awareness of difference, while deeper development of intercultural knowledge and skills requires longer-term scaffolding and repeated engagement. The observed interplay among ICC dimensions thus reflects not only theoretical relationships but also contextual conditions shaping how intercultural learning unfolds in practice.

Overall, the study supports a view of ICC as an integrated yet unevenly developing construct, in which attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness interact through learning processes rather than advancing in tandem. By empirically illustrating how development in one dimension may enable, constrain, or complicate progress in others, the findings extend theoretical accounts of ICC by grounding them in classroom-based evidence from a Chinese tertiary EFL context. This process-oriented understanding reinforces the value of IcLL pedagogy while highlighting the need for sustained, differentiated instructional design to support balanced ICC development over time.

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5.4 Implications of the Study

The implementation of an IcLL-based College English curriculum in the Chinese university context offered valuable insights into how ICC can be systematically fostered through language education. Implications are discussed across two domains: contributions to theory and pedagogical applications.

5.4.1 Theoretical Implication

This study makes several theoretical contributions to research on ICC and IcLL, particularly by refining existing models through empirical evidence from a Chinese tertiary EFL context.

First, the findings provide empirical support for Byram's ICC framework by demonstrating the differentiated and condition-dependent development of its four dimensions: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness. While Byram conceptualizes ICC as a holistic construct, he also emphasizes that its components are interrelated yet do not necessarily develop evenly across students or contexts (Byram, 2021). The present study substantiates this claim by showing that attitudinal and awareness-related dimensions were more responsive to IcLL-based instruction, whereas development in intercultural knowledge and skills was more limited and closely related to learner-specific conditions. This pattern suggests that the four dimensions function not as parallel outcomes, but as interacting components whose development may proceed at different rates under the same pedagogical conditions. In this respect, the study extends Byram's model by offering empirical clarification of how dimensional imbalance and conditionality emerge in classroom-based ICC development.

Second, this study advances theoretical understanding of IcLL by empirically illustrating how Liddicoat and Scarino's process-oriented framework operates across different ICC dimensions. The IcLL principles of noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting are often presented as an integrated pedagogical cycle (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liddicoat, 2022); however, empirical accounts detailing how these processes support specific ICC dimensions remain limited. The present findings indicate that noticing and comparing were most closely associated with changes in

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students' intercultural attitudes and awareness, while reflective engagement supported the development of evaluative judgment and perspective-taking. By contrast, outcomes related to intercultural skills were more strongly influenced by students' existing linguistic resources, suggesting that interaction alone does not guarantee skill development. This differentiated pattern refines the IcLL framework by showing that its pedagogical processes contribute unevenly to ICC dimensions and interact with learner variables in shaping developmental outcomes.

Third, the study contributes to current theoretical discussions by conceptualizing ICC development as a contextually situated and mediated process, rather than as a linear accumulation of competencies. Consistent with contemporary views of ICC as dynamic and learner-dependent (Deardorff, 2020; Byram, 2021), the findings show that intercultural development was shaped by students' prior experiences, cognitive readiness, and classroom mediation. The observed ceiling effects in intercultural attitudes and the conditional gains in intercultural skills highlight the need to conceptualize ICC development as stage-sensitive, requiring different forms of pedagogical support at different points. This insight responds to recent calls in ICC research for greater attention to developmental variation and contextual specificity in theorizing ICC (Borghetti, 2022; Jackson, 2021).

Finally, by situating these findings within the Chinese College English context, the study extends ICC and IcLL theories beyond settings in which they have most frequently been examined. The results demonstrate that while IcLL principles are theoretically robust, their effects are shaped by institutional traditions that emphasize examination performance and language form. This context-sensitive evidence contributes to theory by showing that ICC models need to be interpreted and enacted in relation to local curricular structures, teaching traditions, and learner histories

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(Gao, 2021; Fang & Baker, 2022). In this sense, the study not only supports existing theoretical frameworks, but also refines them by illustrating how intercultural development unfolds within a specific EFL educational ecology.

In sum, this study advances theoretical understandings of ICC and IcLL by empirically demonstrating uneven development across ICC dimensions, clarifying the differentiated effects of IcLL pedagogical processes, and situating intercultural development within a developmental and context-sensitive perspective. These contributions help bridge conceptual models and classroom practice, offering a more precise account of how ICC develops in tertiary EFL education.

5.4.2 Practical Implication

The findings of this study yield several practical implications for the design and implementation of College English instruction in the Chinese EFL context, particularly with regard to how ICC can be fostered through IcLL-informed pedagogy. Rather than treating ICC as an additional or peripheral objective, the results suggest that intercultural development needs to be deliberately embedded in everyday classroom practice through task design, instructional sequencing, and reflective mediation.

At the level of classroom pedagogy, the study indicates that intercultural learning is most effectively supported when teaching moves beyond the transmission of cultural information toward activities that require comparison, reflection, and interpretation. The consistent gains observed in intercultural attitudes and awareness suggest that tasks prompting students to examine cultural assumptions, contrast perspectives, and reflect on meaning are especially productive in the early and intermediate stages of intercultural development. This supports pedagogical arguments that intercultural

learning is not achieved through exposure alone, but through guided meaning-making processes integrated into language use (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liddicoat, 2022). At the same time, the conditional development of intercultural skills highlights the need for careful calibration of task demands, particularly in relation to students' linguistic competence, to avoid disengagement or superficial participation.

In terms of curriculum design and assessment, the findings point to the importance of articulating ICC as a developmental learning outcome rather than a static competence to be achieved within a single course. The differentiated patterns observed across ICC dimensions suggest that short-term interventions are more likely to yield progress in attitudinal and awareness-related domains, while knowledge and skills development require sustained, scaffolded exposure. This has implications for curriculum planning in College English programs, where intercultural objectives are often stated in broad terms but rarely aligned with assessment practices. Developmentally sensitive assessment frameworks that capture incremental change, particularly in awareness and reflective capacity, may provide a more realistic and pedagogically meaningful way of evaluating intercultural learning (Deardorff, 2020; Byram, 2021).

The study also carries implications for teacher education and professional development. Implementing IcLL-oriented pedagogy requires teachers to move beyond presenting cultural content toward facilitating interpretive dialogue, managing ambiguity, and mediating students' reflections. The findings suggest that teachers play a critical role in shaping how intercultural tasks are experienced, especially when students encounter linguistic or cognitive difficulty. This highlights the need for systematic training in intercultural pedagogy as part of both pre-service

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and in-service teacher education, with particular emphasis on task design, reflective scaffolding, and the assessment of intercultural learning processes rather than surface outcomes (Qin, 2024).

Finally, the results have implications for materials development in College English education. Students' reported difficulties in developing deeper intercultural knowledge point to the limitations of materials that rely on static cultural facts or generalized representations. Instead, instructional materials should be designed to support inquiry, comparison, and interpretation, enabling students to engage with cultural practices as situated and contested rather than fixed. Task-based units that integrate authentic texts, guided reflection, and opportunities for discussion can better support the development of intercultural awareness and perspective-taking, as evidenced by the learning experiences reported in this study.

Taken together, these practical implications suggest that fostering ICC through IcLL is not a matter of adding cultural content to existing curricula, but of reorienting pedagogical priorities toward interpretive engagement, developmental progression, and reflective mediation. Within the Chinese College English context, such an approach offers a feasible pathway for aligning language education with broader goals of internationalization and global competence, while remaining responsive to students' linguistic and educational realities.

5.5 Limitations

There are several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, with regard to the study population, the sample was drawn from first-year students majoring in Electronic Information at Taishan University, a local public undergraduate institution in China. According to the

Ministry of Education's classification of higher education institutions (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2020), Taishan University is categorized as a local undergraduate university and is positioned in the mid-tier range among Chinese universities (Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, 2024). All students were science students in the second semester of their first academic year, and sophomore students were not included. Although students came from different provinces, most were from Shandong Province. This relatively limited academic and geographic diversity, together with the modest sample size, constrains the generalizability of the findings. Accordingly, the results should be interpreted as context-specific rather than representative of all Chinese tertiary EFL settings.

Second, the study employed a self-reported ICC questionnaire as a primary quantitative instrument, which entails certain measurement limitations. Byram, Holmes, and Savvides (2021) suggest that different ICC dimensions may require distinct assessment tools to capture their specific characteristics, whereas Deardorff (2020) cautions against fragmenting ICC assessment due to its inherently integrated nature. This theoretical tension reflects a broader methodological trade-off in ICC research. In response, the present study adopted a multidimensional but unified ICC scale to balance construct coverage and practical feasibility. Nevertheless, this approach may not fully capture all aspects of ICC. In addition, although language proficiency was controlled through the Oxford Placement Test, language ability is multifaceted, and components such as pragmatic competence and oral fluency were not separately measured.

Third, the qualitative component of the study was based on interviews with six students from the experimental group. While purposeful sampling was employed to capture variation in language proficiency and ICC development, the small sample

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size and the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis limit the breadth of qualitative claims. Consistent with the embedded mixed-methods design adopted in this study, the qualitative findings were intended to provide explanatory depth and insight into learning processes rather than representativeness or generalization. Despite efforts to enhance rigor through systematic coding and triangulation, the possibility of researcher interpretation bias cannot be entirely excluded.

In addition, interviews were conducted only with students from the experimental group. This decision was consistent with the research questions and the embedded mixed-methods design of the study, in which qualitative data were intended to illuminate how students experienced and made sense of the IcLL-based intervention, rather than to compare outcomes between instructional conditions. While including control-group interviews was not necessary for addressing the qualitative research questions, the absence of comparative qualitative data limits the extent to which learning experiences can be contrasted across groups. This boundary should be considered when interpreting the qualitative findings.

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Finally, the study examined the impact of an IcLL-based intervention over a single semester. Longer-term developmental trajectories of ICC and the sustainability of observed changes beyond the classroom were not explored. This temporal limitation constrains the interpretation of the findings as short-term instructional effects rather than stable developmental outcomes. Future longitudinal research across more diverse institutional contexts is therefore needed to examine the durability and transferability of intercultural learning.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings, implications, and acknowledged limitations of this study, the

following recommendations are proposed for the implementation and further development of IcLL in College English education in China. These recommendations focus on instructional practice, curriculum design, and teacher development, and are grounded in the empirical evidence generated by the present research rather than in general pedagogical ideals.

First, College English instruction should integrate intercultural objectives in a systematic and sustained manner rather than treating culture as a peripheral or supplementary component. The findings indicate that IcLL-based pedagogy can effectively foster students' intercultural attitudes and awareness within a regular language course, particularly when intercultural tasks are embedded into routine classroom activities. This suggests that intercultural learning does not require separate "culture courses," but can be incorporated into existing syllabi through carefully designed comparative, reflective, and discussion-based tasks. Such integration is especially important in the Chinese tertiary context, where language teaching has traditionally prioritized examination-oriented linguistic outcomes.

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Second, instructional design should attend to the differentiated development of ICC dimensions and the varying conditions of students. The results demonstrate that students did not develop intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness at the same pace or to the same extent. In particular, attitudinal and awareness-related outcomes were more readily observed, while intercultural skills development was more strongly constrained by language proficiency. This calls for differentiated task design and pedagogical sequencing, in which tasks targeting reflection and perspective-taking are complemented by scaffolded opportunities for interaction and interpretation that are appropriate to students' linguistic levels. Rather than adopting

a one-size-fits-all approach, teachers should adjust task complexity and support mechanisms to align with students' developmental profiles.

Third, teacher preparation and professional development should place greater emphasis on intercultural pedagogy and classroom mediation skills. The effective enactment of IcLL in this study relied heavily on the teacher's ability to guide comparison, facilitate reflection, and support students in dealing with multiple or conflicting cultural interpretations in classroom interaction. This highlights the need for teacher education programs to move beyond general awareness of "culture teaching" and to provide concrete training in designing intercultural tasks, facilitating dialogic discussion, and responding to students' interpretive difficulties. Professional development initiatives that combine theoretical grounding with classroom-based examples and reflective practice may help teachers develop confidence and competence in implementing IcLL-oriented instruction.

Fourth, curriculum materials and textbooks should be designed to support inquiry-based and reflective intercultural learning rather than focusing predominantly on static cultural information. The findings suggest that materials prompting students to compare perspectives, question assumptions, and reflect on cultural meanings were more effective in fostering intercultural awareness than materials presenting isolated cultural facts. Textbook developers are therefore encouraged to include tasks that engage students in interpretation, evaluation, and meaning-making, and to present culture as dynamic and contested rather than as a set of fixed attributes. Such materials can better support the developmental aims of IcLL within College English classrooms.

In sum, the recommendations emphasize the importance of integrating IcLL principles into everyday teaching practices, aligning instructional design with

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students' developmental conditions, and strengthening teacher capacity for intercultural mediation. Together, these measures can enhance the feasibility and effectiveness of IcLL-based College English instruction in the Chinese tertiary context.

5.6.1 Suggestions for Further Study

Building on the findings and limitations of the present study, several directions for future research are suggested to deepen understanding of ICC development through IcLL in EFL contexts.

First, future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs to examine the sustainability and long-term impact of ICC over time. As this study focused on a single-semester intervention, the observed changes reflect short-term instructional effects rather than long-term developmental outcomes. Longitudinal research spanning multiple semesters or academic years would allow researchers to trace how different ICC dimensions evolve, stabilize, or interact over time, and to examine whether early gains in attitudes or awareness translate into more advanced skills and knowledge.

Second, further research is needed to explore IcLL implementation across more diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts. Given that the present study was conducted in a local Chinese undergraduate university with first-year science majors, future studies should involve students from different academic disciplines, institutional types, and regional settings. Comparative research across contexts may help clarify how institutional culture, curriculum orientation, and learner background mediate the effectiveness and adaptation of IcLL-based pedagogy.

Third, future studies should consider employing more diversified assessment

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methods to capture intercultural learning. While self-report questionnaires provide valuable insights into students' perceptions and self-assessed development, they may not fully reflect students' intercultural performance in interaction. Combining self-report measures with performance-based tasks, discourse analysis, classroom observation, or portfolio assessment could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how intercultural knowledge, skills, and awareness are enacted in practice.

Fourth, research focusing on individual learner development would further illuminate the complexity of ICC development. Qualitative or mixed-methods case studies examining how factors such as language proficiency, motivation, identity, and prior intercultural experience interact with IcLL tasks could provide deeper insight into why students respond differently to the same instructional conditions. Such studies would complement group-level analyses by foregrounding variability and developmental diversity.

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Finally, future research should examine pedagogical mechanisms within IcLL more closely. Rather than treating IcLL as a unified approach, studies could compare different task types, sequencing strategies, or modes of interaction to identify which instructional features are most influential in supporting particular ICC dimensions. This line of inquiry would contribute to refining IcLL as a pedagogical framework and to bridging the gap between theoretical principles and classroom decision-making. Overall, these directions point toward a research agenda that extends beyond demonstrating the effectiveness of IcLL to understanding how, for whom, and under what conditions ICC develops in EFL classrooms.

5.7 Conclusion

This study was undertaken in response to the growing need to foster ICC among EFL students in the Chinese tertiary education context. Grounded in Byram's model of ICC and informed by the principles of IcLL, the research examined the extent to which an IcLL-based College English intervention could support the development of students' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness.

Using an embedded quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, this study demonstrates that IcLL-based instruction supports ICC development in a differentiated and conditional manner. Quantitative findings established that statistically significant gains were observed in intercultural attitudes, skills, and awareness under specific learner conditions, while improvements in intercultural knowledge remained limited within the duration of a single semester. Rather than suggesting uniform effectiveness, these results highlight the role of students' initial profiles in shaping developmental outcomes. The qualitative findings did not function as parallel evidence of effectiveness, but instead provided explanatory insight into how students perceived and experienced these uneven patterns of development, particularly by revealing the cognitive, linguistic, and motivational factors that facilitated or constrained intercultural learning.

Taken together, the findings provide empirical clarification of the interplay among the four dimensions of ICC. Attitudinal openness and intercultural awareness emerged as more readily responsive to IcLL-oriented pedagogical processes such as noticing, comparison, and reflection, whereas the development of intercultural knowledge and skills was more strongly constrained by students' linguistic readiness and prior cultural resources. This pattern supports a holistic yet non-linear view of

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ICC development, in which different dimensions interact dynamically rather than progressing in parallel.

From a theoretical perspective, the study refines existing ICC and IcLL frameworks by offering context-sensitive evidence from Chinese College English classrooms. While Byram conceptualizes ICC as an integrated construct, the present findings specify how dimensional imbalance and conditionality manifest in classroom-based intercultural learning. Similarly, the study extends IcLL theory by showing that its pedagogical processes do not contribute evenly to all ICC dimensions, but operate through differentiated pathways shaped by learner profiles and instructional conditions.

Despite its contributions, the study is bounded by contextual and methodological constraints, including sample specificity, reliance on self-report measures, and the short duration of the intervention. These limitations underscore the need for longitudinal and multi-instrument research to examine the sustainability and transferability of intercultural learning over time.

In conclusion, this study contributes to intercultural language education research by demonstrating that IcLL-based instruction can function as a feasible but conditional pathway for developing ICC in Chinese EFL contexts. By clarifying how different ICC dimensions respond to intercultural pedagogy and by situating these processes within a specific educational ecology, the research advances both theoretical understanding and pedagogical thinking about how ICC may be cultivated through College English instruction.

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Appendix A

Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan for Experiential Group

<table>
<tr><th colspan="7">Lesson Plan 1</th></tr>
<tr><td>Time of instruction</td><td colspan="2">2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>3-5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 1/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 1 Language in mission</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td>Knowledge</td><td colspan="5">✧Background knowledge related to the topic of the unit.
✧Spelling, pronunciation, word meanings and usage of key words and phrases appearing in the unit.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills</td><td colspan="5">✧Writing skill of moving from paragraph to essay.
✧Reading skill of reading for the key ideas in sentences.
✧Speaking skill of applying knowledge related to the theme of the unit to the discussion.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Intercultural communicative competence</td><td colspan="5">✧Become interested and willing to learn and talk about different languages and the difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language, and understand and tolerate the opinions from other countries.
✧Acquire the knowledge of the difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language in their own and foreign countries, as well as the nature of different languages and language families.
✧Be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with foreigners about the difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language.
✧Being able to look at, reflect and explain differences in the difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language for people from different cultures in a proper way.
✧Being able to be aware of the cultural similarities and differences in the difficulties, motives and strategies of learning a foreign language, and how they are reflected in certain documents and situations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">o Multimedia
o We-chat group
o We-Chat applets</td></tr>
</table>

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<table>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="2">○ Intercultural language learning (IcLL)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
<tr><td>Language learning modules</td><td>Activities</td><td>Culture learning process</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Period 1</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Pre-reading activities</td><td>1. Students listen to a Chinese student talking about his story of learning English, and fill blanks with the missing words.
2. Watching a foreign student’s video imitating the status of both Chinese learning English and foreigners learning Chinese 中国人学英文 VS 老外学中文 (youtube.com)</td><td>Guided Input</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher asks students questions:
1. What are Li Ming’s problems in learning English? Do you have the same difficulties? Any other difficulties?
2. What are the motives or reasons of learning English according to Li Ming and his teacher? Do you agree with them?
3. What do the foreigners think about the difficulties and reasons of learning Chinese?</td><td>Noticing of unfamiliar features</td></tr>
<tr><td>Group work: students list the similarities and differences of the difficulties and reasons of learning a foreign language between students from different countries, and share their ideas.
Group Work:
Similarities and Differences in Learning a Foreign Language<table><tr><th></th><th>Difficulties</th><th>Reasons</th></tr><tr><td>Similarities</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Differences</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table></td><td>Comparison with own experience</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Period 2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reading compre-hension</td><td>Students understand the main idea of text A “An impressive English lesson” with the following activities:
1. Finding the key sentences for each paragraph.
2. Answering reading comprehension questions about the text on Page 10.
3. Complete a short summary about the text.</td><td>-</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Period 3</td></tr>
</table>

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Reading comprehension	1. Students explore difficult sentences in Text A by: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout before class. b. Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them before class.. c. Presenting ideas about their understanding of these sentences in class. d. Teacher feedback. 2. Pair work: a. Identify the difficulties in English grammar revealed in the text. b. Q &A: ①Why many foreigners feel Chinese grammar easy? ②Why people from different culture experience differently in the difficulty of learning a foreign language.	**Reflect & Meaning making**
Period 4		
Language focus	1. Words： Students study the use of the new words in the text through exercises on page 10 and teacher explanation. (new words: adequately, adjust, asset, competent, condense, deficit, distinguish, exceed, precise, proficiency) 2. Expression： Students study the new expressions in the text through exercises on page 12 and teacher explanation. (new expressions: be allergic to, be obliged to, become attracted to, distinguish between, fresh from, get lost, get serious about, look upon...as, run into)	-
Period 5		
Reading skills	1. Teacher shows the students how to read for the key ideas in sentences, and explains with sentences from text A. 2. Students read text B and identify the key ideas of some sentences in it. 3. Students do reading comprehension exercises on page 23 to understand text B. 4. Pair discussion: Students talk about questions related to text B: a. How does learning a language help Malcolm X? b. Is Malcolm X approach to learning English helpful to Chinese students? c. Why do you think it is beneficial or not beneficial? 5. Students role play a conversation between Malcolm X and a Chinese student after class and record it, after which submitting to the Xuexitong Platform.	**Reflection & Meaning making**
Period 6		
Reading skills	1. Teacher plays the role-play recording and gives feedback.	-

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	2. Students find out useful collocations about the topic "language learning" in text A and B. 3. Students do exercises related to the collocations on Page 24.	
Period 7		
Structural analysis and writing	1. Students study the "introduction-body-conclusion" structure by analyzing the structure of text A with the help of teacher's guide. 2. Students read a sample essay on page 14 and analyze the pattern to get familiar with it. 3. Teacher combs through previous intercultural activities to help students reflect on the culture topics "Difficulties, motives and benefits of learning a foreign language" in the previous sessions. 4. Students write the outline of the "introduction-body-conclusion" structure essay on the topic "Learning foreign languages for people from different countries" in pairs, then share it with the class. 5. Students write the essay after class and submit to the Xuexitong Platform. Rubrics a. Write an expository essay describing the challenges, motivations, and benefits of learning a foreign language for learners from at least two cultural backgrounds. b. Include intercultural elements such as different language learning purposes (e.g., immigration, job, education), family support, educational policies, and social expectations. c. Integrate key concepts from Text A and intercultural comparison activities (e.g., learner attitudes, policy constraints, global language trends). d. No less than 180 words. e. Grammatically and semantically correct. f. Use at least 5 new words or expressions and 3 collocations related to language learning from Text A. 6. Peer evaluation in groups and teacher feedback after class online.	**Task-based Output**
Period 8		
Stories of China	1. Read a passage about Chinese young men's creative work which changed the world. 2. Translation: Students translate some Chinese sentences on page 26. 3. Teacher gives feedback in class.	-
Period 9		

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<table>
<tr><td>Unit projects</td><td colspan="2">1. Students design an interview protocol about foreign language learning based on their ideas in their writings in groups.
2. Students interview a foreign teacher as another form of feedback with the help of the interview protocol.
3. Students complete a checklist to evaluate the input material of this unit and their writing output.
4. Students modify their ideas and write again after class, and submit to Xuexitong Platform.</td><td>Feedback & Evaluation, Adjustment & further reflection</td></tr>
<tr><td>Assignment and reflection</td><td colspan="3">Period 2: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout.
b.Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them.
Period 5: Role-playing a conversation between Malcolm X and a Chinese student after class and record it.
Period 7: a. Peer evaluation of the essay in groups.
b. Writing a the “introduction-body-conclusion” structure essay on the topic “Learning foreign languages for people from different countries”
Period 8: Designing an interview protocol regarding English learning strategies.
Period 9: Students modifying their ideas and writings.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Assessment</td><td>Rubrics</td><td colspan="2">1. Being able to use topic-related words and expressions properly in discussion and writing.
2. Being able to identify the key ideas of sentences in reading.
3. Being able to be aware of culture similarities and differences in foreign language learning.
4. Being able to reflect on the reasons and possible effects of different difficulties and benefits of learning a foreign language.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Means</td><td colspan="2">1. Classroom tasks
2. After-class assignments</td></tr>
</table>

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 2</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time of instruction</td><td>2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>6-8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 1/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 2 Exploring college majors</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td>Knowledge</td><td colspan="5">✧Background knowledge related to the topic of the unit.
✧Spelling, pronunciation, word meanings and usage of key words and phrases appearing in the unit.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills</td><td colspan="5">✧Writing skill of narrative essay.
✧Reading skill of reading for major details.
✧Speaking skill of applying knowledge related the theme of the unit to the discussion.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Intercultural communicative competence</td><td colspan="5">✧Become interested and willing to learn and talk about choosing a college major in other cultures, and understand and tolerate their opinions.
✧Acquire the knowledge of the factors of choosing a college major and values and reasons behind in their own and foreign countries.
✧Be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with foreigners about choosing a college major.
✧Being able to look at, reflect and explain different values and reasons behind the factors of choosing a college major in a proper way.
✧Being able to be aware of the similarities and differences in choosing a college major among different cultures and how they are reflected in certain documents and situations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">○ Multimedia
○ We-chat group
○ Xuexitong online learning platform</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="6">○ Intercultural language learning (IcLL)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
</table>

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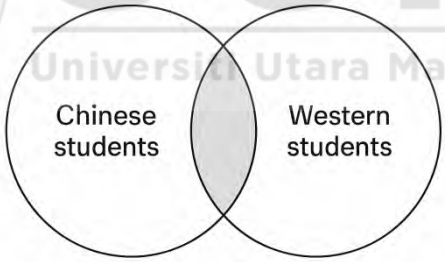
Language learning modules	Activities	Culture learning process
Period 1		
Pre-reading activities	**1.** Students conduct a study about the factors of choosing a college major before class through searching the web, after which the teacher gives online learning materials: (Why did you choose your major? (youtube.com) (1) What is your major and why did you choose it? - Quora). **2.** Students watch the interview in class about why Chinese college students choose their majors? 你为什么会选择现在的专业，是因为父母的期望？还是自己真的喜欢-今日头条 (toutiao.com)	**Guided Input**
	Teacher asks students questions: 1. What factors do college students may take into consideration when choosing their major? Make a list. **2.** What are the factors of choosing a major for college students abroad? **3.** What are the factors of choosing a major for college students in China?	**Noticing of unfamiliar features**
	Pair work: students list the similarities and differences of the factors of choosing a major in China and abroad, and draw a Venn diagram to share their ideas. 	**Comparison with own experience**
Period 2		
Reading comprehension	Students understand the main idea of the text "The road to my major" by : 1. Finding the key sentences for each paragraph. 2. Answering reading comprehension questions about the text on Page 36. 3. Write a short summary about the text, and submit to Xuexitong platform.	-
Period 3		
Reading comprehension	1. Students explore difficult sentences in Text A by: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout before class. b. Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them before class.	**Reflection & Meaning making**

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	c. Exchanging ideas about their understanding of these sentences in class. d. Teacher gives feedback. 2. Pair work: students identify the personal and cultural turning points influencing the author choosing her college major. For example, the metaphor of "too hot/too cold/just right" reflects the value of "moderation" in certain culture.	
Period 4		
Stories of China	1. Translation: Students translate some Chinese sentences on page 52 about the development of China's educational system and policy before class and teacher gives feedback in class. 2. Group discussion: Students reflect on the cultural messages (higher educational system behind major choosing).	**Reflection & Meaning making**
Period 5		
Language focus	1. Words: Students study the use of the new words in the text through exercises on page 36 and teacher explanation. (new words: artistic, aspiration, browse, confirm, magnificence, option, prolonged, provoke, release, reputable) 2. Word building: Students brainstorm with words ending in suffixes "-ing" and "-ive", and guess their formation and meanings. 3. Expressions: Students study the new expressions in the text through exercises on page 38 and teacher explanation. (new expressions: in awe, let sb. down, not up to par, obsessed with, passionate about, pick one's brains, throw ...out, turn out)	-
Period 6		
Reading skills	1. Teacher shows students how to read for the major details, and explain with a paragraph from text A. 2. Students read text B and identify the major details of some paragraphs in it. 3. Students doing reading comprehension exercises on page 49 to understand text B.	-
Period 7		
Reading skills	1. Teacher provides two articles of statistical analysis of the popular majors: 10 Helpful College Major Statistics for Students and Graduates (whattobecome.com) 大学生就业率排行榜！你的专业上榜了吗？ - 知乎 (zhihu.com) 2. Group discussion: Students talk about questions related to text B, and write down the answers on the discussion box of	**Reflection & Meaning making**

	the Xuexitong Platform : a. Is the humanities out of date in China like the author's description? b. According to the statistics from some articles, what are the popular and unpopular majors in China and the U.S? c. Are there social and economic reasons behind? 3. Students find out useful collocations about the topic "choosing a college major" in text A.	
Period 8		
Structural analysis and writing	1. Students study the narrative essay by analyzing paragraph 7 of text A to explore the steps of writing a narrative essay. 2. Students read a sample essay to get familiar with the narrative writing pattern. 3. Writing the outline of the narrative essay on the topic "How I Discovered My Ideal Major: A Cultural Reflection" in pairs, then sharing it with the class. 4. Students write the essay after class and submit to Xuexitong platform. Rubrics: a. Write a personal narrative describing their journey (real or imagined) of choosing a college major. b. Include cultural influences such as family expectations, national education systems, social values, or peer opinions,etc.. c. Integrate key concepts from the texts A and B (e.g., Confucian traditions, STEM prioritization, liberal arts ideals). d. No less than 180 words. e. Grammatically and semantically correct. f. Use at least 5 new words or expressions and 3 collocations related to the topic in text A. 5. Peer evaluation of the essay in groups and teacher feedback after class online.	**Task-based Output**
Period 9		
Unit projects	1. Students design a questionnaire in groups regarding the factors of choosing a college major, and distributing to international students and their schoolmates before class. 2. Teacher shares students' survey findings before class through Xuexitong, as one form of feedback. 3. Students report to the class their findings in groups in class. 4. Students modify their ideas and writings again after class**.**	**Feedback & Evaluation, Adjustment & further reflection**
Assignment and reflection	Period 2: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout. b. Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them. Period 4: Translating some Chinese sentences about the development of	

	China's educational system and policy Period 6: Group discussion: Students talk about questions related to text B Period 8: Writing the narrative essay "How I Discovered My Ideal Major: A Cultural Reflection" . Period 9: Modify their ideas and writings again.	
Assessment	**Rubrics**	1. Being able to use topic-related words and expressions properly in discussion and writing. 2. Being able to identify the major details of a paragraph in reading. 3. Being able to be aware of culture similarities and differences in the factors of choosing a major . 4. Being able to reflect on the reasons and possible effects of the difference in the factors of choosing a major .
	Means	1. Classroom tasks 2. After-class assignments

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 3</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time of instruction</td><td>2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>9-11</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 1/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 3 The young generation: making a difference</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td>Knowledge</td><td colspan="5">✧Background knowledge related to the topic of the unit.
✧Spelling, pronunciation, word meanings and usage of key words and phrases appearing in the unit.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills</td><td colspan="5">✧Writing skill of example essay.
✧Reading skill of predicting the author’s ideas.
✧Speaking skill of applying knowledge related to the theme of the unit to the discussion.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Intercultural communicative competence</td><td colspan="5">✧Become interested and willing to learn and talk about the perceptions about the younger generation of other cultures, and understand and tolerate their opinions.
✧Acquire the knowledge of the perceptions about the younger generation of their own and foreign countries.
✧Be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with foreigners about differences of the younger generations.
✧Being able to look at, reflect and explain differences of the younger generations in a proper way.
✧Being able to be aware of the similarities and differences in the younger generations and how they are reflected in certain documents and situations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">o Multimedia
o We-chat group
o We-Chat applets</td></tr>
</table>

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Teaching methods	○ Intercultural language learning (IcLL)	
The main teaching process and content		
Language learning modules	**Activities**	**Culture learning process**
Period 1		
Pre-reading activities & Reading compre-hension	Students watch videos of real interviews with young people engaged in technology, entrepreneurship, or social activities in China, the U.S., India. (NOVA | Inside China's Tech Boom | Season 50 | Episode 16 | PBS ABC Here And Now interviews Techie Youth students from our New York City class (24) New Media and Technology-Empowering the Indian Youth? - YouTube)	**Guided Input**
	Students read text A "The young generation- the future of China" .	
	Teacher asks students questions: 1. How do youth in these countries participate in STI? 2. What challenges do they face?	**Noticing of unfamiliar features**
Period 2		
Reading compre-hension	Pair work: Students list the similarities and differences of the young generations between US, India and China, and share their ideas.	**Compariso n with own experience**
	Students understand the main idea of text A with the following activities: 1. Finding the key sentences for each paragraph. 2. Answering reading comprehension questions about the text on Page 62. 3. Write a short summary about the text.	-
Period 3		
Reading compre-hension	1. Students explore difficult sentences in Text A by: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout before class. b. Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them before class. c. Exchanging ideas about their understanding of these sentences in class. d. Teacher feedback. 2. Pair work: students identify the reason why there are differences in the young generation between the U.S., India and China, what may be the result? Think about the following questions of young people in	**Reflection & Meaning making**

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	these three countries: a. To what extent are they independent? b. How are failures and successes perceived? c. How do they respond to family and societal expectations? d. What are the common challenges and different strengths?	
Period 4		
Stories of China	1. Students translate some Chinese sentences about "Chinese young people's entrepreneurship" on page 78 before class. 2. Teacher gives feedback in class. 3. Search the web for the government support for the young people's entrepreneurship after class, is it the same with the U.S. and India?	**Reflection & Meaning making**
Period 5		
Language focus	1. Words in use: Students study the use of the new words in the text through exercises on page 62 and teacher explanation. (new words: assign, endure, exhibit, flexible, internal, parallel,persistence, recruit, stunning, vigorous) 2. Word building: Students brainstorm with words ending in suffixes "-ion" and "-ic" and "-ist", guessing their formation and meanings. 3. Expressions: Students study the new expressions in the text through exercises on page 64 and teacher explanation. (new expressions: be accustomed to, be based on, for the sake of,have a passion for, no exaggeration, strive for, take it for granted that, tap into)	-
Period 6		
Reading skills	1. Teacher shows the students how to predict the author's ideas, and explain with a paragraph from text A. 2. Students read text B "Journey Through the Odyssey Years" and predict the author's ideas with exercises between paragraphs of the text. 3. Students do reading comprehension exercises on page 75 to understand text B.	
Period 7		
Reading skills	1. Students scan the passage describing the younger generation in China (文旅视角独家解析，Z 世代的 15 大"专属标签" - 知乎 (zhihu.com)) and the discussion about the perception of the younger generation from other	**Reflection & Meaning making**

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	countries. (（1）您如何看待 Z 世代？- 库拉 (quora.com)) 2. Group discussion: Students analyze the cases in the passages and talk about questions related to text B based on the comparison of the behaviors and situations of young people in China, the United States and India. The following words can be used for hints. Independence / Collectivism Success vs. Fulfillment Parental control / Self-exploration Delayed adulthood Innovation vs. Stability Talk about the questions after class in groups and submit the answer through Xuexitong Platform: ① What values are reflected in how young people behave in each country? ② Do you think these values are influenced more by family, school, or society? Why? ③ How do your own cultural background and experiences shape your view on what young people "should" do? 3. Students find useful collocations about the topic "young generation" in text A and B.	
Period 8		
Structural analysis and writing	1. Students study the example essay by analyzing paragraph 1 and 4 of text A. 2. Students read a sample essay. 3. Students reflect on the culture topics "young generation" in the previous sessions. 4. Students write the outline of the example essay on the topic "Young People Around the World in My Eyes" in pairs, then sharing it with the class. 5. Students writing the essay after class, and submit to Xuexitong Platform. Rubrics: a. Write an example essay portraying the traits, values, and social impact of young people in two or more countries. b. Include cultural influences such as generational values, digital behavior, work ethics, and innovation. c. Integrate key concepts and examples from Text A (e.g., tech innovation, youth values) and supplementary sources. d. No less than 180 words. e. Grammatically and semantically correct. f. Use at least 5 new words or expressions and 3 collocations related to the topic in Text A.	**Task-based Output, Feedback & Evaluation**

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<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">6. Peer evaluation of the example essay in groups and teacher feedback after class online.
7. Students modifying their ideas and writings after class.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Period 9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit projects</td><td colspan="2">1. Students prepare for a talk show after class in groups, and role play in class the Chinese, Indian and American perception of the young generation, based on the writing.
2. Teacher and peer evaluation and feedback.
3. Students modify their ideas and writings again after class.</td><td>Task-based Output, Feedback & Evaluation, adjustment & further reflection</td></tr>
<tr><td>Assignment and reflection</td><td colspan="3">Period 2: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout.
b. Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them before class.
Period 3: Students translate some Chinese sentences about “Chinese young people’s entrepreneurship”.
Period 6: Group discussion: Students talk about questions related to text B based on the comparison of the behaviors and situations of young people in China, the United States and India.
Period 8: a. Students write the essay “Young People Around the World in My Eyes” after class.
b.Students prepare for a talk show after class in groups, and role play in class the Chinese, Indian and American perception of the young generation, based on the writing.
Period 9: Students modify their ideas and writings again.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Assessment</td><td>Rubrics</td><td colspan="2">1. Being able to use topic-related words and expressions properly in discussion and writing.
2. Being able to identify the denotation and connotation of a word in reading.
3. Being able to be aware of culture similarities and differences in the young generation.
4. Being able to reflect on the reasons and possible effects of different young generations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Means</td><td colspan="2">1. Classroom tasks
2. After-class assignments</td></tr>
</table>

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 4</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time of instruction</td><td>2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>12-14</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 2/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 4 Striving for financial health</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td>Knowledge</td><td colspan="5">✧Background knowledge related to the topic of the unit.
✧Spelling, pronunciation, word meanings and usage of key words and phrases appearing in the unit.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills</td><td colspan="5">✧Writing skill of comparison/ contrast essay.
✧Reading skill of understanding denotation and connotation.
✧Speaking skill of applying knowledge related to the theme of the unit to the discussion.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Intercultural communicative competence</td><td colspan="5">✧Become interested and willing to learn and talk about the value of save and spend of other cultures, and understand and tolerate their opinions.
✧Acquire the knowledge of the values of save and spend of their own and foreign countries.
✧Be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with foreigners about the the values of save and spend.
✧Being able to look at, reflect and explain different values of save and spend in a proper way.
✧Being able to be aware of the similarities and differences in save and spend among different cultures and how they are reflected in certain documents and situations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">○ Multimedia
○ We-chat group
○ We-Chat applets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="6">○ Intercultural language learning (IcLL)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
</table>

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Language learning modules	Activities	Culture learning process
Period 1		
Pre-reading activities	1. Teacher distributes a survey checking students spending habits, and shows students the result. 2. Students scan an article about US college students' spending habits: "College Students, Take Note: Develop Good Spending Habits and Secure Your Future" The Spending Habits of College Students | The Vector Impact	**Guided Input**
	Teacher asks students questions: 1. What is the typical spending habit of our class? 2. What's your opinion about college students' spending habits? 3. What is the typical spending habit of US. college students?	**Noticing of unfamiliar features**
	Pair work: students list the similarities and differences of spending habits between US and China, and share their ideas.	**Comparison with own experience**
Period 2		
Reading compre-hension	Students understand the main idea of text A "Spend or Save - the Students' Dilemma" with the following activities: 4. Finding the key sentences for each paragraph. 5. Answering reading comprehension questions about the text on Page 114. 6. Write a short summary about the text.	-
Period 3		
Reading compre-hension	3. Students explore difficult sentences in Text A by: e. Previewing new words and expressions handout before class. f. Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them before class. g. Presenting ideas about their understanding of these sentences in class. h. Teacher feedback. 4. Group work: students identify the reasons for the spend habits of US college students, and think whether the situation is the same in China, and present their their ideas in groups.	**Reflection & Meaning making**
Period 4		
Stories f China	1. Translation: Students translate some Chinese sentences on page 132 about Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean before class and teacher feedback in class.	**Reflection & Meaning making**

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	2. Discussion: What do you think are the reasons of the similarities and differences of the spending habits between China and the West?	
Period 5		
Language focus	1. Words: Students study the use of the new words in the text through exercises on page 114 and teacher explanation. (new words: budget, defy, dilemma, diverse, loyalty, manipulate, objective, perspective, tackle, urge) 2. Word building: Students brainstorm with words ending in suffixes "-ion" and "-ic", and guess their formation and meanings. 3. Expression: Students study the new expressions in the text through exercises on page 116 and teacher explanation. (new expressions: at odds with, do one's utmost, put … off, retain control over, spin out of control, stay on track, take in, take stock of)	-
Period 6		
Reading skills	1. Students understand denotation and connotation by watching a video about it: (39) Denotation and Connotation: What's the Difference? - YouTube 2. Students read text B and identify the denotation and connotation of some words in it. 3. Students do reading comprehension exercises on page 129 to understand text B. 4. Pair discussion: Students talk about questions related to text B: a. Do you have a credit card? b. Is credit card a common thing in China's college? Why or why not? 5. Students have a debate after class on "whether credit card spending is a responsible behavior", showing their views about cash advance culture. And record the debate in groups.	**Reflection & Meaning making**
Period 7		
Reading skills	1. Teacher plays the debate recording. 2. Students find out useful collocations about the topic "spend and save" in text A and B. 3. Students study the adv. + adj. form of collocation with the exercises from the textbook.	-
Period 8		

Structural analysis and writing	1. Students study the "subject-by-subject" pattern of a comparison / contrast essay by analyzing paragraph 3 and 4 of Text A to explore how parallel points are presented with the help of teacher's guide. 2. Students read a sample essay on page 118 and analyze the pattern to get familiar with it. 3. Teacher combs through previous intercultural activities to help students reflect on the culture topics "college student spending habits" and "values on spend and save" in the previous sessions. 4. Students write the outline of the "subject-by-subject" pattern of a comparison / contrast essay on the topic "Spending habits of the Westerners and Chinese college students" in pairs, then share it with the class. 5. Students write the essay after class. Rubrics: a. Write a **comparison/contrast essay** following a subject-by-subject structure, analyzing spending behaviors in different cultures. b. Include cultural factors such as saving traditions, credit card use, and consumption values. c. Integrate key cultural perspectives and examples from Text A (e.g., cash vs. credit, frugality vs. indulgence). d. No less than **180 words**. e. Grammatically and semantically correct. f. Use at least **5 new words or expressions** and **3 collocations** related to the topic in Text A.	**Task-based Output**
Period 9		
Unit projects	1. Students design a questionnaire regarding college student spending habits, and teacher helps to distribute to international students before class. 2. Teacher shares the findings in class. 3. Teacher and peer evaluation and feedback on their previous ideas in their writings. 4. Students complete a checklist to evaluate the input material of this unit and their writing output. 5. Students modify their ideas and write again**.**	**Feedback & Evaluation, adjustment & further reflection**
Assignment and reflection	Period 2: a. Previewing new words and expressions handout. b.Working in groups to select the difficult sentences and analyze them. Period 3: Translating some Chinese sentences about Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean. Period 6: Having a debate after class on "whether credit card spending is a responsible behavior".	

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	Period 8: a. Writing a comparison / contrast essay on the topic “Spending habits of the Westerners and Chinese college students”. b. Designing a questionnaire regarding college student spending habits.	
Assessment	**Rubrics**	1. Being able to use topic-related words and expressions properly in discussion, presentation, debate and writing. 2. Being able to identify the denotation and connotation of a word in reading. 3. Being able to be aware of culture similarities and differences in spending habits. 4. Being able to reflect on the reasons and possible effects of different spending habits.
	Means	1. Classroom tasks 2. After-class assignments

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Lesson Plan for Control Group

<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Time of instruction</td><td colspan="2">2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>3-5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 2/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 1 Language in mission</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td>Knowledge</td><td colspan="5">✧Understand background information related to the unit theme Language in Mission.
✧Master key vocabulary, phrases, and word-building rules presented in the unit.
✧Understand basic text structures and sentence patterns used in the unit texts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills</td><td colspan="5">✧Develop reading comprehension skills, especially reading for key ideas in sentences.
✧Improve writing skills by learning how to move from paragraph writing to short essay writing.
✧Enhance basic discussion and expression skills through text-based classroom activities.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Literacy</td><td colspan="5">✧Cultivate serious attitudes toward English learning.
✧Develop basic cooperation and communication skills through pair and group activities.
✧Strengthen awareness of effective learning strategies in college English study.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">○ Multimedia
○ We-chat group
○ We-Chat applets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="6">○ Convectional Textbook-oriented language teaching</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
<tr><td>Language learning modules</td><td colspan="6">Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Period 1</td></tr>
</table>

Pre-reading activities	1. The teacher introduces the unit theme "Language in Mission" and explains the learning objectives of Unit 1. 2. Background information about Malcolm X is provided through a brief teacher-led lecture supported by PPT slides. 3. Pre-reading questions are raised to activate students' prior knowledge, such as: ① Why do people learn a foreign language? ② What difficulties have you experienced in learning English? ③ In what situations do you think language can influence people's lives? Students respond orally in pairs or as a whole class. 4. The teacher gives brief comments and introduces Text A, explaining that the text focuses on the role of language in personal growth.
Period 2	
Reading compre-hension– Global Reading	1. Students skim Text A: An Impressive English Lesson to grasp the main idea and overall structure. 2. The teacher guides students to focus on: ① The topic sentence of each paragraph ② The general organization of the text 3. Students complete the global reading / general comprehension questions provided after Text A (e.g., identifying the author's purpose and the main idea of the text). 4. The teacher checks answers with the class and summarizes the overall structure of the text.
Period 3	
Reading compre-hension – Detailed Reading	1. The teacher selects several key paragraphs and long or complex sentences from Text A. 2. Sentence-level analysis is conducted by guiding students to: ① Identify sentence structure (subject, predicate, modifiers) ② Understand logical relationships within sentences 3. Translation and paraphrasing activities are used to help students understand meaning and improve sentence comprehension. 4. Students answer detailed comprehension questions related to specific paragraphs.
Period 4	
Language focus	1. This period focuses on language knowledge, including vocabulary, phrases, and word formation. 2. The teacher explains key words and phrases from the unit, drawing attention to meaning, usage, and collocation. 3. Students complete the following textbook-based exercises: ① Words in Use ② Expressions in Use 4. The teacher then introduces the Word Building section of Unit 1, focusing on: ① Adjectives ending in -al (e.g., cultural)

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	② Noun forms ending in -y (e.g., difficult → difficulty) 5. Students complete the corresponding Word Building exercises. 6. Depending on time, selected items from Banked Cloze / Collocation exercises are used to consolidate vocabulary learning.
Period 5	
Structural analysis and writing	1. The teacher introduces the structure analysis of Text A, focusing on how ideas are developed within paragraphs. 2. Key sentence patterns from the unit are explained with examples from the text. 3. The teacher then explains the writing focus of Unit 1: moving from paragraph writing to short essay writing. 4. Students analyze the sample structure provided in the textbook and complete guided writing-related exercises, such as outlining or reorganizing a paragraph.
Period 6	
Reading skills	1. The teacher introduces the reading skill of Unit 1: reading for the key ideas in sentences. 2. Examples are provided to show how key information is usually expressed through sentence structure and key words. 3. Students complete the Reading Skills exercises in the textbook. 4. After practicing the skill, students read Text B: The Great Journey of Learning and complete the Understanding the Text questions independently.
Period 7	
Reading skills	1. The teacher explains selected Understanding the Text questions from Text B, focusing on how the reading skill applies to the text. 2. Students then work on the Critical Thinking section, which requires them to: ① Reflect on the importance of learning ② Connect the text with their own learning experiences 3. Pair or group discussion is organized to allow students to share ideas.
Period 8	
Stories of China + Unit projects	1. The teacher introduces Section C: Stories of China, guiding students to read and understand the text. 2. Key ideas related to perseverance and learning are discussed. 3. The teacher then introduces the Unit Project: Writing a report on English learning, explaining: ① The task requirements ② The expected format ③ Group division and roles 4. Students discuss the project topic and begin preparing content in groups.
Period 9	

Unit Projects+ Unit review	1. Student groups present their Unit Project outcomes. 2. The teacher gives brief feedback on content and language use. 3. A systematic review of the unit is conducted, covering: ① Key vocabulary and phrases ② Word-building rules ③ Reading skills ④ Writing focus 4. Students complete short consolidation exercises.	
Assignment and reflection	1. Vocabulary review and online exercises. 2. Reading comprehension exercises related to Unit 1. 3. Completion or revision of Unit Project. 4. Short writing assignment based on unit theme.	
Assessment	**Rubrics**	1. Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar usage 2. Reading comprehension performance 3. Organization and clarity in writing tasks 4. Participation in classroom activities 5. Completion and quality of assignments
	Means	1. Classroom tasks 2. After-class assignments

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 2</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time of instruction</td><td>2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>3-5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 2/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 2 Exploring College Majors</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td>Knowledge</td><td colspan="5">✧Understand background information related to college majors and major selection.
✧Master key vocabulary, phrases, and word-building rules presented in the unit.
✧Understand basic text structure and sentence patterns used in the unit texts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills</td><td colspan="5">✧Develop reading comprehension skills, especially reading for major details.
✧Improve narrative writing skills related to personal experiences and choices.
✧Enhance basic discussion skills through text-based classroom activities.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Literacy</td><td colspan="5">✧Cultivate rational thinking about college study and future planning.
✧Develop the ability to express personal views logically and clearly.
✧Strengthen cooperation skills through pair and group work.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">○ Multimedia
○ We-chat group
○ We-Chat applets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="6">○ Convectional Textbook-oriented language teaching</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
<tr><td>Language learning modules</td><td colspan="6">Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Period 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pre-reading activities</td><td colspan="6">1. The teacher introduces the unit title Exploring College Majors and briefly explains that the unit focuses on how students choose college majors and plan their academic paths.
2. Students listen to a dialogue, and choose the information heard. The teacher raises preview-based questions from the textbook, such as:
① What is a college major?</td></tr>
</table>

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	② What factors may influence the choice of a major? ③ Have you ever thought seriously about what you want to study in college? 3. Students think individually and then discuss the questions in pairs. Several students share their ideas with the class. 4. The teacher gives brief comments and introduces Text A, explaining that it explores different considerations involved in choosing a college major.
Period 2	
Reading comprehension– Global Reading	1. Students skim Text A to grasp the main idea and overall organization of the passage. 2. The teacher guides students to focus on: ① The introduction and conclusion ② Topic sentences of each paragraph 3. Students complete the global reading / general comprehension questions following Text A in the textbook, focusing on identifying the author's purpose and the main points of the text. 4. The teacher checks answers with the class and summarizes the overall structure of Text A.
Period 3	
Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading	1. The teacher selects key paragraphs and several long or complex sentences from Text A for close reading. ① Sentence-level explanation focuses on: ② Sentence structure ③ Logical relationships between ideas 2. Translation and paraphrasing are used to help students understand meaning accurately. 3. Students answer detailed comprehension questions related to specific paragraphs of Text A, and the teacher provides clarification where needed.
Period 4	
Language focus	1. The teacher explains key vocabulary and phrases from Unit 2, paying attention to meaning and usage in context. 2. Students complete the following textbook-based exercises: ① Words in Use ② Expressions in Use 3. The teacher then introduces the Word Building section of Unit 2, focusing on the word-formation rules presented in the textbook (e.g. noun–verb or adjective–noun transformations specific to this unit). 4. Students complete the corresponding Word Building exercises. 5. Depending on time, selected items from Collocation / Banked Cloze exercises are used to consolidate vocabulary learning.
Period 5	

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Structural analysis and writing	1. The teacher introduces the structure analysis of Text A, focusing on how ideas are organized and developed. 2. Attention is given to paragraph structure and narrative sequencing. 3. The teacher then explains the writing focus of Unit 2: narrative writing, as specified in the textbook. 4. Students analyze the sample narrative structure provided in the textbook and complete guided writing preparation tasks, such as identifying key events and organizing ideas.
Period 6	
Reading skills	1. The teacher introduces the reading skill of Unit 2: reading for major details. 2. Examples are used to show how major details support the main idea of a paragraph. 3. Students complete the Reading Skills exercises provided in the textbook. 4. After practicing the reading skill, students read Text B and complete the Understanding the Text questions independently.
Period 7	
Reading skills	1. The teacher explains selected Understanding the Text questions from Text B, focusing on how major details help readers understand the text more clearly. 2. Students then work on the Critical Thinking section, which encourages them to: ① Reflect on personal interests and abilities ② Consider how different factors influence major selection 3. Pair or group discussion is organized to help students share and clarify their ideas.
Period 8	
Stories of China + Unit projects	1. The teacher introduces Section C: Stories of China, guiding students to read and understand the text. 2. Discussion focuses on how educational choices relate to personal development and national needs. 3. The teacher then introduces the Unit Project, explaining: ① The project topic related to college majors ② Task requirements and expected outcomes ③ Group organization and preparation steps 4. Students discuss project ideas in groups and begin planning their tasks.
Period 9	
Unit Projects+ Unit review	1. Student groups present their Unit Project outcomes. 2. The teacher gives brief feedback on content and language use. 3. A systematic review of the unit is conducted, covering: ① Key vocabulary and phrases ② Word-building rules

	③ Text structure and narrative writing ④ Reading skills and strategies 4. Students complete short consolidation exercises.	
Assignment and reflection	1. Vocabulary and word-building exercises. 2. Reading comprehension exercises related to Unit 2. 3. Completion or revision of the Unit Project. 4. Narrative writing task based on personal major choice.	
Assessment	**Rubrics**	1. Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar usage 2. Reading comprehension performance 3. Organization and clarity in writing tasks 4. Participation in classroom activities 5. Completion and quality of assignments
	Means	1. Classroom tasks 2. After-class assignments

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 3</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time of instruction</td><td>2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>3-5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="2">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 2/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="2">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 3 The Young Generation: Making a Difference</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td colspan="2">Knowledge</td><td colspan="4">✧Understand background information related to young people and social change.
✧Master key vocabulary, phrases, and word-building patterns presented in the unit.
✧Understand sentence structures and text organization used in the unit texts.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Skills</td><td colspan="4">✧Develop reading comprehension skills, especially predicting the author’s ideas.
✧Improve writing skills based on example essays in the unit.
✧Enhance discussion skills through text-based classroom activities.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Literacy</td><td colspan="4">✧Develop a rational and positive understanding of the role of the young generation.
✧Strengthen responsibility awareness and value judgment.
✧
✧Cultivate cooperation and communication skills through group activities.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">○ Multimedia
○ We-chat group
○ We-Chat applets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="6">○ Convectional Textbook-oriented language teaching</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
<tr><td>Language learning modules</td><td colspan="6">Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Period 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pre-reading activities</td><td colspan="6">1. The teacher introduces the unit title The Young Generation: Making a Difference and explains that the unit focuses on young people’s roles in society and future development.
2. Students vote their expectations for future career.
3. The teacher raises vote-based questions from the textbook, such as:</td></tr>
</table>

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	① How do young people influence society? ② In what ways can the young generation make a difference? 4. Students discuss the questions in pairs and share selected ideas with the class. 5. The teacher briefly comments on students' responses and introduces Text A.
Period 2	
Reading comprehension– Global Reading	1. Students skim Text A to identify the main idea and overall structure. 2. The teacher guides students to focus on: ① The introduction of the topic ② How examples are used to support the author's ideas 3. Students complete the global reading / general comprehension exercises following Text A. 4. The teacher checks answers and summarizes the overall organization of the text.
Period 3	
Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading	1. The teacher explains key paragraphs and complex sentences from Text A. ① Attention is given to: ② Sentence structure ③ Rhetorical expressions 2. Logical connections between ideas 3. Translation and paraphrasing are used to clarify meaning. 4. Students complete detailed comprehension questions related to Text A.
Period 4	
Language focus	1. The teacher explains key vocabulary and phrases from Unit 3. 2. Students complete textbook exercises including: ① Words in Use ② Expressions in Use 3. The teacher introduces the Word Building section, explaining the specific word-formation rules presented in this unit. 4. Students complete the corresponding Word Building exercises. 5. Selected Collocation / Banked Cloze items are used to reinforce vocabulary learning when appropriate.
Period 5	
Structural analysis and writing	1. The teacher analyzes the structure of Text A, focusing on how examples are organized to support ideas. 2. The writing focus of Unit 3 is introduced, based on the example essay provided in the textbook. 3. Students analyze the sample structure and complete guided writing preparation tasks, such as outlining ideas and identifying supporting details.
Period 6	

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Reading skills	1. The teacher introduces the reading skill of Unit 3: predicting the author’s ideas. 2. Examples are used to demonstrate how titles, topic sentences, and key words help readers predict meaning. 3. Students complete the Reading Skills exercises in the textbook. 4. Students then read Text B and complete the Understanding the Text questions.	
Period 7		
Reading skills	1. The teacher explains selected Understanding the Text questions from Text B. 2. Students work on the Critical Thinking section, which encourages reflection on: ① Youth responsibility ② Personal contribution to society 3. Group discussion is organized to exchange views and deepen understanding.	
Period 8		
Stories of China + Unit projects	1. The teacher introduces Section C: Stories of China, guiding students to read and understand the text. 2. Discussion focuses on how educational choices relate to personal development and national needs. 3. The teacher then introduces the Unit Project, explaining: ④ The project topic related to college majors ⑤ Task requirements and expected outcomes ⑥ Group organization and preparation steps 4. Students discuss project ideas in groups and begin planning their tasks.	
Period 9		
Unit Projects+ Unit review	1. The teacher introduces Section C: Stories of China, guiding students to read and discuss how young people contribute to national development. 2. The Unit Project is introduced, including: ① Project topic related to youth and social responsibility ② Task requirements ③ Group roles and preparation steps 3. Students discuss project ideas and begin preparation.	
Assignment and reflection	1. Vocabulary and word-building exercises. 2. Reading comprehension exercises related to Unit 3. 3. Completion or revision of the Unit Project. 4. Writing practice related to youth topics	
Assessment	**Rubrics**	1. Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar usage 2. Reading comprehension performance 3. Organization and clarity in writing tasks 4. Participation in classroom activities

		5. Completion and quality of assignments
	Means	1. Classroom tasks 2. After-class assignments

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="7">Lesson Plan 4</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time of instruction</td><td colspan="2">2024</td><td>Semester</td><td>2</td><td>Week</td><td>3-5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Course</td><td colspan="3">College English</td><td rowspan="2">Department/ Class/ Grade</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">School of Physics and Electronic Engineering/ Electronic information class 2/ 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textbook</td><td colspan="3">New Horizon College English (4th ed.)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Mary</td><td>Title</td><td>Lecturer</td><td>Duration</td><td colspan="2">9 periods (45mins/period)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit/ Topic</td><td colspan="6">Unit 4 Striving for Financial Health</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Teaching objectives</td><td colspan="2">Knowledge</td><td colspan="4">✧Understand background information related to financial health and consumption.
✧Master key vocabulary, phrases, and word-building patterns in the unit.
✧Understand sentence structures and organizational patterns used in the texts.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Skills</td><td colspan="4">✧Develop reading comprehension skills, especially understanding denotation and connotation.
✧Improve writing skills focusing on comparison and contrast.
✧Enhance discussion skills on financial topics.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Literacy</td><td colspan="4">✧Develop rational consumption concepts.
✧Build awareness of financial responsibility.
✧Cultivate disciplined learning habits.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary means</td><td colspan="6">○ Multimedia
○ We-chat group
○ We-Chat applets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching methods</td><td colspan="6">○ Convectional Textbook-oriented language teaching</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">The main teaching process and content</td></tr>
<tr><td>Language learning modules</td><td colspan="6">Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Period 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pre-reading activities</td><td colspan="6">1.The teacher introduces the unit title Striving for Financial Health and explains that the unit focuses on spending habits and financial literacy.
2.Students work on a survey about their spending habits.
3.The teacher asks survey-based questions include:
① Do you usually save money or spend it?
② What does “financial health” means in your daily lives?
③ Why is financial literacy important for college students?
4.Students discuss in pairs and share ideas.
5.The teacher introduces Text A.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Period 2</td></tr>
</table>

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Reading comprehension– Global Reading	1. Students skim Text A to identify the main idea and structure. 2. The teacher raises guided comprehension questions adapted from textbook exercises to check understanding. 3. Students identify key arguments related to financial decision-making and consumer behavior. 4. Pair discussion is arranged before whole-class feedback.
Period 3	
Reading comprehension – Detailed Reading	1. The teacher explains key paragraphs and complex sentences from Text A. 2. Translation and explanation are used to clarify meaning. 3. Students complete detailed comprehension questions related to Text A.
Period 4	
Language focus	1.The teacher explains key vocabulary and phrases related to finance and consumption. 2.Students complete: ① Words in Use ② Expressions in Use 3.The Word Building section is introduced, focusing on the specific word-formation rules in Unit 4. 4.Students complete Word Building exercises. 5.Selected Collocation / Banked Cloze exercises are used for consolidation.
Period 5	
Structural analysis and writing	1. The teacher analyzes the structure of Text A, focusing on comparison and contrast. 2. The writing focus of Unit 4 is explained. 3. Students analyze the sample writing structure and complete guided writing preparation tasks.
Period 6	
Reading skills	1. The teacher introduces the reading skill “understanding denotation and connotation.” 2. Examples from the text are used to illustrate the difference between literal meaning and implied meaning. 3. Students practice identifying denotative and connotative meanings through textbook exercises. 4. Teacher feedback emphasizes how word choice influences interpretation.
Period 7	
Reading skills	1. The teacher explains key Understanding the Text questions. 2. Students complete the Critical Thinking section, discussing: ① Responsible spending ② Financial decision-making

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	3. Group discussion is organized.	
Period 8		
Stories of China + Unit projects	1. The teacher introduces Section C: Stories of China, focusing on financial responsibility and well-being. 2. The Unit Project is introduced, including task requirements and group preparation. 3. Students plan project tasks in groups.	
Period 9		
Unit Projects+ Unit review	1. Students present their Unit Project. 2. The teacher provides feedback. 3. A comprehensive review covers: ① Vocabulary and phrases ② Word building ③ Reading skills ④ Writing strategies 4. Short exercises are completed and the unit is summarized.	
Assignment and reflection	1. Vocabulary and word-building exercises. 2. Reading comprehension exercises related to Unit 4. 3. Completion or revision of the Unit Project. 4. Writing practice related to youth topics	
Assessment	**Rubrics**	1.Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar usage 2.Reading comprehension performance 3.Organization and clarity in writing tasks 4.Participation in classroom activities 5.Completion and quality of assignments
	Means	1. Classroom tasks 2. After-class assignments

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Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for the Students (English)

I'm so glad you come for this interview with me. I'd like to talk to you about your experiences and perceptions during the College English programme that you have just gone through with one of the goals of improving intercultural communicative competence. This interview will last about 20 minutes. The interview will be recorded and I will take some notes during the process. Your personal information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with others. You can ask to end the interview at any time if there is anything you don't want to talk about. If you have any questions or need further explanation, please feel free to let me know. So, let's get started.

Category	Themes	Examples of questions
Icebreakers	A1: Greetings	How was your day today?
	A2: Demographic information	What's your name? Where are you from? Have you ever been abroad?
Perceptions of ICC development	B1: the development of intercultural attitudes	How has your interest in cultures from other countries changed after the lessons, if at all? Has your willingness of learning different views on the same issue from both your own and other cultures changed after the lessons?
	B2: the development of intercultural knowledge	Did the lessons influence your understanding of cultures from other countries (e.g., values, beliefs, literature, art, institutions, geography, customs, social norms, etc.)? How did the lessons influence your understanding of your own culture, if at all? How did the lessons influence your understanding about how people in our country view cultures from other countries? Has your perspective on how people in other countries think about our culture changed after the lesson?
	B3: the development of	How, if at all, have the lessons influenced your ability to interpret events, behaviors (e.g., cultural gestures,

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	intercultural skills	conversational norms) and texts from other countries? Has your approach to learning about cultures of other countries changed after the lessons? How, if at all, have the lessons influenced your ability to communicate with people from different countries without conflict or misunderstanding?"
	B4: the development of intercultural awareness	How do feel about your ability of evaluating cultures of both your own and others after the lessons? Have the lessons influenced your awareness of viewing your own culture from the perspective of others? If so, in what way?
Effective instructional methods and activities	C1: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural attitudes	After the student answering Q1, ask "could you give examples to illustrate what activities worked to influence this intercultural attitude, positively or negatively?" After the student answering Q2, ask "could you give examples to illustrate what activities worked to influence this intercultural attitude, positively or negatively?"
	C2: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural knowledge	After the student answering Q3 and 4, ask "What kind of class activities, if any, influenced this intercultural knowledge? Can you provide examples?" After the student answering Q5 and 6, ask "What kind of class activities, if any, influenced this intercultural knowledge? Can you provide examples?"
	C3: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural skills	After the student answering Q7, ask "Have any class activities influenced this intercultural skill? Can you share some examples?" After the student answering Q8, ask "Have any class activities influenced this intercultural skill? Can you share some examples?" After the student answering Q9, ask "Have any class activities influenced this intercultural skill? Can you share some examples?"
	C4: methods and activities in the instruction that develop intercultural awareness	After the student answering Q10, ask "Have any class activities influenced this intercultural awareness? Can you share some examples?" After the student answering Q11, ask "Have any class activities influenced this intercultural awareness? Can you share some examples?"
Reflections on challenges and suggestions	D1: challenges encountered in the intervention	Were there any activities related to intercultural learning that you found particularly challenging? If so, what made them challenging?
	D2: additional comments	Do you have any question or suggestions? Feel free to talk about it!

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Interview Protocol (Chinese)

很高兴你能接受我的访谈。我想和你谈谈在刚刚结束的以提高跨文化交际能力为目标之一的大学英语课程中的经历和想法。这次访谈将持续20 分钟左右。访谈将会被录音，我也会在这个过程中做一些笔记。你的个人信息将会被保密，不会与他人分享。当有任何你不想谈论的事情时，你可以随时要求结束这次访谈。如果你有任何问题或者需要进一步的解释，请随时告诉我。那么，让我们开始吧!

类别	主题	问题示例
A. 破冰问题	A1:寒暄	a.今天过得怎么样啊?
	A2:人口统计学信息	b.你叫什么名字? c.你是哪里人啊? d.你出过国吗?
B. ICC 发展情况的看法	B1: 跨文化态度的发展	1. 经过课程学习后，你对其他国家文化的兴趣是否发生了变化？如果有，是怎样的变化？课程结束后，你对理解和接受本国与他国在同一问题上的不同观点的意愿是否有改变？
	B2: 跨文化知识的发展	2. 这段时间的英语课对你对他国文化（如价值观、信仰、文学、艺术、制度、地理、习俗、社会规范等）的了解是否有所影响？ 3. 这段时间的英语课对你对本国文化的理解产生了什么影响，如果有的话？ 4. 经过课程学习后，你对我国人民如何看待其他国家文化的了解有没有变化？如果有，是怎样的？ 5. 经过课程学习后，你对其他国家的人如何看待我们文化的了解是否有所改变？
	B3: 跨文化技能的发展	6. 这段时间的英语课程是否影响了你解释其他国家事件、行为（如文化手势、会话规范）和文本的能力？如果有，是怎样的影响？ 7. 经过课程学习后，你获取和了解其他国家文化的能力是否发生了变化？ 8. 课程是否影响了你与不同国家人士进行无冲突或误解的沟通能力？如果有，是怎样的影响？
	B4: 跨文化意识的发展	9. 经过英语课程后，你怎样看你自己评价我国和他国文化的能力？ 10. 课程是否影响了你从他国人视角看待自己文化的意识？如果有，是怎样的影响？
C. 有效的教学方法和	C1: 培养跨文化态度的教	12. 在学生回答 Q1 后，询问：“你能举例说明哪些课堂活动对这一跨文化态度产生了积

活动	学方法和活动	极或消极的影响吗？” 13. 在学生回答 Q2 后，询问：“你能举例说明哪些课堂活动对这一跨文化态度产生了积极或消极的影响吗？”
	C2: 培养跨文化知识的教学方法和活动	14. 在学生回答 Q3 和 Q4 后，询问：“如果有的话，哪些课堂活动影响了你的跨文化知识？你能提供一些例子吗？” 15. 在学生回答 Q5 和 Q6 后，询问：“如果有的话，哪些课堂活动影响了你的跨文化知识？你能提供一些例子吗？”
	C3: 培养跨文化技能的教学方法和活动	16. 在学生回答 Q7 后，询问：“是否有任何课堂活动影响了你的跨文化技能？你能分享一些例子吗？” 17. 在学生回答 Q8 后，询问：“是否有任何课堂活动影响了你的跨文化技能？你能分享一些例子吗？” 18. 在学生回答 Q9 后，询问：“是否有任何课堂活动影响了你的跨文化技能？你能分享一些例子吗？”
	C4: 培养跨文化意识的教学方法和活动	19. 在学生回答 Q10 后，询问：“是否有任何课堂活动影响了你的跨文化意识？你能分享一些例子吗？” 20. 在学生回答 Q11 后，询问：“是否有任何课堂活动影响了你的跨文化意识？你能分享一些例子吗？”
D. 关于干预中挑战的反思和建议	D2: 干预中遇到的挑战	21. 在涉及跨文化学习的课堂活动中，你是否遇到过特别具有挑战性的活动？如果是，是什么让它变得具有挑战性？
	D3: 补充意见	22. 你有任何问题或建议吗？欢迎随时提出！

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Appendix C

Supplementary Data Analysis Tables and Figures

Tables for Validation of ICCAS

Table C1

Result of Item-Total Correlation Analysis

Item	Pearson's r	Significance (p)	Correlation Assessment
Q1	0.645	0.000	Significant
Q2	0.507	0.000	Significant
Q3	0.574	0.000	Significant
Q4	0.517	0.000	Significant
Q5	0.517	0.000	Significant
Q6	0.415	0.005	Significant
Q7	0.567	0.000	Significant
Q8	0.573	0.000	Significant
Q9	0.557	0.000	Significant
Q10	0.530	0.000	Significant
Q11	0.443	0.003	Significant
Q12	0.552	0.000	Significant
Q13	0.710	0.000	Significant
Q14	0.590	0.000	Significant
Q15	0.335	0.026	Significant
Q16	0.583	0.000	Significant
Q17	0.543	0.000	Significant
Q18	0.491	0.001	Significant
Q19	0.609	0.000	Significant
Q20	0.597	0.000	Significant
Q21	0.749	0.000	Significant
Q22	0.603	0.000	Significant
Q23	0.696	0.000	Significant
Q24	0.783	0.000	Significant
Q25	0.654	0.000	Significant
Q26	0.651	0.000	Significant
Q27	0.827	0.000	Significant
Q28	0.602	0.000	Significant
Q29	0.641	0.000	Significant

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Table C2

Critical Ratio Analysis Results

Item	High Group Mean	Low Group Mean	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d	Decision
Q1	4.75	2.20	-4.514	0.000	1.45	Retain
Q2	4.50	2.10	-2.825	0.010	1.37	Retain
Q3	4.60	2.15	-4.281	0.000	1.42	Retain
Q4	4.20	2.30	-3.018	0.006	1.26	Retain
Q5	4.10	2.40	-2.559	0.018	1.19	Retain
Q6	3.90	2.50	-2.167	0.041	1.05	Retain
Q7	4.30	2.35	-2.624	0.015	1.28	Retain
Q8	4.50	2.45	-3.068	0.005	1.33	Retain
Q9	4.20	2.50	-3.130	0.005	1.22	Retain
Q10	4.00	2.60	-3.270	0.003	1.11	Retain
Q11	4.30	2.55	-2.512	0.019	1.10	Retain
Q12	4.40	2.60	-3.591	0.002	1.25	Retain
Q13	4.55	2.70	-5.137	0.000	1.50	Retain
Q14	4.50	2.80	-3.557	0.002	1.35	Retain
Q15	4.60	2.90	-2.445	0.023	1.20	Retain
Q16	4.70	3.00	-6.029	0.000	1.60	Retain
Q17	4.80	3.10	-4.514	0.000	1.45	Retain
Q18	4.90	3.20	-3.598	0.002	1.38	Retain
Q19	4.85	3.30	-4.649	0.000	1.40	Retain
Q20	4.75	3.40	-3.723	0.001	1.35	Retain
Q21	4.80	3.50	-8.055	0.000	1.80	Retain
Q22	4.85	3.60	-3.202	0.004	1.30	Retain
Q23	4.90	3.70	-4.478	0.000	1.50	Retain
Q24	4.95	3.80	-6.927	0.000	1.75	Retain
Q25	5.00	3.90	-4.016	0.001	1.40	Retain
Q26	5.05	4.00	-4.505	0.000	1.45	Retain
Q27	5.10	4.10	-7.659	0.000	1.85	Retain
Q28	5.15	4.20	-3.788	0.001	1.28	Retain
Q29	5.20	4.30	-3.797	0.001	1.30	Retain

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Table C3

Content Validity of ICCAS for Pilot Study

Dimension	Item ID	Item Content	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	I-CVI	Modification Required
ICAT	1	I am willing to communicate with foreigners from different cultural backgrounds.	5	5	5	1.00	✗
ICAT	2	I am willing to tolerate foreigners' different values, eating habits, and taboos.	4	5	4	1.00	✗
ICAT	3	I am interested in learning foreign languages and cultures to understand foreigners.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICKN	4	I understand my own country's history, geography, and socio-political systems.	5	5	4	1.00	✗
ICKN	5	I know my own country's lifestyle and values.	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICKN	6	I am familiar with my own country's social etiquette and religious culture.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICKN	7	I understand foreign countries' history, geography, and socio-political systems.	4	4	5	1.00	✗
ICKN	8	I know foreign lifestyles and values.	5	5	4	1.00	✗
ICKN	9	I am familiar with foreign social etiquette and religious culture.	5	4	4	1.00	✗
ICKN	10	I can recognize and identify foreign cultural taboos.	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICKN	11	I can compare basic norms and behaviors across different cultures.	5	5	4	1.00	✗
ICKN	12	I can describe core concepts in intercultural communication (e.g., culture shock).	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICKN	13	I know strategies for successful intercultural communication.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	14	I can negotiate and explain cultural differences to resolve misunderstandings.	3	3	4	0.33	✓ (Needs revision)
ICSK	15	I can use non-verbal communication when facing language barriers.	5	5	4	1.00	✗
ICSK	16	I can communicate effectively in a foreign	4	5	5	1.00	✗

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Dimension	Item ID	Item Content	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	I-CVI	Modification Required
		language with diverse cultural groups.					
ICSK	17	I treat foreigners politely during communication.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	18	I avoid offending foreigners through language, dress, or behavior.	4	5	4	1.00	✗
ICSK	19	I can avoid biases and prejudices toward foreigners.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	20	I avoid discussing foreigners' privacy during communication.	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	21	I can directly acquire intercultural knowledge through interactions with foreigners.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	22	I maintain sensitivity to cultural differences.	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	23	I use diverse methods to learn foreign languages and cultures.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICSK	24	I reflect on and learn from cross-cultural misunderstandings.	3	4	3	0.33	✓ (Needs revision)
ICSK	25	I analyze global events from multiple cultural perspectives.	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICAW	26	I recognize cultural similarities and differences during communication.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICAW	27	I interpret cultural values reflected in specific contexts (e.g., credit card usage).	4	5	5	1.00	✗
ICAW	28	I identify how cultural styles affect social/work situations.	5	4	5	1.00	✗
ICAW	29	I evaluate cultural issues objectively and comprehensively.	4	5	5	1.00	✗

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Tables for Demographic Equivalence Testing

Table C4

Gender Distribution of the Experimental and Control Groups (N = 110)

Group	Male (n, %)	Female (n, %)	Total (n, %)
CG	40 (50.0%)	14 (46.7%)	54 (49.1%)
EG	40 (50.0%)	16 (53.3%)	56 (50.9%)
Total	80 (72.7%)	30 (27.3%)	110 (100%)

Table C5

Distribution of Overseas Experience in the Experimental and Control Groups (N = 110)

Group	No Overseas Experience (n, %)	With Overseas Experience (n, %)	Total (n, %)
CG	52 (96.3%)	2 (3.7%)	54 (49.1%)
EG	55 (98.2%)	1 (1.8%)	56 (50.9%)
Total	107 (97.3%)	3 (2.7%)	110 (100%)

Table C6

Chi-square Test for Overseas Experience Between Groups

Test Method	χ^2 Value	df	*p* Value	Effect Size (φ)
Pearson Chi-square	.381	1	.537	.06
Fisher's Exact Test (2-tailed)	-	-	.615	-

Table C7

Age Distribution of the Experimental and Control Groups (N = 110)

Group	Median	Interquartile Range (IQR)	Skewness	Kurtosis
CG	19.0	0	0.37	0.77
EG	19.0	1	0.42	0.29

Table C8

Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Age Between Groups

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U Value	*p* Value	Effect Size (r)
CG	54	50.52	2728.00	1243.0	.062	.18
EG	56	60.30	3377.00	-	-	-

Tables for Verification of Covariate Correlations

Table C9

Correlations between OPT_total and Pretest Scores of ICC Dimensions

Variable	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
ICAT	.530*	<.001	110
ICKN	.614*	<.001	110
ICSK	.729*	<.001	110
ICAW	.640*	<.001	110
Total ICC Score	.788*	<.001	110

(*Note:* *p < .001)

Table for Linearity Between OPT Total Score and ICC Post-test

Table C10

Correlations Between OPT_total and Post-test Scores of ICC

Variable	Pearson's r	*p*-value
ICAT	.521	<.001
ICKN	.634	<.001
ICSK	.702	<.001
ICAW	.659	<.001

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Table for Linearity Between Pre- and Post-test Scores

Table C11

Correlations Between Pretest and Post-test Scores of ICC

Variable	Pearson's r	*p*-value
ICAT	.609	<.001
ICKN	.721	<.001
ICSK	.748	<.001
ICAW	.693	<.001

Tables for Normality Test

Table C12

Descriptive Statistics for Residuals

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Mean_Post_ICAT	0.00	0.358	0.089	-0.137	-0.77	0.93
Mean_Post_ICKN	0.00	0.312	-0.343	0.778	-0.97	0.89
Mean_Post_ICSK	0.00	0.307	0.218	0.032	-0.65	0.80
Mean_Post_ICAW	0.00	0.356	-0.054	0.080	-0.95	1.01

Table C13

Normality Test Results

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p)	Shapiro-Wilk (p)
Mean_Post_ICAT	.200	.715
Mean_Post_ICKN	.200	.244
Mean_Post_ICSK	.200	.441
Mean_Post_ICAW	.200	.589

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Table for Homogeneity of Variance Test

Table C14

Homogeneity of Variance Test (Levene's Test)

Dimension	Levene's F	df1	df2	*p* Value
ICAT	0.837	1	108	.362
ICKN	0.167	1	108	.683
ICSK	0.595	1	108	.442
ICAW	0.311	1	108	.578

Table for Baseline Equivalence of Covariates

Table C15

Baseline Comparison of Covariates between Experimental and Control Groups (Independent Samples t-Test)

Variable	Group	M ± SD	Levene F (*p*)	t (df)	*p*-value	Cohen's *d* [95% CI]
OPT_total	EG	59.46 ± 12.97	0.247 (.620)	0.124 (108)	.902	0.024 [-.350, .397]
	CG	59.78 ± 13.59				
ICAT_Pre	EG	3.87 ± 0.57	0.002 (.963)	-0.441 (108)	.660	-0.084 [-.458, .290]
	CG	3.82 ± 0.57				
ICKN_Pre	EG	3.01 ± 0.56	0.563 (.455)	1.093 (108)	.277	0.208 [-.167, .583]
	CG	3.13 ± 0.51				
ICSK_Pre	EG	3.32 ± 0.51	0.190 (.664)	1.173 (108)	.243	0.224 [-.152, .598]
	CG	3.43 ± 0.54				
ICAW_Pre	EG	3.43 ± 0.67	4.264 (.041)	0.182 (102.1)	.856	0.020 [-.204, .245]
	CG	3.45 ± 0.51				

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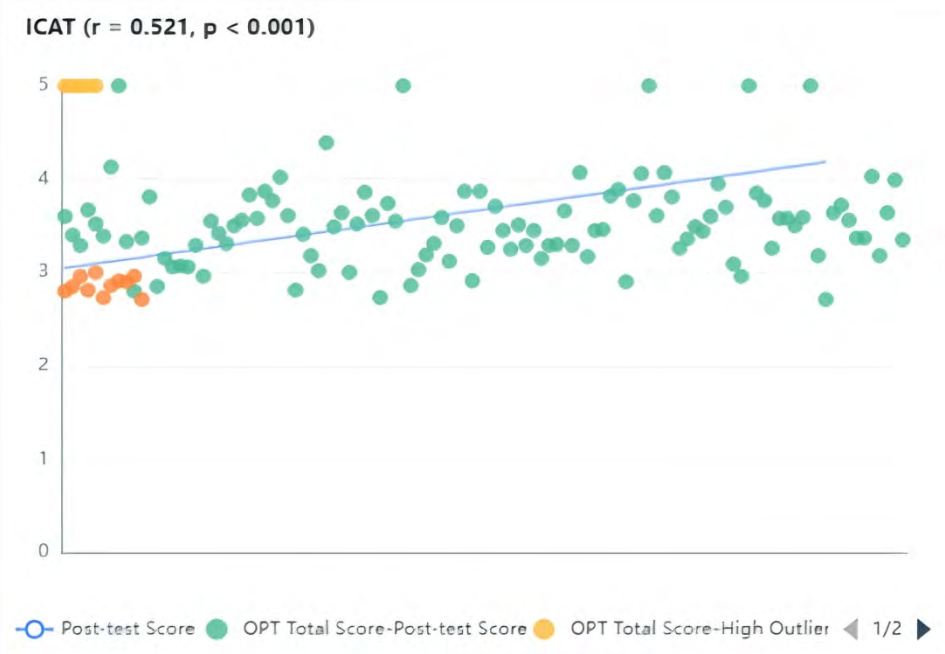
Table for Test of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

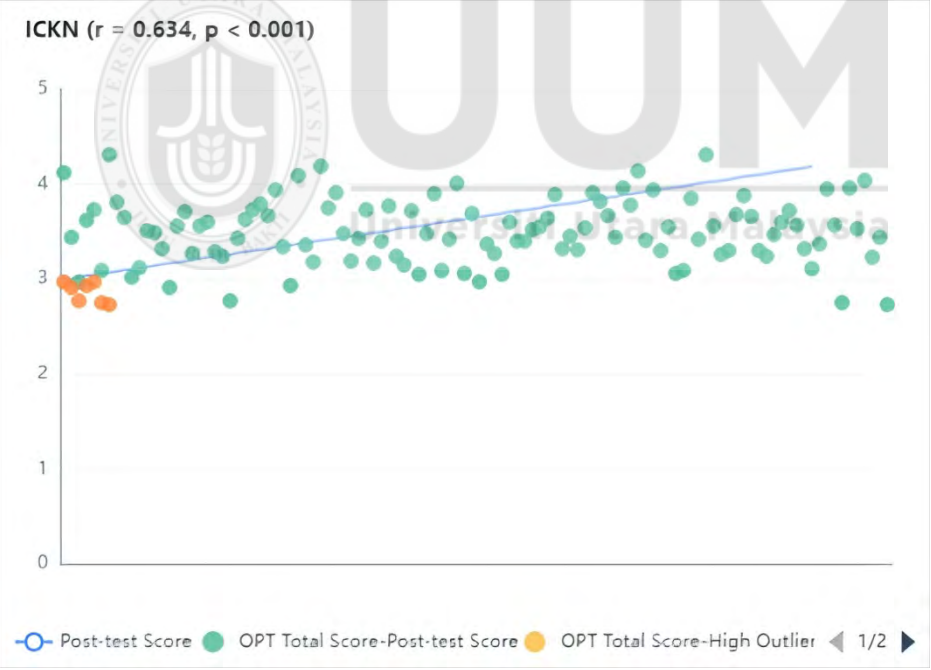
Table C16

Interaction Effects Between Group and Covariates Across ICC Dimensions

Dimension	Group × OPT_total	*p*-value	Group × Mean_Pre_Dimension	*p*-value
ICAT	$F(1,104) = 1.172$	.281	$F(2,104) = 28.069$	<.001
ICAW	$F(1,104) = 2.415$	.123	$F(2,104) = 0.036$	.851
ICSK	$F(1,104) = 13.834$	<.001	$F(2,104) = 1.096$	.338
ICKN	$F(1,104) = 1.243$	.268	$F(2,104) = 5.333$	.060

Figure C1. Scatter-plot for Linearity Between OPT Total Score and ICC Post-test





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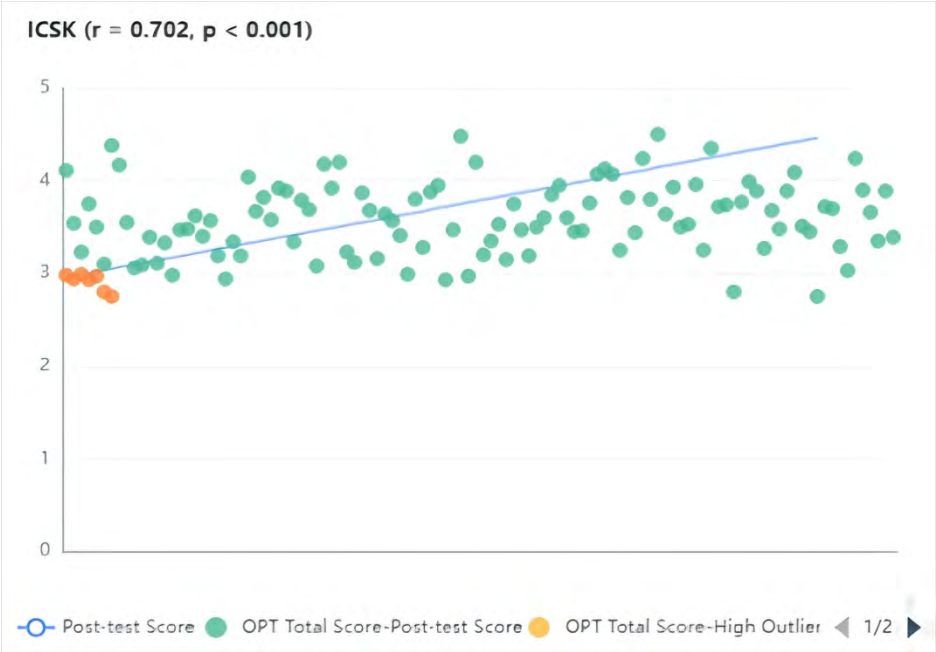

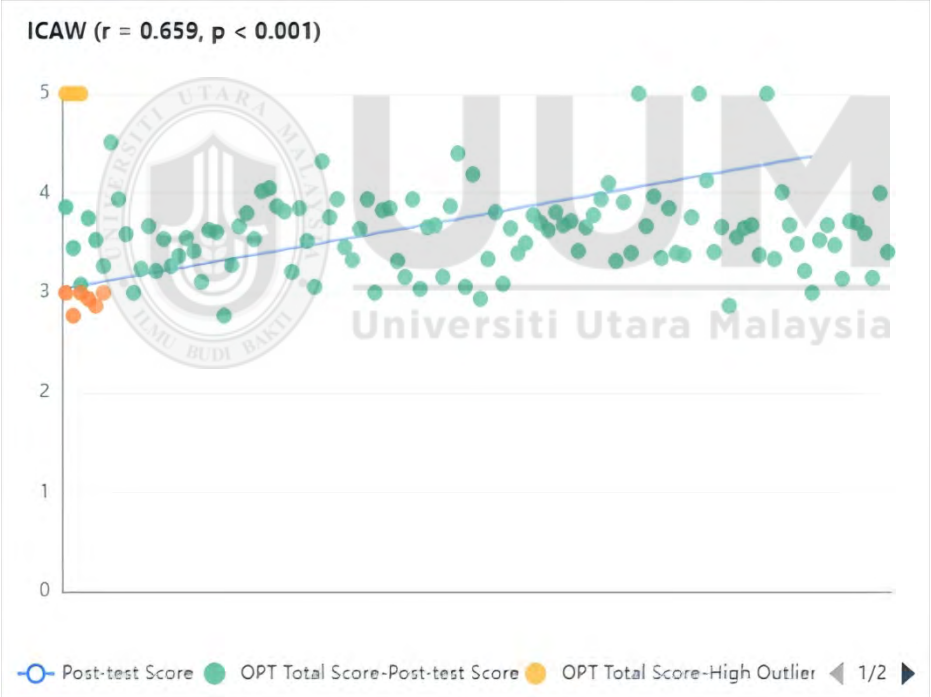

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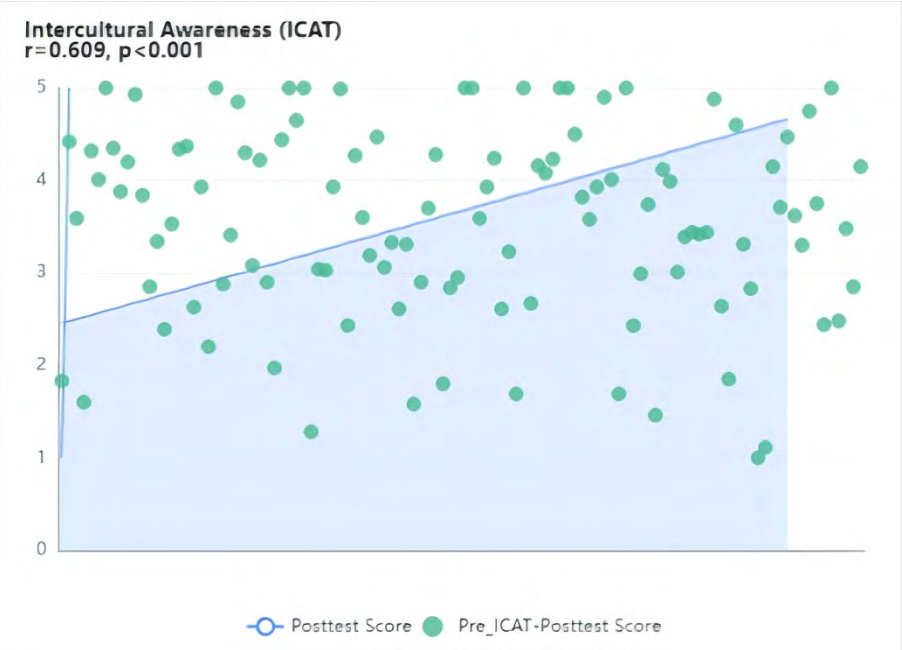
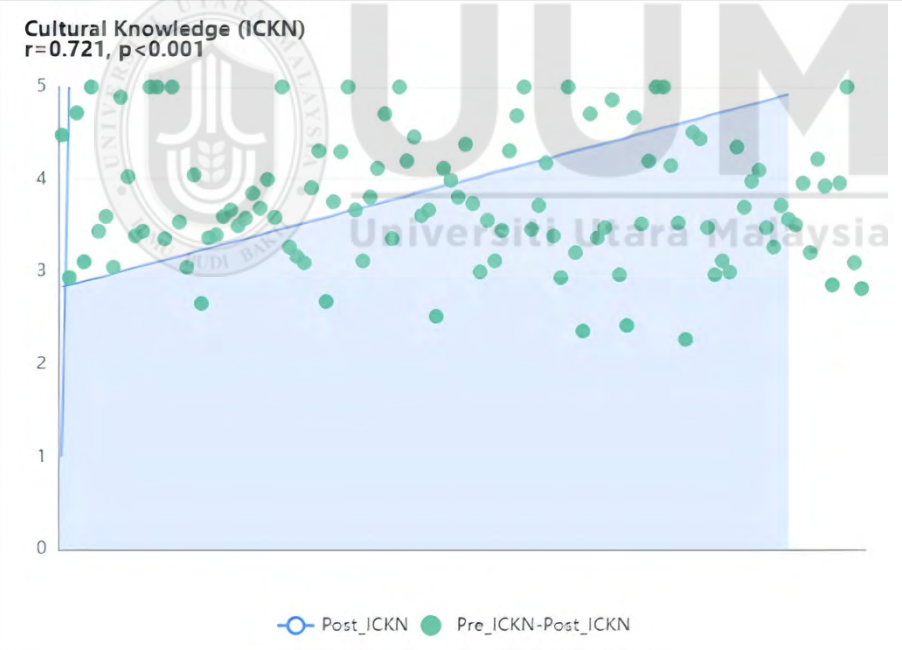
Figure C2. Scatter-plots for Linearity Between ICC Pre- and Post-test of ICC





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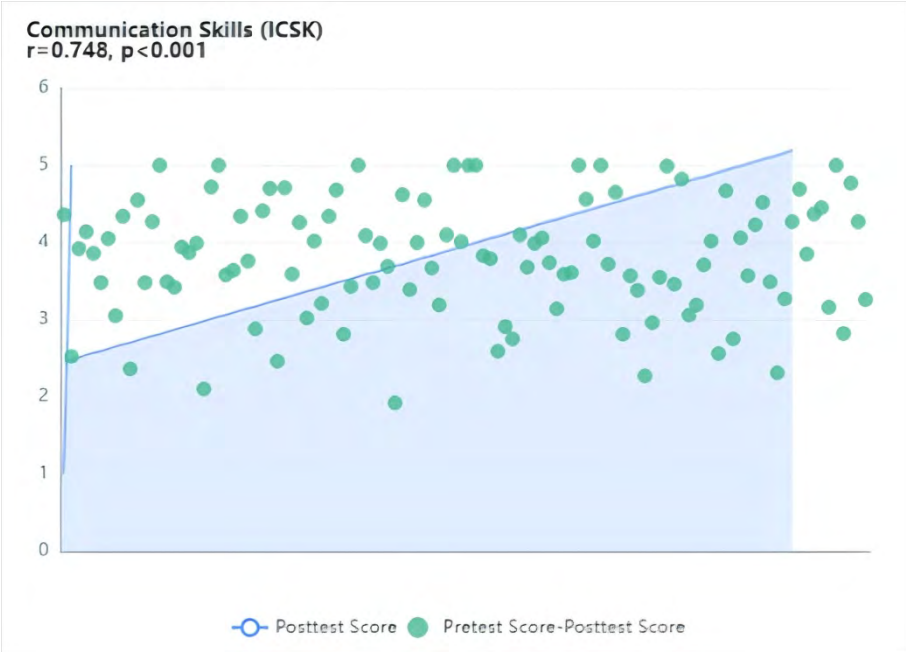

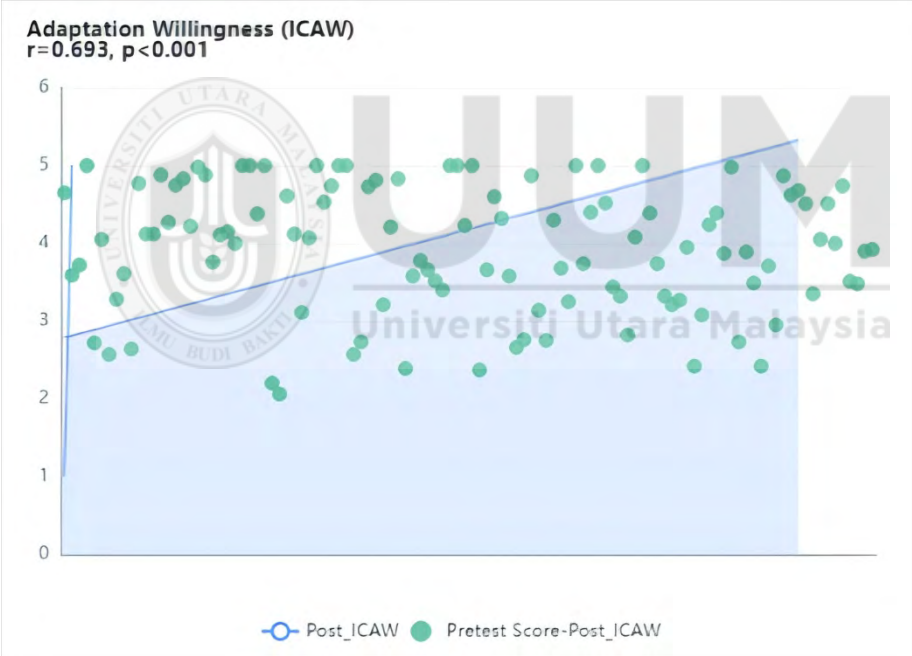

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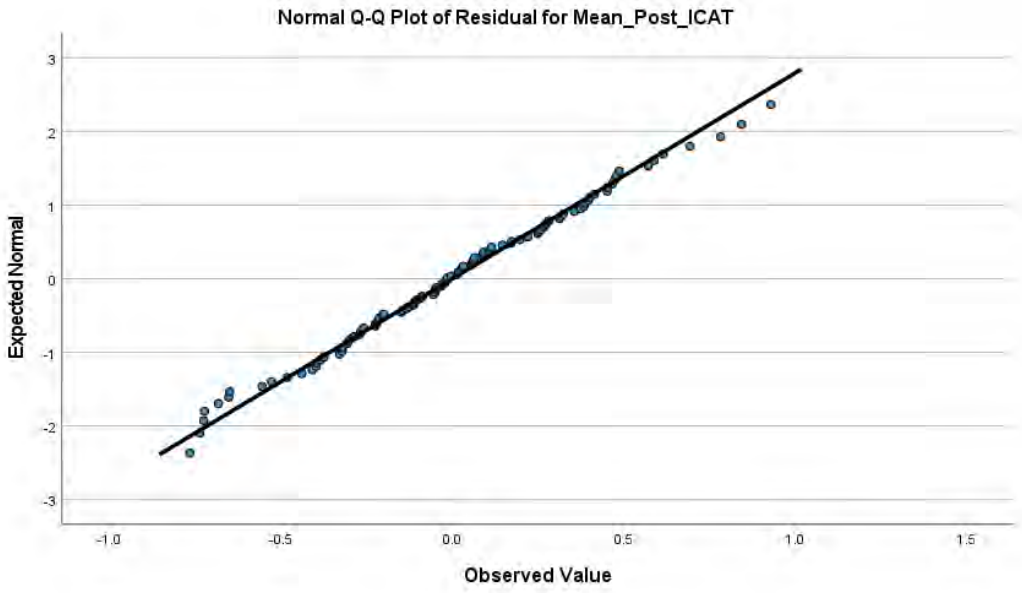
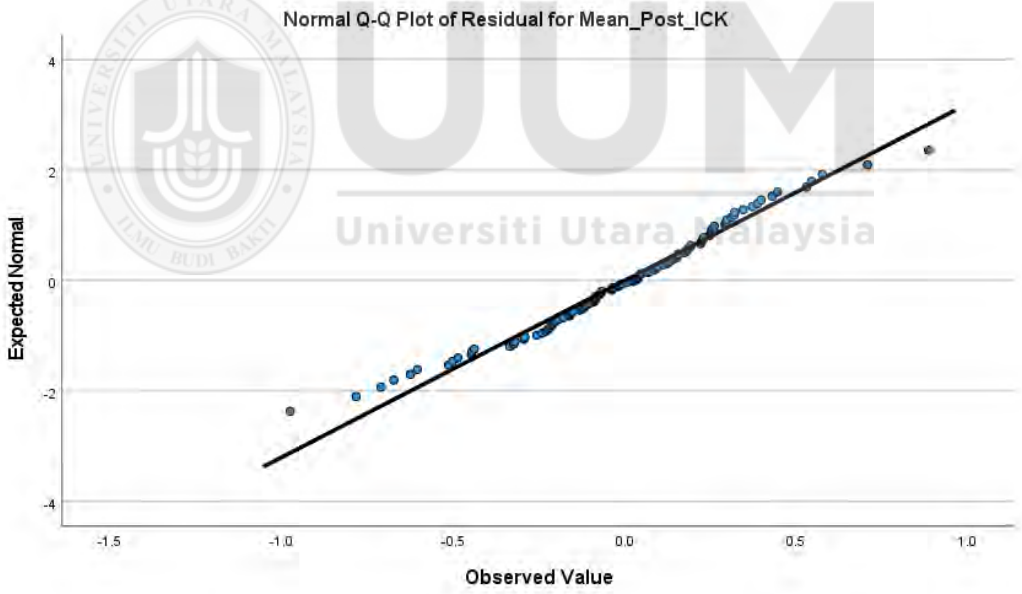
Figure C3. Normal Q-Q Plots of Residual for All Dimensions of ICC





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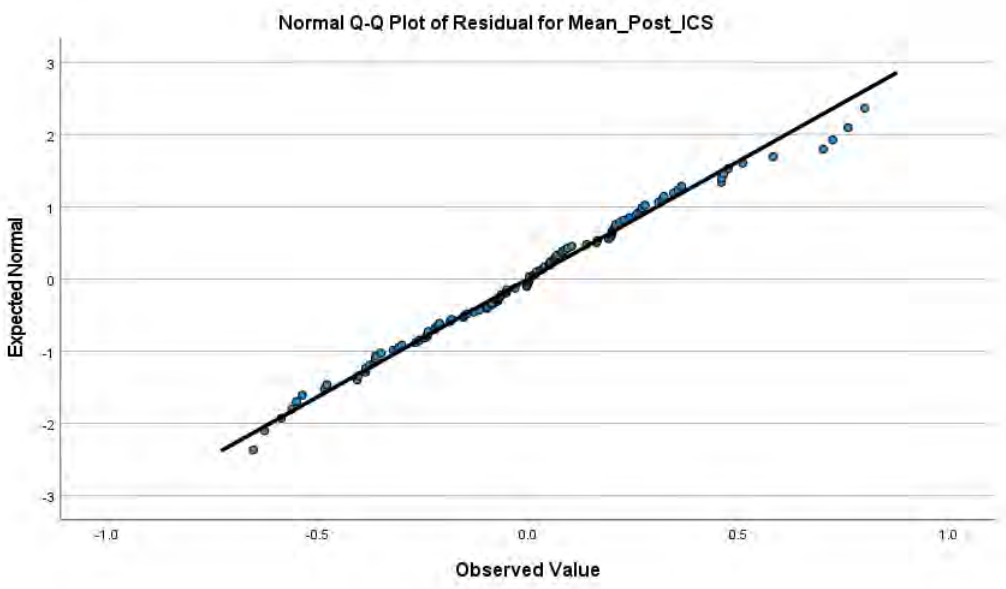

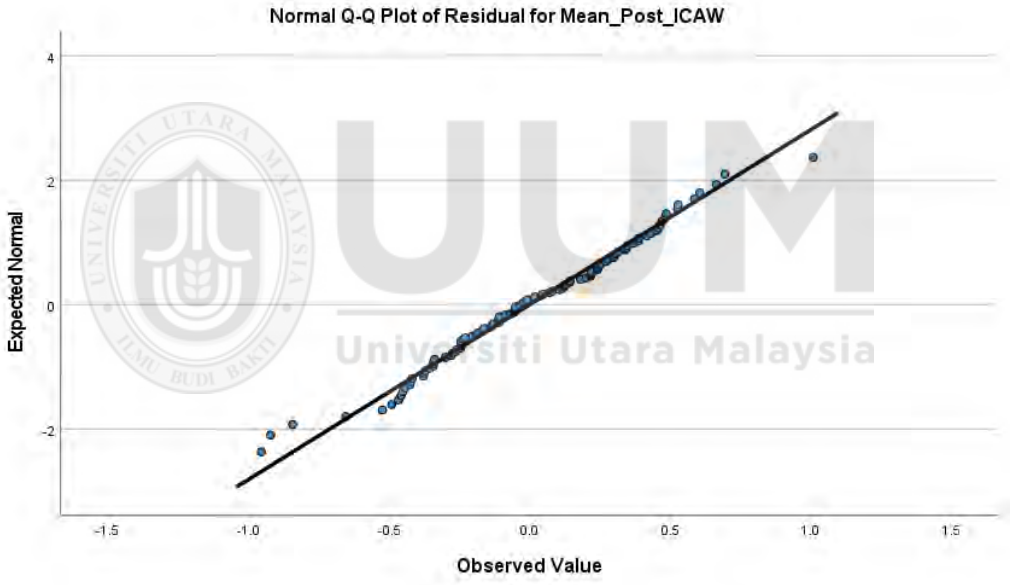

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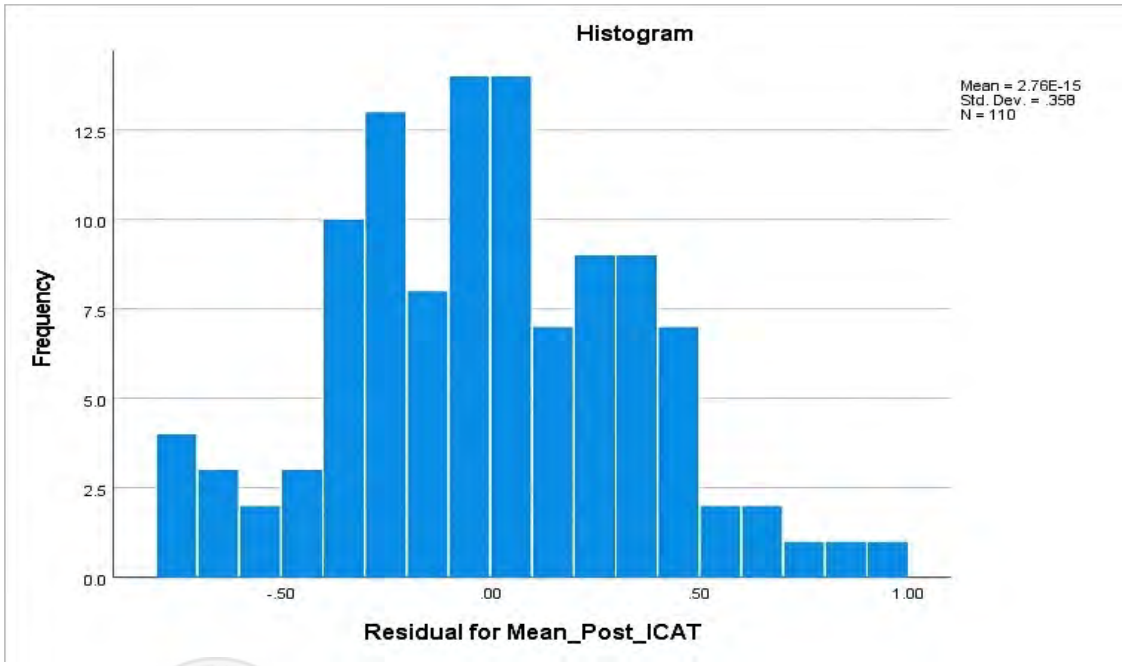
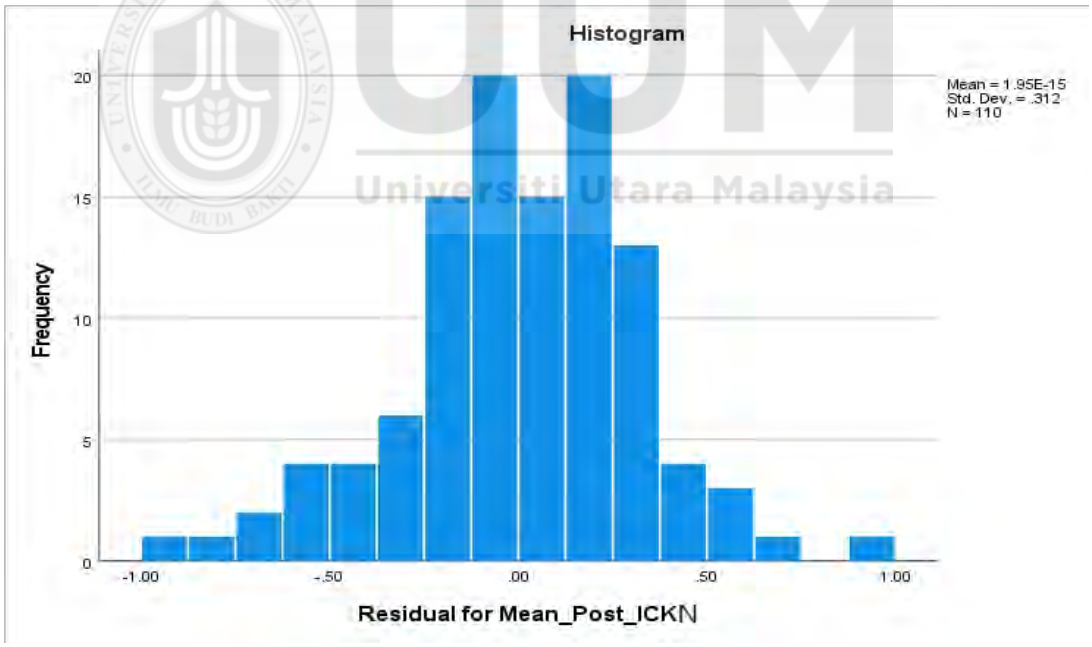
Figure C4. Histogram of Residual for *All Dimensions of ICC*





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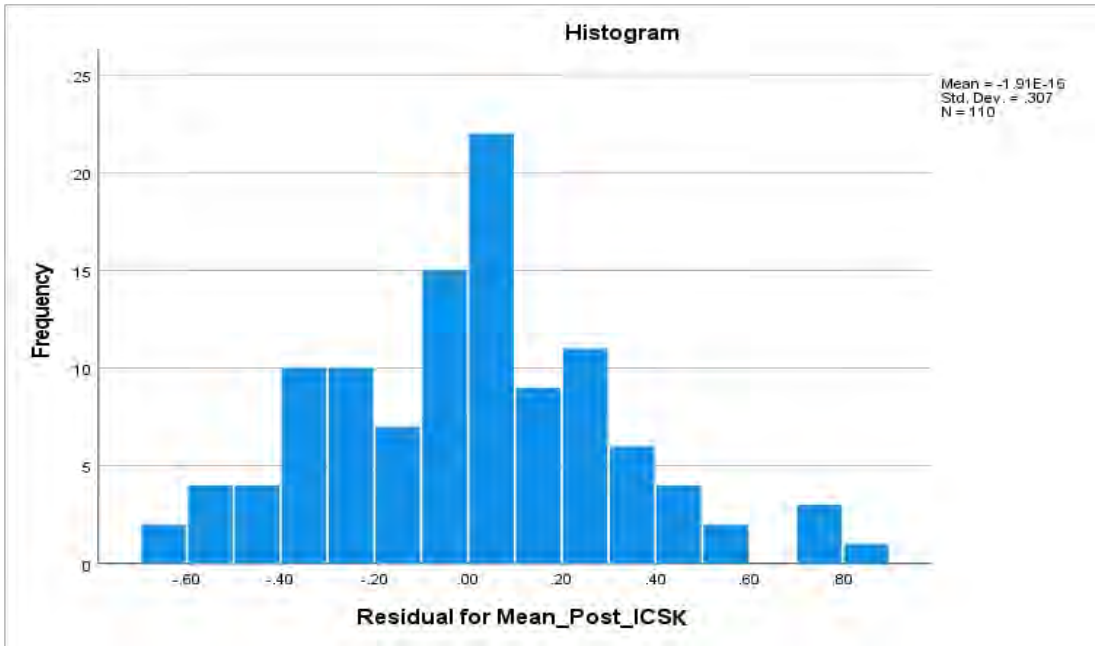

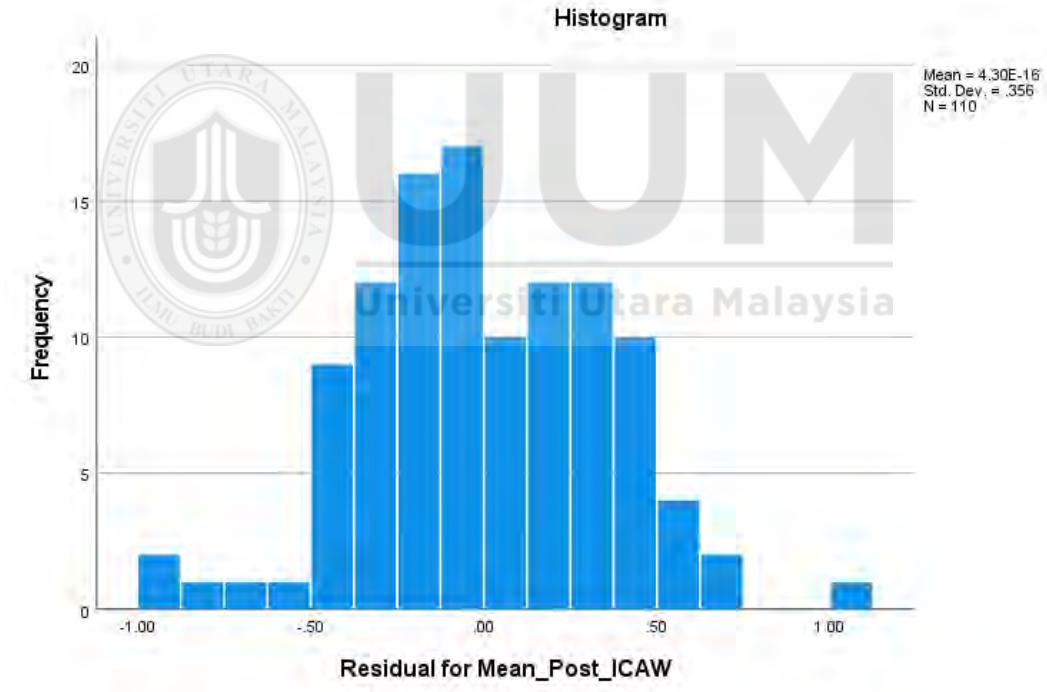

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Appendix D

Request Letter for Validator

Dear Dr._____,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Ji Yuanxin, and I am currently working on research "Developing Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence Through Intercultural Language Learning Approach in College English Course in China"as part of my doctoral dissertation. I am writing to kindly request your assistance as a validator for this project.

The purpose of the validation process is to ensure the accuracy, validity and reliability of the information presented in my study. Your expertise and experience in educational research make you an ideal candidate for providing valuable insights and feedback.

Here are some key details about the validation process:

Objective of Validation:

I would like the validator of this study to focus on the assessment of the data collection instruments, including the Oxford Online Placement Test, Lesson Plan, Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale, and Interview Protocol to assure the content validity.

Time Commitment:

It is expected that the instrument evaluation will be completed in about a week, which includes a review of the research instrument, online meetings and filling out feedback forms, etc.

Confidentiality:

I promise that any of your information shared will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of the project.

Next Steps:

I will email you a brief introduction to my study and all the instrument materials, including the assessment checklist for you to review and give feedback. Later, I will hold an online meeting to discuss your feedback to ensure you view on the instruments can be thoroughly understood, which will benefit future improvement. I am confident that your expertise will significantly contribute to the success of this project. Your commitment to ensuring the quality of the information presented is highly appreciated.

If you are willing to serve as a validator or have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you very much for considering my request. I am looking forward to the possibility of working together.

Ji Yuanxin

Appendix E

Content Validity Review Form for Intercultural Communication Competence Scale (ICCAS)

1.Scoring Criteria

Experts should rate the relevance of each item using the following definitions:

Score	Definition
1	Completely irrelevant (Item does not relate to the target construct)
2	Somewhat irrelevant (Item has weak association with the construct)
3	Moderately relevant (Item has partial relevance but needs optimization)
4	Highly relevant (Item clearly reflects the construct)
5	Absolutely relevant (Item fully and explicitly reflects the construct)

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2.Expert Review Form (All 29 Items)

Expert Review Form

Name: Juexia Chen Designation: Associate professor

Please check the appropriate box for each item and provide modification suggestions:

Dimension	Item ID	Item Content	Score (1-5)
Intercultural Attitudes	1	1. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of my own country.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Attitudes	2	2. Knowledge of my own country's lifestyle and values.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Attitudes	3	3. Understand the social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge of my own country.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	4	4. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of foreign countries.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	5	5. Understand foreign lifestyles and value knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	6	6. Understand foreign social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	7	7. Understand foreign cultural taboo knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	8	8. Understand and compare basic norms and behavioral knowledge in different cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	9	9. Understand the basics of concepts such as culture and intercultural communication.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	10	10. Know some strategies and techniques for successful intercultural communication.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	11	11. Willing to communicate and learn with foreigners from different cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	12	12. Willing to try to be tolerant of foreigners' different values, eating habits, taboos, etc.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	13	13. Willing to learn foreign languages and understand foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	14	14. The ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the culture of the country in the event of misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication to satisfy	☐1 ☐2 ☑3 ☐4 ☐5

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		both parties.	
Intercultural Skills	15	15. The ability to communicate with body language or other non-verbal means when there is a language communication barrier.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	16	16. The ability to use a foreign language to communicate successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds and fields.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	17	17. The ability to treat foreigners with courtesy when communicating with them.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	18	18. When communicating with foreigners, try to avoid offending their abilities in language, dress and behavior.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	19	19. The ability to avoid prejudice against foreigners when communicating with them.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	20	20. When communicating with foreigners, they will avoid talking about the privacy of foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	21	21. Possess the ability to directly acquire knowledge related to intercultural communication through contact with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	22	22. Ability to maintain sensitivity to cross-cultural differences.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	23	23. Have the ability to use various methods, skills and strategies to learn foreign languages and cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	24	24. The ability to reflect and learn when cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings arise, and to seek appropriate solutions.	☐1 ☐2 ☑3 ☐4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	25	25. The ability to look at issues from different cultures and perspectives when events such as politics, economy, and religion occur in other countries.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	26	26. Be aware of cultural similarities and differences when communicating with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	27	27. Be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	28	28. Aware of the differences between one's own cultural identity and the other's cultural identity when communicating with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	29	29. I evaluate cultural issues objectively and comprehensively.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5

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Expert Review Form

Name: Ma Xiuhua Designation: Associate Professor

Please check the appropriate box for each item and provide modification suggestions:

Dimension	Item ID	Item Content	Score (1-5)
Intercultural Attitudes	1	1. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of my own country.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Attitudes	2	2. Knowledge of my own country's lifestyle and values.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Attitudes	3	3. Understand the social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge of my own country.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	4	4. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of foreign countries.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	5	5. Understand foreign lifestyles and value knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	6	6. Understand foreign social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	7	7. Understand foreign cultural taboo knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	8	8. Understand and compare basic norms and behavioral knowledge in different cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	9	9. Understand the basics of concepts such as culture and intercultural communication.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	10	10. Know some strategies and techniques for successful intercultural communication.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	11	11. Willing to communicate and learn with foreigners from different cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	12	12. Willing to try to be tolerant of foreigners' different values, eating habits, taboos, etc.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	13	13. Willing to learn foreign languages and understand foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	14	14. The ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the culture of the country in the event of misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication to satisfy	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5

		both parties.	
Intercultural Skills	15	15. The ability to communicate with body language or other non-verbal means when there is a language communication barrier.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	16	16. The ability to use a foreign language to communicate successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds and fields.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	17	17. The ability to treat foreigners with courtesy when communicating with them.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	18	18. When communicating with foreigners, try to avoid offending their abilities in language, dress and behavior.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	19	19. The ability to avoid prejudice against foreigners when communicating with them.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	20	20. When communicating with foreigners, they will avoid talking about the privacy of foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	21	21. Possess the ability to directly acquire knowledge related to intercultural communication through contact with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	22	22. Ability to maintain sensitivity to cross-cultural differences.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	23	23. Have the ability to use various methods, skills and strategies to learn foreign languages and cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	24	24. The ability to reflect and learn when cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings arise, and to seek appropriate solutions.	☐1 ☐2 ☑3 ☐4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	25	25. The ability to look at issues from different cultures and perspectives when events such as politics, economy, and religion occur in other countries.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Awareness	26	26. Be aware of cultural similarities and differences when communicating with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	27	27. Be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Awareness	28	28. Aware of the differences between one's own cultural identity and the other's cultural identity when communicating with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	29	29. I evaluate cultural issues objectively and comprehensively.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5

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Expert Review Form

Name: Liming Designation: Professor

Please check the appropriate box for each item and provide modification suggestions:

Dimension	Item ID	Item Content	Score (1-5)
Intercultural Attitudes	1	1. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of my own country.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Attitudes	2	2. Knowledge of my own country's lifestyle and values.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Attitudes	3	3. Understand the social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge of my own country.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	4	4. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of foreign countries.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	5	5. Understand foreign lifestyles and value knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	6	6. Understand foreign social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	7	7. Understand foreign cultural taboo knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	8	8. Understand and compare basic norms and behavioral knowledge in different cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	9	9. Understand the basics of concepts such as culture and intercultural communication.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	10	10. Know some strategies and techniques for successful intercultural communication.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	11	11. Willing to communicate and learn with foreigners from different cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Knowledge	12	12. Willing to try to be tolerant of foreigners' different values, eating habits, taboos, etc.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Knowledge	13	13. Willing to learn foreign languages and understand foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	14	14. The ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the culture of the country in the event of misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication to satisfy	☐1 ☐2 ☑3 ☐4 ☑5

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		both parties.	
Intercultural Skills	15	15. The ability to communicate with body language or other non-verbal means when there is a language communication barrier.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	16	16. The ability to use a foreign language to communicate successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds and fields.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	17	17. The ability to treat foreigners with courtesy when communicating with them.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	18	18. When communicating with foreigners, try to avoid offending their abilities in language, dress and behavior.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	19	19. The ability to avoid prejudice against foreigners when communicating with them.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	20	20. When communicating with foreigners, they will avoid talking about the privacy of foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	21	21. Possess the ability to directly acquire knowledge related to intercultural communication through contact with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	22	22. Ability to maintain sensitivity to cross-cultural differences.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Skills	23	23. Have the ability to use various methods, skills and strategies to learn foreign languages and cultures.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	24	24. The ability to reflect and learn when cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings arise, and to seek appropriate solutions.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Skills	25	25. The ability to look at issues from different cultures and perspectives when events such as politics, economy, and religion occur in other countries.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	26	26. Be aware of cultural similarities and differences when communicating with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Awareness	27	27. Be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5
Intercultural Awareness	28	28. Aware of the differences between one's own cultural identity and the other's cultural identity when communicating with foreigners.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☑4 ☐5
Intercultural Awareness	29	29. I evaluate cultural issues objectively and comprehensively.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☑5

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3.Calculation Rules

Item-level CVI (I-CVI)： I-CVI = (Number of experts rating 4 or 5) / Total experts

(Threshold: ≥0.78 for excellence)

Scale-level CVI (S-CVI/Ave)： S-CVI/Ave =Σ(I-CVI) / 29

(Threshold: ≥0.9 for excellence)

4.Decision Criteria & Recommendation

Metric	**Threshold**	**Action**
I-CVI	≥0.78 (for 5 experts)	Retain the item; Delete or revise if <0.6.
S-CVI/Ave	≥0.9	Excellent; Optimize low-scoring items if 0.8 ≤ S-CVI <0.9; Redesign if <0.8.

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Appendix F

Assessment Checklist and Students' Feedback for Instruments

Assessment Checklist for Lesson Plan

教案评价清单

Assessment Checklist for Lesson Plan

The following statements are the description for the evaluation of the IcLL-based College English intervention lesson plan. Please rate each statement of this lesson plan honestly. Then, verify whether this lesson plan can be used as a lesson plan for both the pilot study, and give comments for further modifications.

No.	Statements	Rating scale for assessing lesson plan				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
1	The objectives of the lessons are clear and understandable.					✓
2	The objectives highlight students' intercultural communicative competence as equally important skill as linguistic competence.				✓	
3	All components of lessons of each unit are included.					✓
4	The content of every lesson is close to real life and interests of the students.					✓
5	There are diversified and authentic teaching resources and materials used.					✓
6	Teaching content and teaching materials are free of ethical, moral and legal concerns.					✓
7	Diverse instructional activities are included to promote student engagement and interaction.				✓	
8	The principles (active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection, responsibility) and process of the IcLL approach are fully embodied and applied.				✓	
9	The teaching activities are suitable for the students and easy to carry out.					✓
10	The lesson plan contains diverse forms of assessment, including formative assessment.					✓
11	The lessons are well-planed, sequential, and clear organized.					✓
Verification and comments on the lesson plan						

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The lesson plan is well organized with clear objectives, interesting contents, feasible teaching activities and diverse assessment.

My suggestion is about the instruction part – Reading Comprehension (Period 1). I suggest this part may be changed as the followings.

1. Finding Key sentences and words concerning the theme
2. Theme exploration and critical thinking.

In this way, Miss Ji may make her teaching closer to her objective: inter-cultural teaching.

Another suggestion is that Miss Ji give careful check on the details of each part of her plan to ensure it's a perfect lesson plan.

Yuexia Chen

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Assessment Checklist for ICCAS

The following statements are the description for the evaluation of the Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale (ICCAS). Please rate each statement of ICCAS honestly. Then, verify whether it can be used to collect data in the pilot study, and give comments for further modifications.

No.	Statements	Rating scale for assessing lesson plan				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
1	The questions are clear and understandable, and the language used is appropriate for the target respondents.		✓			
2	The font sizes and formats are appropriate for readability.					✓
3	The questionnaire clearly states its purpose and objectives.				✓	
4	The research questions are consistent with the objectives.					✓
5	The question directly helps answer the research question.					✓
6	The response options are clear and detailed and the range of response options is appropriate.				✓	
7	The questions are written in a fair and neutral manner.				✓	
8	There is consistency in the language, formatting, and wording used throughout the questionnaire.				✓	
9	The length of the questionnaire is appropriate for the target respondents.			✓		
10	The questions are well-structured and logically sound.			✓		
11	There no unnecessary or redundant questions.				✓	
12	Concise instructions are provided at the beginning of the questionnaire and the instructions guide participants on how to respond.				✓	

Verification and comments on ICCAS	Very good. All the questions are closed related to the research, but some questions in chinese are not understandable easily for students. Ma Xiuhua

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Assessment Checklist for OPT

Assessment Checklist for OPT

The following statements are the description for the evaluation of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Please rate each statement of OPT honestly. Then, verify whether it can be used to collect data in the pilot study, and give comments for further modifications.

No.	Statements	Rating scale for assessing lesson plan				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
1	The test is consistent with language proficiency goals.					✓
2	The assessment of different language skills is balanced.				✓	
3	The listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are appropriately assessed.				✓	
4	There are clear instructions for each section and the description avoid ambiguity.					✓
5	The candidate have enough time to complete all tasks.					✓
6	The scoring criteria for each task are clearly defined and cover different language proficiency levels.					✓
7	The test items are representative of the language skills being measured.					✓
8	The test is free of cultural bias and ethical and moral issues.					✓
9	Test difficulty is reasonable for the respondents.					✓

Verification and comments on the OOPT	This is a standardized test that can accurately assess students' English language proficiency. The test cost and time arrangement need to be further considered by the researcher.

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Assessment Checklist for Interview Protocol

Assessment Checklist for Interview Protocol

The following statements are the description for the evaluation of the Interview Protocol. Please rate each statement of Interview Protocol honestly. Then, verify whether it can be used to collect data in the pilot study, and give comments for further modifications.

No.	Statements	Rating scale for assessing lesson plan				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excell ent
1	The purpose of the interview protocol is clearly defined.					✓
2	The protocol meets the research questions and evaluation objectives.					✓
3	These questions can guide the interview to obtain relevant information.					✓
4	The protocol has a logical and consistent structure.					✓
5	There are fluid questions that promote natural dialog.					✓
6	Questions are designed to be open-ended and encourage detailed responses.					✓
7	The questions are phrased in clear, direct language, and are appropriate for participants' understanding.					✓
8	The questions are neutral and fair, and are free of ethical and moral issues.					✓
9	There are room for spontaneous follow-up questions.					✓
10	It allows for a thorough exploration of themes within the allotted time.					✓
Verification and comments on interview protocol	The interview will successfully help Miss Ji get the data with its good framework and organization. Yuanxia Chen					

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Student Feedback on Intervention

Student feedback on IcLL-based intervention is important for improving the implementation of the lessons. Below are some possible opinion about the intervention. Please check the ideas that fit your understanding of it.

No. 序号	Aspects for evaluation 评价方面	Statement 描述	Tick the views meet your opinions 勾选你的观点
1	Intervention purpose 干预目的	I understood the purpose of the intervention and thought it would be helpful for our development. 我理解了干预的目的，并认为这将有助于我们的发展。	✓
		There may be a need for a clearer statement of the objectives and expected effects of the intervention. 建议更清楚地说明干预措施的目标和预期效果。	
2	Intervention mode 干预方式	The intervention is sensible and helps us to learn or develop. 这种干预是合理的，可以帮助我们学习或发展。	✓
		Are there other more interesting or effective ways to intervene?还有其他更有趣或更有效的干预方法吗?	
3	Degree of participation 参与度	I felt engaged in the intervention, and it was meaningful. 与干预的过程中感到投入，觉得有意义。	✓
		I need additional encouragement or support to increase engagement. 我需要额外的鼓励或支持，以增加参与度。	
4	Individualized consideration 个性化考虑	The intervention took into account individual differences and I felt valued. 干预考虑到了个体差异，我感到被重视。	✓
		The interventions can be further individualized to meet the needs of different students.干预措施可以进行进一步的个性化化，以满足不同学生的需要。	
5	Feedback mechanisms 反馈机制	The lecturer provided timely feedback that helps us understand our progress. 老师提供了及时的反馈，帮助我们了解我们的进展。	✓
		There may be the need to provide more specific and personalized feedback.建议提供更具体和个性化的学习反馈。	

6	Other comments 其他建议	无

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Student Feedback on Interview

Student Feedback on Interview

Student feedback on the interviews is important for assessing the quality of the interviews, understanding their views and feelings, and providing directions for improvement. Please check the ideas that fit your understanding of it.

No. 序号	Aspects for evaluation 评价方面	Statement 描述	Tick the views meet your opinions 勾选你的观点
1	Purpose of the interviews 访谈目的	I considered that the purpose of the interviews was clear and felt that participation was meaningful. 我认为访谈的目的是明确的，并认为参与是有意义的。	✓
		I was Confused about the purpose of the interview and need for more explanation.我对访谈的目的感到困惑，需要更多的解释。	
2	Question design 问题设计	I thought the questions to be well-designed and I was able to fully express my views.我认为这些问题设计得很好，所以我能够充分地表达我的观点。	✓
		There are questions that are difficult to understand or answer. 有些问题难以理解或回答。	✓
3	Interview process 访谈过程	I perceived the interview process as smooth and felt relaxed and at ease.我觉得访谈的过程很顺利，我感到很放松和轻松。	
		I felt a little nervous and uncomfortable with the interview process.我对访谈的过程感到有点紧张和不舒服。	
4	Way of questioning 提问方式	I thought that the questioning approach leads me to think deeply. 我认为提问的方法会让我深入思考。	✓
		I felt that some questions were too subjective or too open-ended.我觉得有些问题太主观或太开放式了(找不到回答的切入点)。	
5	Timing 时间管理	The interviews were considered to be well organized and did not feel too long or too short. 我认为访谈组织得很好，不会觉得时间太长或太短。	✓
		I felt that the interview is too long. 我觉得访谈的时间太长了。	
6	Privacy and Confidentialit	I felt that my privacy was protected during the interviews.我觉得我的隐私在访谈中受到了保	✓

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	y 隐私和保密	护。 I felt that my privacy was not well protected during the interviews. 我觉得我的隐私在访谈中没有得到很好的保护。	
7	Other comments 其他建议	有些问题可以适当解释或举例说明。	

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Student Feedback on ICCAS

Student feedback on ICCAS is valuable in assessing the effectiveness of intervention programs, student satisfaction, and directions for improvement. Please check the ideas that fit your understanding of ICCAS.

No. 序号	Aspects for evaluation 评价方面	Statement 描述	Tick the views meet your opinions 勾选你的观点
1	Questionnaire Design 问卷设计	The questionnaire design is clear and easy to understand. 问卷设计清晰易懂。	✗
		Some of the questions were difficult to understand and it was suggested to make them more concise. 有些问题很难理解，建议使它们更简洁。	✓
2	Quality of questions 问题质量	The questions covered a wide range of areas and provided a comprehensive understanding of our views. 这些问题涉及了广泛的领域，并全面了解了我们的观点。	✓
		Some questions were too subjective and may have led to inconsistent responses. 有些问题过于主观，可能会导致前后不一致的回答。	
3	Timing 作答时间	The time taken to complete the questionnaire was reasonable.完成调查问卷所需的时间是合理的。	✓
		Some questions took too much time and may have affected participation.有些问题花费了太多的时间，可能会影响到我参与回答问题。	
4	Privacy and Confidentiality 隐私和保密	We were assured that our responses were anonymous and felt more free to express ourselves. 我们得到保证，我们的回答是匿名的，并感到能够更自由地表达自己。	✓
		More information could be provided on data handling and privacy protection. 可以提供更多关于数据处理和隐私保护的信息。	
5	Questionnaire Topic 问卷主题	The theme of the questionnaire was relevant to our learning and life experiences. 调查问卷的主题与我们的学习和生活经历有关。	✓
		Some questions are irrelevant to our life, and is hard to answer. 有些问题与我们的生活无关，很难回答。	

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6	Other comments 其他建议	第27题有些难理解 第28题想像不出该场景，可以描述时举个例子。

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Appendix G

Modification of Instruments

ICCAS Modifications after Pilot Study

Item No.	Original Version	Modified version	Changes
14	I have the ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the culture of the country in the event of misunderstandings in intercultural communication to satisfy both parties. 在跨文化交际中出现误解时，我有能力与对方协商并解释该国的文化，使双方都满意。	I think I have the ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the cultures of both countries to satisfy both parties when conflicts arise in my interactions with foreigners. 我觉得在与外国人交流中出现冲突时，我有能力与对方协商并解释彼此国家的文化，使双方都满意。	1) Added "I think" at the beginning; 2) "the country" changed to "both countries". 3) "in the event of misunderstandings in intercultural communication" changed to "when conflicts arise in my interactions with foreigners". 4) The same changes in Chinese.
24	I think I have the ability to reflect and learn when cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings arise, and to seek appropriate solutions. 当出现跨文化冲突和误解时，我有能力进行反思和学习，并寻求适当的解决办法。	I think I have the ability to reflect and learn when misunderstandings about Chinese and foreign cultures arise. 我觉得当出现对中外文化的误解时，我有能力进行反思和学习。	1) "cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings" changed to "misunderstandings about Chinese and foreign cultures" 2) remove "and to seek appropriate solutions" 3) The same changes in Chinese.

26	I can be aware of cultural similarities and differences in communication with foreigners, recognizing that there may be distinct cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, languages, and other aspects between me and my interlocutors. 在与外国人交流时，我能意识到文化的异同，认识到我与对话者之间可能存在不同的文化背景、价值观、信仰、语言和其他方面。	I can be aware of the differences in each other's cultural identities in communication with foreigners, i.e. my own and the interlocutors' behaviors and thoughts are influenced by their respective cultures (in terms of values, traditions, language, beliefs, etc.), with their personal habits and preferences. 在与外国人交流时，我能意识到彼此的文化身份的差异，即自己和对方的行为和想法都受到各自文化（价值观、传统、语言和信仰等方面）影响，拥有个人习惯和偏好。	1) "cultural similarities and differences" changed to "differences in each other's cultural identities" 2) The explanation of culture differences changed to the explanation of difference in culture identities. 3) The same changes in Chinese.
27	I can be aware of how the values of my own and other cultures are reflected in specific documents and situations. 我能意识到自己和其他文化的价值观是如何反映在具体的文件和场合中的。	I am able to recognize how particular texts, events and situations represent the values of my own and other cultures. (e.g., in the text on the spending habits of university students, American university students are accustomed to using credit cards, which reflects their philosophy of overspending.) 我能意识到在具体的文本、事件和场合中自己和其他文化的价值观是如何体现的。（比如，在关于大学生消费习惯的文本中，美国大学生习惯使用信用卡，这反映了他们超前消费的理念。）	1) "I can be aware of" changed to "I am able to recognize". 2) "documents" changed to "texts". 3) added "events" 4) changed from active to passive voice; 5) added an example for better understanding. 6)The same changes in Chinese.
28	I can be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations. 我能意识到文化风格和语言使用的	I can be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations (e.g., some cultures have a more direct style of communication that is seen as impolite in another culture).	1) Add an example for better understanding. 2) The same changes in Chinese.

	差异，以及它们如何影响社交和工作情境。	我能意识到文化风格和语言使用的差异，以及它们如何影响社交和工作情境。（比如，有些文化的沟通风格较直接，而在另一个文化中却被视为不礼貌。）	
29	——	I can be aware that the evaluation and analysis of cultural issues in texts or events in my country and in other countries should be carried out objectively, in-depth and comprehensively on the basis of uniform criteria, without subjective and arbitrary. 我能意识到对本国和他国文本或事件中的文化问题进行评价分析时，应依据统一的标准，客观、深入、全面地展开，而不具有主观随意性。	1) Added a new item. 2) The same changes in Chinese.

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Interview Protocol Modifications after Pilot Study

Item No.	Original Version	Modified version	Changes
Opening remarks (Chinese)	很高兴今天你来与我谈话。我想和你谈谈你在刚刚过去的以提高跨文化交际能力为目标之一的大学英语课程中的经历和想法。这次访谈将持续 20 分钟左右。会议将会被录下来，我也会在这个过程中做一些笔记。请放心所有的答案都将被保密。这意味着你的谈话答案不会与他人分享。当有任何你不想谈论的事情时，你可以在任何时候结束这次访谈。你有什么需要澄清的问题，或者对我刚才说的有疑问吗？	很高兴你能接受我的访谈。我想和你谈谈在刚刚结束的以提高跨文化交际能力为目标之一的大学英语课程中的经历和想法。这次访谈将持续 20 分钟左右。访谈将会被录音，我也会在这个过程中做一些笔记。你的个人信息将会被保密，不会与他人分享。当有任何你不想谈论的事情时，你可以随时要求结束这次访谈。如果你有任何问题或者需要进一步的解释，请随时告诉我。那么，让我们开始吧！	1) “很高兴今天你来与我谈话。” changed to “很高兴你能接受我的访谈。” 2) “刚刚过去的”changed to “刚刚结束的” 3) “会议将会被录下来” changed to “访谈将会被录音” 4) “请放心所有的答案都将被保密。这意味着你的谈话答案不会与他人分享。” changed to “你的个人信息将会被保密，不会与他人分享。” 5) “在任何时候” changed to “随时” 6) “你有什么需要澄清的问题，或者对我刚才说的有疑问吗？” changed to “如果你有任何问题或者需要进一步的解释，请随时告诉我。” 7) Added the sentence “那么，让我们开始吧！”
Opening remarks (English)	I’m glad you came to talk to me today. I would like to talk to you about your experiences and thoughts on the English program at the university that you have just gone through with one of the goals of improving intercultural communication skills. This interview will last about 20 minutes. The session will be	I’m so glad you come for this interview with me. I’d like to talk to you about your experiences and perceptions during the College English programme that you have just gone through with one of the goals of improving intercultural communicative competence. This interview will last about 20 minutes. The interview will be recorded and I	1) “I’m glad you came to talk to me today.” changed to “I’m so glad you come for this interview with me.” 2) “thoughts” changed to “perceptions” 3) “the English program at the university” changed to “the College English programme”. 4) “videotaped” changed to “recorded” 5) “Please be assured that all answers will be kept confidential. This means that your answers to the conversation will not be shared with others.” changed to “Your personal information will be kept confidential

	videotaped and I will take some notes during the process. Please be assured that all answers will be kept confidential. This means that your answers to the conversation will not be shared with others. When you don't want to talk about anything you don't want to talk about, please leave it and you can end the interview at any time. Do you have any clarifications or questions about what I just said?	will take some notes during the process. Your personal information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with others. You can ask to end the interview at any time if there is anything you don't want to talk about. If you have any questions or need further explanation, please feel free to let me know. So, let's get started.	and will not be shared with others." 6) "When you don't want to talk about anything you don't want to talk about, please leave it and you can end the interview at any time." changed to "You can ask to end the interview at any time if there is anything you don't want to talk about." 7) "Do you have any clarifications or questions about what I just said?" changed to "If you have any questions or need further explanation, please feel free to let me know." 8) Added the sentence "So, let's get started."
1	Do you feel more interested in other cultures after the lessons? 你是否觉得自己对其他国家的文化更感兴趣了？	How has your interest in cultures from other countries changed after the lessons, if at all? 你对其他国家文化的兴趣是否发生了变化？如果有，是怎样的变化？	Change to a neutral question to avoid leading and biased language.
2	Are you more willing to discover and understand different views of the same issue both in your own and other cultures? 你是否更愿意去发现和理解本国和其他文化对同一问题的不同看法？	Has your willingness of learning different views on the same issue from both your own and other cultures changed after the lessons? 你了解本国和他国的文化对同一问题的不同看法的意愿有没有变化？	Ditto

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3	Did the lessons develop your knowledge about other cultures (e.g., values, beliefs, literature, art, institutions, geography, customs, social norms etc.)? 这段时间的英语课是否增进了你对其他文化的了解（如价值观、信仰、文学、艺术、制度、地理、习俗、社会规范等）？	Did the lessons influence your understanding of cultures from other countries (e.g., values, beliefs, literature, art, institutions, geography, customs, social norms, etc.)? 这段时间的英语课是否对你对其他国家的文化的了解（如价值观、信仰、文学、艺术、制度、地理、习俗、社会规范等）产生了影响？	Ditto
5	Do you know better about how people in our country view other cultures? 你是否比以前更加了解我国人民如何看待其他文化？	How did the lessons influence your understanding about how people in our country view cultures from other countries? 这段时间的英语课如何影响了你对我国人民看待其他国家文化方式的理解？	Ditto
7	Do the lessons enable you to better interpret events (e.g. Chinese beginners keeping nodding heads when speaking Chinese) and documents (e.g. newspaper articles about the popular majors) from other countries? 这段时间的英语课是否使你能够更好地解读其他国家的事件（例如，汉	How, if at all, have the lessons influenced your ability to interpret events, behaviors (e.g., cultural gestures, conversational norms) and texts from other countries? 这段时间的英语课程是否影响了你解释其他国家事件、行为（如文化手势、会话规范）和文本的能力？如果有，是怎样的影响？	Ditto

	语初学者在说汉语时不断点头）和文件（例如，报纸上关于他国家热门专业的文章）？		
11	Do you feel more aware about understanding our culture from other countries' perspectives?	Have the lessons influenced your awareness of viewing your own culture from the perspective of others? If so, in what way? 课程是否影响了你从他国人视角看待自己文化的意识？如果有，是怎样的影响？	Ditto

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Appendix H

Data Collection Work Plan

Phases	Research questions	Task No.	Duration	Tasks	Instruments	Tools	Types of data	Data sources	Sample size	Role of the researcher
Phase 1 Quantitative Data Collection	RQ1, RQ 2, RQ 3, RQ 4	1	18/03/2024 - 23/03/2024	Introduction, grouping respondents, orientation	OPT	We-chat group	OPT scores	EG and CG	110	Designer of the quantitative data collection method, lesson plan developer, recruiter of the participants, director, trainer, and monitor of the implementation of the intervention, quantitative data collector, communicating with the participants.
		2	24/03/2024 - 25/03/2024	Pretest and scoring	ICCAS	Wenjuanxin, We-chat group	Pretest ICCAS scores, demographic data	EG and CG	110	
		3	26/03/2024 - 15/04/2024	Intervention Unit 1	Lesson Plan 1	Multimedia, internet	-	EG and CG	110	
		4	16/04/2024 - 06/05/2024	Intervention Unit 2	Lesson Plan 2	Multimedia, internet	-	EG and CG	110	
		5	07/05/2024 - 27/05/2024	Intervention Unit 3	Lesson Plan 3	Multimedia, internet	-	EG and CG	110	
		6	28/05/2024 - 12/06/2024	Intervention Unit 4	Lesson Plan 4	Multimedia, internet	-	EG and CG	110	
		7	13/06/2024 - 14/06/2024	Post-test and scoring	ICCAS	Wenjuanxin, We-chat group	Post-test ICCAS scores, demographic data	EG and CG	110	

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Phase 2 Qualitative Data Collection	RQ 5	8	15/06/2024 - 22/06/2024	Interview	Interview protocol	Face to face/ We-chat video call	Recording and transcribed text of students' experiences and perceptions of the intervention	Some students from EG	6	Designer of the qualitative data collection method, interview protocol developer, interviewer.

Data Collection Gantt Chart

No.	Task	March					April		May				June					Days
		18	23	24	25	26	15	16	06	07	27	28	12	13	14	15	22	
1	Introduction, grouping respondents, orientation																	6
2	Pretest and scoring																	2
3	Intervention Unit 1																	21
4	Intervention Unit 2																	21
5	Intervention Unit 3																	21
6	Intervention Unit 4																	16
7	Post-test and scoring																	2
8	Interview																	8

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Appendix I
Letters and Forms Preparing for Data Collection

Permission Letter (English)

Universiti Utara Malaysia, UUM, Sintok
Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia 06010

8th January 2024

Taishan University, 525 Dongyue Road, Daiyue District, Tai'an
Shandong Province, PRC 271000

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir / Madam,

REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA FOR THESIS

This is to request for your permission to conduct data collection at your institution.

Ji Yuanxin (matric number: 905855) is an English Instructor at Taishan University and also a full-time postgraduate student of Doctor of Philosophy (Education) at the College of Arts and Sciences, UUM.

Now, I am planning a research project as a part of my PhD dissertation under the supervision of Prof.Aspalila Shapii, UUM College of Art and Sciences. The research study is titled "Developing Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence Through Intercultural Language Learning Approach in College English Course in China" which will involve second year degree students and teachers in the School of Foreign Languages. They will be requested to take part in a classroom intervention and interviews about their perceptions related to the intervention.
The necessity of this study lies in the fact that College English teaching in this university pays more attention to language knowledge and skills than intercultural communicative competence. However, the intercultural communicative competence is an important goal of College English teaching according to the national *College English Teaching Guide* and the school-based College English syllabubs. The purpose of this study is to make the intercultural competence education explicit in College English teaching using the IcLL approach, which may have the potential to test the effectiveness of IcLL in improving students' intercultural communicative competence. During this period, the intervention will not deviate from the school-based syllabus and textbooks of College English, ensuring that it will not interfere with normal day-to-day teaching and academic activities.

Sincerely hope I could get your permission to conduct the study at Taishan University.

Thank you!

Yours faithfully

Ji Yuanxin

马来西亚吉打州新笃镇
马来西亚北方大学 06010

Permission Letter (Chinese)

2024 年 1 月 8 日

中国山东省泰安市岱岳区
东岳大街 525 号 271000

敬启者

尊敬的先生/女士:

请求为论文收集数据

谨此请求贵校允许我在贵校进行数据收集。

纪元新是泰山学院的一名英语教师，同时也是马来西亚北方大学文理学院全日制哲学博士（教育学）研究生（学号：905855）。

目前，我正在规划一个研究项目，作为我博士论文的一部分，由马来西亚北方大学文理学院的 Aspalila Shapii 教授指导。这项研究的题目是 “在中国大学英语课程中通过跨文化语言学习方法培养学习者的跨文化交际能力”。该研究项目需要泰山学院大二学生和外国语学院教师参与。他们将被要求参与课堂干预，并就他们对干预的看法进行访谈。

本研究的必要性在于，泰山学院的大学英语教学更注重语言知识和技能，而非跨文化交际能力。然而，根据国家《大学英语教学大纲》和校本《大学英语教学大纲》，跨文化交际能力是大学英语教学的重要目标。本研究的目的是在大学英语教学中运用 IcLL（跨文化语言教学法） 方法明确跨文化交际能力的教育，从而有可能检验 IcLL 在提高学生跨文化交际能力方面的效果。在此期间，干预活动不会偏离大学英语的校本教学大纲和教科书，确保不会干扰正常的日常教学和学术活动。

衷心希望能得到您的允许，在泰山学院开展这项研究。

谢谢!

纪元新

Approval Letter for Data Collection

泰山学院
Taishan University

地址：山东省泰安市东岳大街 525 号 邮编：271000
Taishan University, 525 Dongyue Road,
Daiyue District, Tai'an
Shandong Province, PRC 271000

Universiti Utara Malaysia, UUM, Sintok
Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia 06010

Dear Sir/Madam

I, the Secretary of the School of Foreign Languages, Taishan University, agree to support the data collection for the research project on "Developing Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence through Intercultural Language Learning Approaches in Chinese University English Courses".

Background of the study:

I have been informed and understand the purpose, methodology and possible outcomes of this study.

Data collection process:

I agree to provide the necessary support and resources to ensure that the data collection process runs smoothly. This may include providing access to participants, assisting the research team in accessing relevant websites, etc.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

I understand the steps that will be taken during the data collection process to ensure the confidentiality and security of the information collected.

Collaboration Agreement:

I agree to comply with the requirements of the research programme to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data collection.

Data Access:

I understand that the data collected will be used for research purposes only and will not be used for any other purpose unless written permission is obtained.

Answering Questions:

I have asked questions about the study and the unit's participation and have received satisfactory answers.

Consent Signature:

This unit agrees to participate in the data collection for the study "Developing Learners' Intercultural Communication Competence through Intercultural Language Learning Approaches in English Courses in Chinese Universities" and will provide the necessary support and co-operation to ensure the success of this study.

Signiture: _____ Date: 2024.1.15

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Informed Consent Form

Dear College English course students,

This is to request for your consent to participate in this research. I will explain the objective and the nature of the study and you have a right to decide your participation. If you want to join the study, please write your name and your signature below.

Research title:

Developing Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence Through Intercultural Language Learning Approach In College English Course In China

Researcher:

Ji Yuanxin (English Instructor at Taishan University, full time postgraduate student of Doctor of Philosophy (Education) at the College of Arts and Sciences, UUM).

Telephone: +86 15288927996, E-mail: rzabcde@163.com

Objective of the study:

I am a PhD student at the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), University Uttar Malaysia (UUM). This research is a part of my doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to examine whether Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL) approach is beneficial to the second-year college students' intercultural communicative competence.

Plan of the Study:

30 students will be selected to take part in the pilot study and 80 students in the intervention.You will be classified into two groups, experimental and control groups. Each group of students will be exposed to the College English program according to the school's teaching plan. One group of students will be exposed to the IcLL approach, while the other group of students will continue the previous approach of College English Teaching. The study will last for 12 weeks and four units will be covered. Both groups of participants will use the same textbook assigned by the school, i.e., New Horizons College English Book 2. Your English language proficiency will be tested for 30 minutes to one hour and a questionnaire on intercultural communicative competence will be administered before the course begins, and the same survey will be administered at the end of the study. Each will take no more than 30 minutes and the questionnaire will be sent to you as a link. Later, some of you will be selected to have an interview in which you will be encouraged to express your perception about the experience you have during the course.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with participating in this research project. However, we believe this study will contribute to the improvement of your intercultural communicative competence.

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Confidentiality and Privacy:

We will take steps to protect your personal information and the results of the study will be anonymized. Any publication or report will not contain information that reveals your identity.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is completely voluntary. Being a participant in this study is not an academic requirement, and not participating will not place you at a disadvantage in your academic program or your future association with the Taishan University. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative repercussions. You may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this research to the researcher or the Office of School of Foreign Languages, Taishan University.

Thank you!

Ji Yuanxin

Researcher’ s signature:

Date:

Student’s consent:

I have read and understand the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

Participant’ s name:

Matric No.:

Participant’ s signature:

Date:

Universiti Utara Malaysia

Informed Consent Form (Chinese Version)

亲爱的同学：

谨以此信征求您参与本研究的意愿。以下是对这项研究的目的和性质的解释，您在阅读后有权决定是否参与。如果您愿意参加这项研究，请在下面写下您的姓名并签名。

研究题目：

“在中国大学英语课程中通过跨文化语言学习方法培养学习者的跨文化交际能力”

研究者：

纪元新（泰山学院英语教师，马来西亚北方大学文理学院全日制哲学博士（教育学）研究生）。

电话：+86 15288927996，电子邮件：rzabcde@163.com

研究目的：

我是马来西亚北方大学（UUM）文理学院（CAS）的一名博士生。本研究是我博士论文的一部分。

本研究的目的是探讨跨文化语言学习（IcLL）方法是否有利于提高大学二年级学生的跨文化交际能力。

研究计划：

参与者将被分为两组，实验组和对照组。每组学生都将按照学校的教学计划进行大学英语课程的学习。其中一组学生将接触 IcLL 教学法，另一组学生将继续采用之前的大学英语教学法。研究将持续 12 周，涵盖四个单元。两组学生将使用学校指定的同一本教科书，即《新视野大学英语第二册》。在课程开始前，我将对参与者的英语水平进行 30 分钟到 1 小时的测试，并发放一份跨文化交际能力调查问卷，研究结束时也将发放同样的调查问卷。每次不超过 30 分钟，问卷将以链接的形式发送给您。最后，部分参与者将会被邀请参与一项访谈，对其在课程中的经历发表个人的想法。

风险和益处：

参与本研究项目没有已知的风险和或不适。不过，我们相信这项研究将有助于提高您的跨文化交际能力。

保密和隐私：

我们将采取措施保护您的个人信息，研究结果将匿名化。任何出版物或报告都不会包含暴露您身份的信息。

自愿参与：

您的参与完全出于自愿。参与本研究并不是一项学业要求，不参与本研究也不会使您在学业或未来与泰山学院的联系中处于不利地位。您可以随时选择

退出本研究，而不会受到惩罚或负面影响。您可以向研究人员或泰山学院外国语学院办公室报告对本研究的任何不满。

谢谢！

纪元新

研究者签名：

日期：

学生同意书：

我已阅读并理解上述信息，同意参与本研究。

参与者姓名：

学号：

参与者签名：

日期：

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Appendix J

Teacher Training Guide

Please note that this information is to guide the teacher that will help the researcher teach the experimental group. To improve students' intercultural communicative competence, the intercultural language learning (IcLL) approach will be adopted in College English instruction. The following principles need to be strictly adhered to.

1. Explicit teaching of culture is a central part of language teaching. The students need to be helped, through explicit culture teaching, to realize the similarity and difference between their ow culture and that of others.

2. Culture needs to be integrated into other language skills, not a separate skill to be trained.

3. We need to start teaching culture at the very beginning of language teaching.

4. The bilingual speaker is the norm, instead of cultivate a native-like speaker, that is to develop a speaker who is comfortable and capable in an intercultural context.

5. Language learning should involve intercultural exploration, namely, learn about the way in which their own culture works and how their own language reflects their culture.

6. Teachers should help students develop ways of finding out more about the culture they are learning by analyzing their experiences and developing their awareness, that is learning to continue to learn, instead of mere force feeding of culture knowledge.

7. Teachers should adhere the IcLL pedagogical principles of active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection, responsibility.

8. Teachers should perform the role of moderator in helping students to integrate what is being learned.

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Appendix K

Wu et al.'s (2013) ICCAS Items

Wu's (2013) ICCAS Items (Chinese)

1.了解本国的历史、地理和社会政治知识。
2.了解本国的生活方式和价值观知识。
3.了解本国的社交礼仪和宗教文化知识。
4.了解国外的历史、地理和社会政治知识。
5.了解国外的生活方式和价值观知识。
6.了解国外的社交礼仪和宗教文化知识。
7.了解国外的文化禁忌知识。
8.了解和对比不同文化的基本规范和行为知识。
9.了解文化和跨文化交流与传播等概念的基本知识。
10.了解一些成功进行跨文化交流的策略和技巧。
11.愿意与来自不同文化的外国人进行交流和学习。
12.愿意尽量去宽容外国人不同的价值观、饮食习惯、禁忌等。
13.愿意学好外语和了解外国人。
14.出现跨文化交流误解时与对方协商、解释本国文化从而达到让双方满意的能力。
15.出现语言交流障碍时借助身体语言或其他非语言方式进行交流的能力。
16.使用外语与来自不同文化背景和领域的人进行成功交流的能力。
17.在与外国人交流时礼貌对待他们的能力。
18.在与外国人交流时尽量避免在语言、穿着和行为举止上冒犯他们的能力。
19.在与外国人交流时尽量避免对外国人产生偏见和成见的能力。
20.在与外国人交流时会避免提到有关外国人隐私的话题。
21.具备通过与外国人接触直接获取跨文化交际相关知识的能力。
22.具有对跨文化差异保持敏感性的能力。
23.具备运用各种方法、技巧与策略学习外国语言和文化的能力。
24.出现跨文化冲突和误解时进行反思和学习并寻求妥善解决途径的能力。
25.对于其他国家发生如政治、经济、宗教等方面的事件时会从不同文化和多角度看问题的能力。
26.意识到与外国人交流时彼此存在文化相似性和差异性。
27.意识到文化风格和语言运用的不同, 以及它们对社会和工作情景造成的影响。
28.意识到与外国人交流时自身文化身份和对方文化身份的差异。

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Wu's (2013) ICCAS Items (English)

1. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of my own country.
2. Knowledge of my own country's lifestyle and values.
3. Understand the social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge of my own country.
4. Understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge of foreign countries.
5. Understand foreign lifestyles and value knowledge.
6. Understand foreign social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge.
7. Understand foreign cultural taboo knowledge.
8. Understand and compare basic norms and behavioral knowledge in different cultures.
9. Understand the basics of concepts such as culture and intercultural communication.
10. Know some strategies and techniques for successful intercultural communication.
11. Willing to communicate and learn with foreigners from different cultures.
12. Willing to try to be tolerant of foreigners' different values, eating habits, taboos, etc.
13. Willing to learn foreign languages and understand foreigners.
14. The ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the culture of the country in the event of misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication to satisfy both parties.
15. The ability to communicate with body language or other non-verbal means when there is a language communication barrier.
16. The ability to use a foreign language to communicate successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds and fields.
17. The ability to treat foreigners with courtesy when communicating with them.
18. When communicating with foreigners, try to avoid offending their abilities in language, dress and behavior.
19. The ability to avoid prejudice against foreigners when communicating with them.
20. When communicating with foreigners, they will avoid talking about the privacy of foreigners.
21. Possess the ability to directly acquire knowledge related to intercultural communication through contact with foreigners.
22. Ability to maintain sensitivity to cross-cultural differences.
23. Have the ability to use various methods, skills and strategies to learn foreign languages and cultures.
24. The ability to reflect and learn when cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings arise, and to seek appropriate solutions.
25. The ability to look at issues from different cultures and perspectives when events such as politics, economy, and religion occur in other countries.
26. Be aware of cultural similarities and differences when communicating with foreigners.
27. Be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations.
28. Aware of the differences between one's own cultural identity and the other's cultural identity when communicating with foreigners.

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Appendix L

Adapted Version of ICCAS

Adapted Version of ICCAS (English)

The statements below describe the feelings and understanding of intercultural communication competence. Do you agree with them? This is not a test, so there is no "right" or "wrong" answers. By responding to these statements, you can help yourself and your teacher understand the current status of your intercultural communicative competence. Please indicate your opinion after each statement. Choose the answer best shows your level of agreement with the statement.

Demographics						
Name: Matric No.: _____ Age: _____		Gender: ○Male ○Female I have traveled to other countries. ○Yes ○No				
Intercultural Attitudes						
No	**Statement**	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1	I'm willing to communicate with foreigners from different cultures.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
2	I'm willing to try to be tolerant of foreigners' different values, eating habits, taboos, etc.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
3	I'm interested in and willing to learn foreign languages and cultures and understand foreigners.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
Intercultural Knowledge						
4	I know the history, geography and socio-political knowledge (e.g. social and political system, laws, policies, etc.) of my own country.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5

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5	I have knowledge of my own country's lifestyle and values.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
6	I know the social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge of my own country.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
7	I understand the history, geography and socio-political knowledge (e.g. social and political system, laws, policies, etc.) of foreign countries.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
8	I know foreign lifestyles and values.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
9	I know foreign social etiquette and religious cultural knowledge.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
10	I know and can recognize foreign cultural taboo knowledge.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
11	I know and can compare basic norms and behavioral knowledge in different cultures.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
12	I know and can describe the basics of concepts such as culture, its components and intercultural communication such as culture shock, cross-cultural adjustment, etc..	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
13	I know some strategies and techniques for successful intercultural communication (effective and appropriate interaction with foreigners).	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
Intercultural Skills						
14	I think I have the ability to negotiate with the other party and explain the culture of both countries in the event of misunderstandings in intercultural communication to satisfy both parties.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
15	I think I have the ability to communicate with body language or other non-verbal means when there is a language communication barrier.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
16	I think I have the ability to use a foreign language to communicate successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds and fields.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
17	I think I have the ability to treat foreigners with courtesy when communicating with them.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
18	I think when communicating with foreigners, I try to avoid offending them in	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5

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	language, dress and behavior.					
19	I think I have the ability to avoid bias and prejudice against foreigners when communicating with them.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
20	I think when communicating with foreigners, I will avoid talking about the privacy of foreigners.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
21	I think I possess the ability to directly acquire knowledge related to intercultural communication through contact with foreigners.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
22	I think I have the ability to maintain sensitivity to cultural differences.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
23	I think I have the ability to use various methods, skills and strategies to learn foreign languages and cultures.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
24	I think I have the ability to reflect and learn when misunderstandings about Chinese and foreign cultures arise.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
25	I think I have the ability to look at issues from different cultures and perspectives when events such as politics, economy, and religion occur in other countries.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
Intercultural Awareness						
26	I can be aware of cultural similarities and differences in communication with foreigners, recognizing that there may be distinct cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, languages, and other aspects between me and my interlocutors.	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
27	I can be aware of the how the values of my own and other cultures are reflected in specific documents, events and situations. (e.g., in the text on the spending habits of university students, American university students are accustomed to using credit cards, which reflects their philosophy of overspending.)	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
28	I can be aware of differences in cultural style and language use, and how they affect social and work situations. (e.g., some cultures have a more direct style of communication that is seen as impolite in another culture.)	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5

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29	I can be aware that the evaluation and analysis of cultural issues in texts or events in my country and in other countries should be carried out objectively, in-depth and comprehensively on the basis of uniform criteria, without subjective and arbitrary.	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5

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Adapted Version of ICCAS (Chinese)

亲爱的同学，感谢您抽出宝贵的时间参与我们的调查！本次调查旨在了解您对自己的跨文化交际能力的感受和理解。恳请您用几分钟时间帮忙填写这份问卷。本问卷所有数据只用于统计分析，请放心填写。题目选项无对错之分，不会对您的学业成绩有任何影响，请您按自己的实际情况选择最能体现您对以下陈述的认同程度的选项。如果您在填写问卷的过程中有任何疑问或需要进一步的信息，随时可以联系我们，您的反馈将受到高度重视！再次感谢您的参与！您的反馈将成为我们不断改进的动力！

基本信息						
姓名: 学号.: _____ 年龄:		性别: ○男 ○女 我去过其他的国家。 ○是 ○否				
序号	**陈述**	**完全不赞同**	**不赞同**	**一般**	**赞同**	**完全赞同**
跨文化态度						
1	我愿意与来自不同文化背景的外国人交流。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
2	我愿意尝试包容外国人不同的价值观、饮食习惯、禁忌等。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
3	我有兴趣并愿意学习外国语言和文化，了解外国人。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
跨文化知识						
4	我了解自己国家的历史、地理和社会政治知识（如社会政治制度、法律、政策等）。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
5	我了解自己国家的生活方式和价值观。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
6	我了解自己国家的社交礼仪和宗教文化知识。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
7	我了解外国的历史、地理和社会政治知识（如社会政治制度、法律、政策等）。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
8	我了解外国的生活方式和价值观。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
9	我知道外国的社交礼仪和宗教文化知识。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
10	我知道并能识别外国文化禁忌知识。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
11	我知道并能比较不同文化的基本规范和行为知识。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5
12	我知道并能描述文化、文化的组成部分和跨文化交际等概念的基本内容，如文化冲击、	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5

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	跨文化适应等。					
13	我知道一些成功进行跨文化交际（与外国人进行有效和适当的互动）的策略和技巧。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
跨文化技能						
14	我觉得在与外国人交流中出现冲突时，我有能力与对方协商并解释彼此国家的文化，使双方都满意。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
15	我觉得当语言交流有障碍时，我有能力用肢体语言或其他非语言手段进行交流。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
16	我觉得我有能力使用外语成功地与来自不同文化背景和领域的人进行交流。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
17	我觉得在与外国人交流时，我能够以礼相待。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
18	我觉得与外国人交流时，我尽量避免在语言、着装和行为上冒犯他们。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
19	我觉得在与外国人交流时，我有能力避免对他们产生偏见和刻板印象。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
20	我觉得在与外国人交流时，我会避免谈论外国人的隐私。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
21	我觉得我有能力通过与外国人的接触，直接获取与跨文化交际有关的知识。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
22	我觉得我有能力保持对文化差异的敏感性,主动地将他国文化与本国文化进行对比。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
23	我觉得我有能力运用各种方法、技能和策略来学习外语和外国文化。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
24	我觉得当出现对中外文化的误解时，我有能力进行反思和学习。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
25	我觉得当其他国家发生政治、经济和宗教等事件时，我有能力从不同的文化和角度看问题。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
跨文化意识						
26	在与外国人交流时，我能意识到彼此的文化身份的差异，即自己和对方的行为和想法都受到各自文化（价值观、传统、语言和信仰等方面）影响，拥有个人习惯和偏好。	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
27	我能意识到在具体的文本、事件和场合中，自己和其他文化的价值观是如何体现的。（比如，在关于大学生消费习惯的文本中，美国大学生习惯使用信用卡，这反映了他们超前消费的理念。）	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5
28	我能意识到文化风格和语言使用的差异，以及它们如何影响社交和工作情境。（比如，有些文化的沟通风格较直接，而在另一个文化中却被视为不礼貌。）	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5

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29	我能意识到对本国和他国文本或事件中的文化问题进行评价分析时，应依据统一的标准，客观、深入、全面地展开，而不具有主观随意性。	○1	○2	○3	○4	○5

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Appendix M

An Example of Interview

Interview Transcript (English)
Interview Transcript: P01-F-C (P01: No. 1, Female, OPT Level C1)
Interview Date: 2024-06-16
Duration: 00:18:39
Location: Classroom A3015, No. 2 Comprehensive Building

Section 1: Opening Remarks

[00:00:00] Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to this interview! Today, we'll be discussing our college English course, which lists improving intercultural communication competence as one of its objectives. I'd like to hear about your experiences and thoughts on this course, okay?
[00:00:25] P01: Okay, teacher.
[00:00:27] Interviewer: The interview will take about 20 minutes. I'll be recording it and taking notes, but please rest assured that your personal information will be kept confidential and never shared with others. If there's anything you'd rather not discuss, just let me know, and we can stop anytime. If you have questions or need clarification on anything, feel free to ask. Alright?
[00:01:01] P01: Okay, teacher!
[00:01:05] Interviewer: Great, let's get started.
[00:01:09] P01: Okay!

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Section 2: Icebreaker Questions

[00:01:12] Interviewer: How's your day going?
[00:01:18] P01: It's been okay. I just finished classes—nothing too special.
[00:01:25] Interviewer: Good, good. What's your name?
[00:01:30] P01: My name is Zhang Yipeng.
[00:01:32] Interviewer: Where are you from?
[00:01:35] P01: I'm from Jiangsu Province.
[00:01:38] Interviewer: Your accent made me think you're from within the province!
[00:01:43] P01: (smiling) I'm from northern Jiangsu—our accents are similar.
[00:01:48] Interviewer: Ah, that makes sense. Have you ever been abroad?
[00:01:52] P01: Not yet, but maybe I'll have the chance in the future.

Section 3: Intercultural Attitudes

[00:02:01] Interviewer: Alright, let's move to the main topic. Has your interest in other cultures changed because of this English course? If so, how?

[00:02:18] P01: Yes, I'm more interested now than before. I used to only have a superficial understanding, but through the course, I've discovered many fascinating aspects of other cultures.
[00:02:51] Interviewer: Can you give examples of classroom activities that positively influenced this attitude? Which activities made you more interested?
[00:03:09] P01: Let me think… (5-second pause) For example, group discussions in class—we talked about how different countries view foreign language learning and the challenges they face, which are quite different from ours. That made me want to understand more deeply. There were also cultural presentation activities where classmates shared the characteristics of various countries, which broadened my horizons.
[00:04:10] Interviewer: Has your willingness to discover and understand different views between your own culture and other cultures on the same issue changed?
[00:04:23] P01: Yes, I'm more willing to learn now. When encountering cultural topics, I think about how foreigners might view the issue differently and try to understand their perspectives on my own.
[00:05:08] Interviewer: Can you give an example of classroom activities that positively influenced this willingness?
[00:05:22] P01: Teacher, are you asking which activities made me more eager to understand how other countries view issues differently from us?
[00:05:36] Interviewer: Yes, please provide a relevant example.
[00:05:41] P01: (3-second pause) Oh! In the "values of save and spend" unit about consumption habits, our teacher organized a debate where we compared Chinese and Western consumption concepts. Through the debate, I became more willing to understand different viewpoints.

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Section 4: Intercultural Knowledge

[00:06:28] Interviewer: Great, it seems these activities left a deep impression! Has this English course influenced your understanding of other cultures, such as their values, beliefs, literature, art, institutions, geography, customs, or social norms?
[00:06:54] P01: Yes, my understanding has increased significantly. In the "younger generation" unit, I learned about the lifestyles and values of young people in different countries, which was very rewarding.
[00:07:20] Interviewer: Good. Has the course influenced your understanding of your own culture, if at all?
[00:07:33] P01: I think it has. (4-second pause) Through comparing with other cultures, I've gained new insights into our own culture.
[00:08:04] Interviewer: Can you give examples of activities that enhanced this intercultural knowledge?
[00:08:16] P01: (smiling) For instance, when discussing consumption concepts, the teacher had us conduct a consumption survey, which helped me better understand the consumption habits of Chinese college students.
[00:08:48] Interviewer: Excellent! How has the course influenced your

understanding of how people in your country view other cultures?
[00:09:10] P01: I feel I better understand how our country views other cultures now.
[00:09:14] Interviewer: Can you provide an example?
[00:09:17] P01: Through classroom discussions and sharing, I noticed that our views on other cultures can differ.
[00:09:43] Interviewer: After the course, has your understanding of how people in other countries view your culture changed?
[00:09:55] P01: Yes, I know more now. For example, foreign teachers shared foreigners' views on Chinese culture at English corners, letting me know they're interested in traditional Chinese culture but less familiar with modern culture.
[00:10:27] Interviewer: Can you give examples of activities that improved this intercultural knowledge?
[00:10:36] P01: Let me think… (4-second pause) Interactions with foreign teachers were helpful, as were cultural exchange activities that allowed me to learn how people from different countries view Chinese culture.

Section 5: Intercultural Skills

[00:10:55] Interviewer: Has this English course influenced your ability to interpret events, behaviors, or texts from other countries? For example, Chinese language beginners nodding repeatedly while speaking Chinese, or newspaper articles about popular majors in other countries? If so, how?
[00:11:16] P01: (3-second pause) I feel my interpretive skills have improved. Right, right—(speaking faster) I used to not realize that foreign beginners nod when speaking Chinese because of tone issues. When the teacher showed us a mimicry video, I was confused and thought they did it on purpose (laughs), but it turns out they nod to pronounce tones better. Now I know there are cultural backgrounds behind such behaviors—for example, their languages don't have tones.
[00:12:33] Interviewer: Good. Has your ability to understand and engage with other cultures changed after the course?
[00:12:42] P01: Yes, I have more methods now. Through the course, I learned how to research and access cultural knowledge.
[00:13:01] Interviewer: Can you be specific? Which classroom activities brought about this change?
[00:13:15] P01: Sometimes the teacher assigned group activities where we explored other cultures, such as creating cultural collection tables. We divided tasks to find information and discovered new cultural knowledge through reading.
[00:13:53] Interviewer: Has the course influenced your ability to communicate with people from different countries without conflict or misunderstanding? If so, how?
[00:14:08] P01: I think my communication skills have improved. I can better understand others and express my views, especially on cultural topics we've studied. I'd find it easier to discuss these with foreigners now.
[00:14:20] Interviewer: Can you give examples of activities that improved these intercultural skills?

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[00:14:29] P01: Role-playing was very useful. Simulating real communication scenarios taught me how to handle different situations.

Section 6: Intercultural Awareness

[00:14:58] Interviewer: After the English course, how do you view your ability to evaluate your own and other cultures?
[00:15:10] P01: I think it's improved to some extent. Through various comparisons and discussions, I've learned to view cultural issues from multiple perspectives.
[00:15:25] Interviewer: Can you give examples of activities that enhanced this intercultural awareness?
[00:15:38] P01: Writing cultural analysis reports allowed me to deeply analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different cultures, cultivating my ability to evaluate objectively.
[00:15:59] Interviewer: Has the course influenced your awareness of viewing your own culture from others' perspectives? If so, how?
[00:16:10] P01: I think I have this awareness now. When interacting with foreign teachers and learning about other cultures, I consider their views on Chinese culture, which helps me better understand our own culture.
[00:16:41] Interviewer: Can you give examples of activities that improved this intercultural awareness?
[00:16:51] P01: Interactions with foreign teachers and listening to classmates share their experiences of communicating with foreigners helped me understand Chinese culture from different angles.

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Section 7: Feedback on Challenges in Intercultural Learning

[00:17:09] Interviewer: In classroom activities related to intercultural learning, have you encountered any particularly challenging activities? If so, what made them challenging?
[00:17:20] P01: Discussing with foreigners was challenging because it involved a lot of vocabulary and complex ideas, and I sometimes couldn't express myself clearly.
[00:17:48] Interviewer: Finally, do you have any questions or suggestions for the college English course?
[00:18:03] P01: I was wondering if future courses can include more face-to-face interactions with foreign students? I think this would better improve our intercultural communication skills.
[00:18:26] Interviewer: Great! Thank you for your answers—they've given me a lot to think about. Shall we end here today?
[00:18:39] P01: Okay, teacher!

Interview Transcript (Chinese)

访谈编号：P01-F-C （受访者 P01：3 号，女性，OPT 水平 C 级）
访谈日期：2024-06-16
访谈时长：00：18：39
访谈地点：2 号综合楼 A3015 教室
◆◆◆
段落 1：开场白
[00:00:00] 采访者：好，感谢你能来参加我的访谈哈！咱今天呢就是就聊聊我们的大学英语课。这门课不是把提高咱们的跨文化交际能力当作教学目标之一嘛，我就想听听你们上这门课的经历和这个想法，好吧？
[00:00:25] 受访者 P01：，好的，老师。
[00:00:27] 采访者：，咱大概就聊 20 分钟左右哈！然后，我会把咱的访谈过程录个音，也会做个笔记。，但是你放心，你的这个个人信息我肯定会保密，绝对不会告诉别人的哈！要是聊到一些你不想说的，咱就随时喊停就行，哈！要是你有什么问题，或者哪儿没听明白想让我再解释解释的，你也别客气，直接问就行。好吧？
[00:01:01] 受访者 P01：好的，老师！
[00:01:05] 采访者：那行，那咱就开始吧！
[00:01:09] 受访者 P01：好！
◆◆◆
段落 2：破冰问题
[00:01:12] 采访者：好嘞！你今天过得怎么样啊？
[00:01:18] 受访者 P01：今天还行吧，刚上完课，，挺好的。
[00:01:25] 采访者：挺好，挺好。那你叫什么名字？
[00:01:30] 受访者 P01：我叫张逸鹏。
[00:01:32] 采访者：你是哪里人啊？
[00:01:35] 受访者 P01：我是江苏的。
[00:01:38] 采访者：听你说话我以为你省内的呢！
[00:01:43] 受访者 P01：（微笑）我苏北的，口音差不多。
[00:01:48] 采访者：哦。怪不得。你出过国吗？
[00:01:52] 受访者 P01：还没有出过国呢，以后有机会的吧！
◆◆◆
段落 3：跨文化态度
[00:02:01] 采访者：好的。那我们进入正题哈。你对其他国家文化的兴趣有没有因为这段时间的英语课学习发生变化？如果有，是怎样的变化？
[00:02:18] 受访者 P01：有，我感觉比以前更感兴趣了。以前只是大概知道一些，现在通过英语课的学习，发现其他国家文化有很多有趣的地方。
[00:02:51] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些课堂活动对这一跨文化态度产生了积极的影响吗？我是说是什么课堂活动让你更感兴趣了呢？
[00:03:09] 受访者 P01：我想一下啊（沉默 5 秒）比如课堂上的小组讨论活动，我们讨论过不同国家对于外语学习的看法、遇到的困难之类的，和我们不太一样，让我很想深入地了解。还有文化展示活动，同学们展示了很多国家的特色，拓宽了我的视野。
[00:04:10] 采访者：你对发现和理解本国和其他国家的文化对同一问题的不同看法的意愿有没有变化？

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[00:04:23] 受访者 P01：有，我更有愿意去了解了。现在遇到一些文化有关的主题的时候，我都会去思考外国人对这个问题的观点跟我们可能有什么不同，然后试着自己去了解他们的观点。
[00:05:08] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些课堂活动对这一跨文化态度产生了积极的影响吗？
[00:05:22] 受访者 P01：老师，你是问我哪些活动让我更喜欢去了解别的国家对问题的看法跟我们有什么不一样吗？
[00:05:36] 采访者：对，举个与之相关的例子吧！
[00:05:41] 受访者 P01：（沉默 3 秒）哦！在学“values of save and spend”就是消费习惯那个单元的时候，我们老师组织了辩论活动，让我们对比中国和西方在消费观念上的不同，通过辩论，我更愿意去理解不同的看法了。
◆◆◆
段落 4：跨文化知识
[00:06:28] 采访者：很好，看样子这些活动给你留下了深刻印象啊！那么，这段时间的英语课有没有对你对其他国家的文化的了解产生了影响呢？比如他们的价值观、信仰、文学、艺术、制度、地理、习俗、社会规范等？
[00:06:54] 受访者 P01：有的，我对这些的了解增进了很多。学那个“younger generation”这个单元的时候，我了解到了不同国家年轻人的生活方式和价值观，很有收获。
[00:07:20] 采访者：好的。这段时间的英语课对你对本国文化的理解产生了什么影响，如果有的话？
[00:07:33] 受访者 P01：我觉得也增进了吧！（沉默 4 秒）通过和其他国家文化的对比，我对我们的文化有了新的认识 。
[00:08:04] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些活动有助于增进这种跨文化知识吗？
[00:08:16] 受访者 P01：（微笑）比如说在讨论消费观念的时候，老师让我们做了一个消费调查我记得，让我更能理解我们中国的大学生的消费观念了。
[00:08:48] 采访者：很好！那这段时间的英语课怎样影响你对我国人民如何看待其他国家文化的理解？
[00:09:10] 受访者 P01：我感觉我更加了解我们国家如何看待其他国家文化了。
[00:09:14] 采访者：比如说呢？你能提供一些例子吗？
[00:09:17] 受访者 P01：通过那个课堂上的讨论和分享，我发现我们对其他国家文化的看法不太一样。
[00:09:43] 采访者：经过课程学习后，你对其他国家的人如何看待我们文化的了解是否有所改变？
[00:09:55] 受访者 P01：是的，了解得更多了。比如外教在英语角上分享了一些外国人对中国文化的看法，然后，让我知道他们对中国的传统文化很感兴趣，但对一些现代文化还不太了解。
[00:10:27] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些活动有助于改善这种跨文化知识吗？
[00:10:36] 受访者 P01：我想想哈（沉默 4 秒）和外教的交流活动很有帮助，还有一些文化交流活动，让我了解到不同国家的人对中国文化的看法。
◆◆◆
段落 5：跨文化技能

[00:10:55] 采访者：这段时间的英语课程是否影响了你解释其他国家事件、行为和文本的能力？例如，汉语初学者在说汉语时会不断点头，还有报纸上关于其他国家热门专业的文章？ 如果有，是怎样的影响？
[00:11:16] 受访者 P01：（沉默 3 秒）我感觉自己解读能力提高了。对对（语速加快），我以前没有意识到外国人刚学汉语的时候，会对声调这个东西做出这种点头的反应，当时老师给我们放那个模仿秀的时候，我都傻眼了，我以为他是故意的（笑），结果是为了更好地把声调读出来。就是那个知道他们行为背后有一些文化背景，就比如这个他们的语言里没有声调这个东西。
[00:12:33] 采访者：好。经过课程学习后，你了解和接触其他国家文化的能力是否发生了变化？
[00:12:42] 受访者 P01：是的，我有更多的方法去了解了。通过课程学习，我学会了一些查找资料的方法，也知道了一些获取文化知识的渠道。
[00:13:01] 采访者：能具体说说吗？是什么课堂活动给你带来的这种改变？
[00:13:15] 受访者 P01：有的时候老师布置一些让我们自己去探索其他国家文化的小组活动，做文化收集表之类的，然后我们几个人分工就去找资料，然后阅读发现一些不知道的文化知识。
[00:13:53] 采访者：课程是否影响了你与不同国家人士进行无冲突或误解的沟通能力？如果有，是怎样的影响？
[00:14:08] 受访者 P01：有吧，我觉得自己交流能力提高了，能够更好地理解对方的意思，也能更好的表达自己的观点了，至少是我们学过的一些文化主题，我觉得再让我遇到外国人讨论这些话题的时候更容易表达了。
[00:14:20] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些活动有助于改善这种跨文化技能吗？
[00:14:29] 受访者 P01：角色扮演吧，我觉得很有用，模拟真实的交流场景，让我学会了如何应对不同的情况。
◆◆◆
段落 6：跨文化意识
[00:14:58] 采访者：经过英语课程后，你对你自己对本国和他国文化的评价能力有什么看法？
[00:15:10] 受访者 P01：我觉得有一定的提高吧。通过各种对比和讨论，我学会了从多个角度看待文化问题。
[00:15:25] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些活动有助于改善这种跨文化意识吗？
[00:15:38] 受访者 P01：文化分析报告的写作活动，让我深入分析不同文化的优缺点，培养了我的客观评价能力。
[00:15:59] 采访者：课程是否影响了你从他国人视角看待自己文化的意识？如果有，是怎样的影响？
[00:16:10] 受访者 P01：我觉得学完课程后有这个意识了。就是在和外教交流以及学习其他国家文化的过程中，我会思考他们对中国文化的看法，然后更好地理解我们自己的文化。
[00:16:41] 采访者：你能举例说明哪些活动有助于改善这种跨文化意识吗？
[00:16:51] 受访者 P01：我觉得外教交流吧，听其他同学分享他们和外国人交流的经历，让我从不同角度理解了中国文化。
◆◆◆
段落 7：关于干预中发现的问题的意见

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[00:17:09] 采访者：好的。在涉及跨文化学习的课堂活动中，你是否遇到过特别具有挑战性的活动？如果是，是什么让它变得具有挑战性？
[00:17:20] 受访者 P01：我觉得在和外国人进行讨论时比较有挑战性，因为，那个，就是涉及到很多词汇和比较复杂的观点表达，有时候会表达不清楚。
[00:17:48] 采访者：好的，最后你还有什么问题或建议吗？你对大学英语课程有什么想法吧？
[00:18:03] 受访者 P01：我想问一下就是以后的课程中能不能增加一些和外国学生的面对面交流呢？我觉得这样可以更好地提高我们的跨文化交际能力。
[00:18:26] 非常好！谢谢你的回答哈！也给我很多思考。今天咱就到这？好吧？
[00:18:39] 好的，老师！

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Appendix N

Documentation of the OPT

1. Overview of the Test

The Oxford Placement Test (OPT) is a standardized, computer-adaptive English language proficiency test developed by Oxford University Press. It is designed to assess the general English proficiency of non-native learners at upper-secondary and adult levels.

The test assesses core components of language knowledge, including grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. It has two sections – Use of English and Listening. The Use of English section assesses students' knowledge of grammatical form and vocabulary. The Listening section assesses students' general listening ability. Both sections test how well students understand the meaning of what is being communicated, which is an excellent indicator of general language ability.

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Based on test performance, the OPT provides both a numerical score and an estimated proficiency level aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ranging from A1 to C2.

2. Test Format and Scoring

The OPT is administered online and employs a computer-adaptive testing format, in which the difficulty level of test items is adjusted dynamically according to the test-taker's responses. This adaptive design allows for efficient and individualized assessment while maintaining measurement precision across different proficiency levels.

Scoring is fully automated. Test results include: a standardized numerical score ranging from 0 to 120, and a corresponding CEFR proficiency level (A1–C2), as defined by the test provider.

3. Test Administration in the Present Study

In this study, the OPT was administered to all students prior to the instructional intervention in order to assess baseline English proficiency. The test was conducted under standardized conditions to ensure fairness and reliability.

Specifically, the test was administered online in a controlled computer-lab environment. All participants completed the test individually using digital devices. Standardized instructions were provided before the test. The test duration was approximately 90 minutes, as recommended by the test provider.

4. Use of OPT Results in the Study

In the present study, OPT scores and CEFR-aligned proficiency levels were used solely for descriptive and methodological purposes, including: profiling participants' overall English proficiency, establishing baseline equivalence between the experimental and control groups, and serving as a covariate in statistical analyses to control for the potential confounding effect of language proficiency. The OPT was not used as an outcome measure, nor were its results used for instructional placement, curriculum design, or evaluation of learning gains.

5. Availability of Test Materials

As the Oxford Placement Test is a proprietary and computer-adaptive assessment, specific test items are not publicly disclosed by the test provider and vary across test-takers. Therefore, in accordance with standard research practice and copyright restrictions, only test specifications, administration procedures, and scoring

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information are provided in this appendix. More information about the test, please refer to the official website:

https://elt.oup.com/feature/global/oxford-online-placement/?itm_source=oup-elt-site&itm_medium=promo-centre&itm_campaign=ww-assessment-opt&cc=gb&selLanguage=en&mode=hub

6. Validation of OPT

Language proficiency has been shown to significantly impact students' intercultural development and academic performance in second language contexts (Tran & Vong, 2021). Therefore, OPT was employed to assess students' baseline English proficiency and served as a critical covariate to control for the potential influence of language ability on ICC outcomes. In this study, validating the OPT scores was essential to ensure their appropriateness for between-group comparisons and for inclusion in statistical models such as ANCOVA.

Because OPT has been extensively validated by Oxford University Press and supported by substantial international validity evidence concerning its construct, interpretive, and use arguments (Pollitt, 2009; Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2011; Oxford University Press, 2021), this study did not re-establish validity, as such evidence is generated at the level of test development and cannot be replicated by individual researchers who do not have access to the technical data required for validity testing. In contrast, reliability is sample-dependent and may vary when the same instrument is used with different learner groups; therefore, internal consistency reliability was examined for the current sample to ensure the stability of proficiency measurement in this specific Chinese EFL context.

To ensure data quality, a systematic cleaning procedure was implemented. One

incomplete OPT record was removed, and 13 students voluntarily withdrew from the pilot due to personal reasons such as scheduling conflicts or illness, resulting in 30 valid records for analysis. Although the sample size is relatively small, it aligns with the common practice in pilot testing for scale refinement and feasibility checks, where samples of 15–30 participants are considered adequate for examining clarity, item functioning, and administration procedures (Hertzog, 2008; van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

These OPT results were cross-checked with corresponding ICCAS questionnaire responses to ensure data set consistency, with no mismatches or missing data observed. According to their feedback, data loss primarily resulted from technical issues (e.g., system crashes or connectivity problems) and voluntary non-participation. To minimize data loss in the main experiment, the importance of completing the test was emphasized in the informed consent form, and reminder strategies such as emails or text messages were implemented to encourage students to complete the assessment (Saunders et al., 2018).

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As shown in Table N1, the total OPT scores of the 30 students ranged from 41 to 89 (M = 61.63, SD = 11.25), indicating a moderate overall proficiency level. For the Use of English (UoE) subtest, scores ranged from 46 to 99, with an average of 70.90 (SD = 13.01), while the Listening subtest scores ranged from 36 to 80, with a mean of 52.40 (SD = 10.86). The wide score distributions across all components suggest substantial individual variation in English proficiency among students.

Table N1

Descriptive Statistics of OPT Scores

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Score	30	48	41	89	61.63	11.25
UoE Score	30	53	46	99	70.90	13.01
Listening Score	30	30	36	80	52.40	10.86

Students' proficiency levels were further categorized according to the CEFR standards across the Total, UoE, and Listening scores (see Table N2). For the Total Score, 96.7% of students fell within the B1–B2 range, indicating moderate proficiency. In the UoE section, 80% scored at B2 or above, suggesting comparatively stronger mastery of grammar and vocabulary. However, listening performance was relatively weaker, with 73.4% of students at B1 or below, and only one student reaching the C1 level.

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Table N2

CEFR Level Distribution across OPT Components (N = 30)

CEFR Level	Total Score (n/%)	UoE Score (n/%)	Listening Score (n/%)
A2	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	5 (16.7%)
B1	14 (46.7%)	5 (16.7%)	17 (56.7%)
B2	15 (50.0%)	17 (56.7%)	7 (23.3%)
C1	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3%)	1 (3.3%)

Reliability Analysis

As a standardized proficiency test, the Oxford Online Placement Test (OPT) has demonstrated strong psychometric properties. According to Oxford University Press (2015), test-retest reliability is reported as 0.82 for the UoE and 0.78 for the

Listening section, with parallel-form validity estimated at r = .75, indicating overall measurement stability.

In the present study, split-half reliability was calculated to assess internal consistency. The correlation between the UoE and Listening sections was r = .789. Applying the Spearman–Brown prophecy formula (Brown, 2002), the corrected reliability coefficient reached r = .882, indicating strong internal consistency. These results further support the OPT's suitability as a reliable placement instrument. The inter-correlations among all subsections and the total score are presented in Table N3.

Table N3

Correlation Analysis of OPT Subsections

Variable	**UoE Score**	**Listening Score**	**Total Score**
UoE Score	1	0.789	0.956
Listening Score	0.789	1	0.935
Total Score	0.956	0.935	1

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Correlation with Intercultural Communicative Competence

To examine the relationship between language proficiency (as measured by the total OPT score) and the dependent variable (ICC), a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. AS shown in Table N4, the results indicated a significant positive correlation between the total OPT score (Total_score) and the ICC score (r = .79, p < .01). This suggests that language proficiency may influence students' performance on ICC assessments. Therefore, in the main study, language proficiency should be included as a covariate in the data analysis to avoid potential confounding effects on the study's findings.

Table N4

Correlation Between Language Proficiency and ICC

Variable	Total Score	ICC Score
Total Score	1	0.790
ICC Score	0.790	1

Simulated Group Equivalence Check

During the pilot study, a simulated grouping was conducted to preliminarily assess whether English proficiency would be balanced between potential experimental and control groups if intact class-based assignment were used. This analysis aimed to determine whether language proficiency needed to be controlled as a covariate in the formal quasi-experimental design.

An independent samples t-test was performed on OPT total scores of two intact classes that were randomly selected to represent hypothetical experimental and control groups. The results shown in Table N5 showed no statistically significant difference in mean proficiency scores between the simulated groups (simulated EG: $M = 62.1$, $SD = 10.8$; simulated CG: $M = 61.2$, $SD = 11.7$; $t = 0.81$, $p = 0.425$).

This finding suggests that, under the simulated grouping, language proficiency was evenly distributed, thereby supporting the feasibility of intact class assignment. Nonetheless, to ensure internal validity, language proficiency was still controlled as a covariate in the formal analysis phase, given its theoretical relevance to ICC.

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Table N5

Preliminary Comparison of OPT Scores Between Intended Groups

Variable	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Total_score	Simulated EG	15	62.1	10.8	0.81	0.425
	Simulated CG	15	61.2	11.7		

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Appendix O

Supplementary Robustness Analyses

Supplementary robustness analyses were conducted to enhance the robustness, credibility, and interpretability of the main findings. Specifically, it includes calculations of effect sizes to quantify the magnitude of intervention effects, and a sensitivity analysis to examine the stability of results under different analytical scenarios.

Effect size calculations are increasingly emphasized in applied educational research, as they provide critical information about the practical significance of results beyond p-values (Lakens, 2022; Fritz et al., 2012) . Sensitivity analysis, on the other hand, is essential for evaluating the stability of statistical inferences under alternative model specifications, helping to ensure that findings are not artifacts of specific analytical choices (Cinelli & Hazlett, 2020; S. Razavi et al., 2021). These validation steps contribute to the transparency and credibility of quantitative findings, especially in mixed-methods intervention studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

1. Effect Size Calculation

Given that statistical significance does not always reflect practical importance, effect size measures such as partial η^2 were adopted to provide additional insight into the magnitude of observed effects (Lakens, 2022). This study employed Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to examine four dimensions of ICC: Intercultural Attitudes , Skills, Awareness, and Knowledge. The goal was to explore the effects of the grouping variable (Group) and covariates (OPT_total, Mean_Pre_ICAT, Mean_Pre_ICSK, Mean_Pre_ICAW, Mean_Pre_ICKN) on each dependent variable

(Mean_Post_ICAT, Mean_Post_ICSK, Mean_Post_ICAW, Mean_Post_ICKN). In addition, partial eta squared (η^2) was used to calculate effect sizes, quantifying the proportion of variance explained by each factor and providing robust evidence for the efficacy of IcLL-based interventions.

In the ANCOVA framework, partial eta squared is calculated as follows:

Partial η^2 = SS_effect / (SS_effect + SS_error)

Where SS_effect denotes the Type III sum of squares for the effect of interest, and SS_error refers to the Type III sum of squares for the error term.

a) ICAT Dimension

As shown in Table 4.22), the ICAT model explained 36.7% of the total variance (η^2 = .367). However, the effect size of the Group variable was relatively low (η^2 = .021), indicating a limited direct effect of the intervention on intercultural attitudes. In contrast, language proficiency (OPT_total) showed a stronger influence, highlighting its crucial role in attitude development. Additionally, the Group × OPT_total interaction was not significant (η^2 = .007), suggesting a similar pattern of influence across both experimental and control groups.

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Table O1

Effect Size Summary of ICAT

Variable	SS	df	F	*p*	η²
Model	10.911	3	20.469	<.001	.367
Group	0.397	1	2.234	.138	.021
Group × OPT_total	0.124	1	0.699	.405	.007

Effect sizes for the ICAT dimension were also calculated based on independent samples t-tests conducted within each CEFR level subgroup. Cohen's d was used to

quantify the standardized mean difference between groups.

In the Moderate group, the intervention had a large effect (d = 1.46), suggesting that the IcLL-based instruction substantially improved intercultural attitudes for students with intermediate language proficiency. By contrast, in the High group, the effect size was small (d = .14), and the difference was not statistically significant (p = .546) (see Table 4.23). This may indicate a ceiling effect or reduced sensitivity of highly proficient students to short-term attitudinal change.

Table O2

Effect Size Summary for ICAT by CEFR Level

CEFR Level	Group	N	t	df	*p*	Cohen's d	95% CI	Interpretation
Moderate	CG	16	-4.12	30	<.001	1.46	[-2.23, -0.66]	Large effect
	EG	16						
High	CG	38	-0.61	76	.546	0.14	[-0.58, 0.31]	Small effect
	EG	40						

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These supplementary analyses demonstrate that the intervention's effect on ICAT was moderated by language proficiency, with the strongest gains observed in the Moderate CEFR group.

b) ICKN Dimension:

In the ICKN dimension, the model explained 52.8% of the variance (η^2 = .528) (see Table 4.24). The Group effect was relatively small (η^2 = .026), suggesting limited direct impact of the intervention on intercultural knowledge. Language proficiency had the largest effect (η^2 = 0.270), underlining its vital role in knowledge acquisition. Pre-test performance (Mean_Pre_ICKN) also had a meaningful influence (η^2 = .083), indicating the cumulative nature of knowledge development.

Table O3

Effect Size Summary of ICKN

Variable	SS	df	F	*p*	η²
Model	11.899	3	39.516	<.001	.528
Group	0.282	1	2.805	.097	.026
OPT_total	3.938	1	39.229	<.001	.270
Mean_Pre_ICKN	0.960	1	9.567	.003	.083

c) ICSK Dimension:

As show in Table 4.25, the ICSK model explained 55.4% of the variance (η^2 = .554), the highest among all dimensions, indicating that intercultural skills were most sensitive to the intervention. The Group variable showed a notable effect size (η^2 = .116), confirming the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing skills. The Group × OPT_total interaction was also significant (η^2 = .136), indicating that students with higher language proficiency benefited more from the skills training.

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Table O4

Effect Size Summary of ICSK

Variable	SS	df	F	*p*	η²
Model	11.034	4	32.659	<.001	.554
Group	1.153	1	13.645	<.001	.116
Group × OPT_total	1.385	1	16.398	<.001	.136

d) ICAW Dimension:

For the ICAW dimension, the model accounted for 45.7% of the variance (η^2 = .457) (see Table 4.26). The Group variable had a moderate effect (η^2 = .057), suggesting a relatively stronger intervention impact on intercultural awareness, though less pronounced than for skills. Language proficiency again played a key role (η^2 = .224).

Pre-test scores (Mean_Pre_ICAW) also contributed modestly ($\eta^2 = .038$), indicating that awareness development may be influenced by prior knowledge.

Table O5

Effect Size Summary of ICAW

Variable	SS	df	F	*p*	η²
Model	11.623	3	29.786	<.001	.457
Group	0.835	1	6.417	.013	.057
OPT_total	3.994	1	30.706	<.001	.224
Mean_Pre_ICAW	0.542	1	4.164	.044	.038

Taken together, the effect size analyses indicate that the magnitude of intervention effects varied across ICC dimensions. While the intervention accounted for a larger proportion of variance in intercultural skills and awareness, effect sizes for intercultural attitudes and knowledge were comparatively small, with a substantial proportion of variance explained by language proficiency and pre-test scores. These results complement the ANCOVA findings by providing additional evidence on the practical magnitude of observed effects.

2. Sensitivity Analysis

To ensure the robustness of the research findings, this study conducted a multi-dimensional sensitivity analysis to verify the reliability of the ANCOVA results. The analysis incorporated outlier treatment, alternative model validation, covariate adjustment, and Bootstrap resampling to systematically evaluate the stability of key effects.

a) Outlier Treatment

Outliers were identified using boxplots and defined as post-test scores exceeding ±3

standard deviations from the mean in each dimension. A total of five extreme cases were removed. Re-estimating the ANCOVA models after outlier removal yielded only minimal changes in group effect sizes and significance levels (see Table 4.27).

Table O6

Comparison of Effect Sizes Before and After Outlier Removal

Dimension	Original η^2	Adjusted η^2	p-value Change
ICAT	.021	.019	.138 → .145
ICSK	.116	.122	<.001 → <.001
ICAW	.057	.063	.013 → .009
ICKN	.026	.023	.097 → .105

The main outliers consisted of low-proficiency students in the experimental group (OPT_total < 60, n = 3) and high-proficiency students in the control group (OPT_total > 85, n = 2). After removal, effect size variations were less than 10% and directionally consistent (e.g., the ICSK group effect changed from η^2 = .116 to .122), supporting the robustness of the model (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

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b) Alternative Model Validation

Robust regression (Huber loss function) and non-parametric testing (Kruskal-Wallis H test) were used for cross-validation. For ICSK, which showed significant interaction effects, robust regression confirmed both the main effect of Group (β = .26, p = .001) and the interaction effect (β = .14, p = .008). Non-parametric test results further supported the original conclusions (ICAT: H = 2.18, p = .139; ICKN: H = 2.94, p = .086), indicating the reliability of findings (Wager & Athey, 2018).

c) Covariate Adjustment Strategy

Gender and age were additionally controlled for in the ANCOVA models. The group

effect size changed by less than 5% across all dimensions (Table 4.28). For example, in ICSK, the group effect size slightly decreased from η^2 = .116 to .112 (p = .001), suggesting that demographic variables had a limited confounding effect on intervention outcomes (Efron, 2020).

Table O7

Comparison of Effect Sizes Before and After Covariate Adjustment

Dimension	Original η²	Adjusted η²	*p*-value Change
ICAT	.021	.017	.138 → .155
ICSK	.116	.112	<.001 → .001
ICAW	.057	.054	.013 → .016
ICKN	.026	.022	.097 → .115

d) Bootstrap Resampling Validation

Given that ICSK yielded the most pronounced group and interaction effects, it was selected for bootstrap validation. A 1000-iteration Bootstrap analysis was conducted for the ICSK dimension. The mean difference in the group main effect was 0.38, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.24, 0.52]; the slope of the interaction effect (Group × OPT_total) was 0.15, with a 95% CI of [0.09, 0.23]. These estimates closely matched the original parameters (see Table 4.29), confirming the stability of parameter estimation (Efron, 2020).

Table O8

Bootstrap Validation Results (ICSK Dimension)

Effect Term	Original Estimate	Bootstrap Mean	95% Confidence Interval
Group Main Effect	0.39	0.38	[0.24, 0.52]
Group × OPT_total	0.16	0.15	[0.09, 0.23]

The sensitivity analysis collectively indicates that the IcLL-based intervention had

robust effects on enhancing intercultural skills and awareness, while its impact on attitudes and knowledge requires further improvement (Lakens, 2022). Notably, students with higher language proficiency (OPT_total ≥ 70) demonstrated significantly greater gains in ICSK (mean difference = 0.38, 95% CI [0.24, 0.52]), highlighting the necessity of differentiated instruction. These findings corroborate the results from the simple effects analysis (Section 4.2.4.2), particularly highlighting the significant positive effect of the IcLL intervention on high-proficiency students' intercultural skills (ICSK).

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