
**Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence of
Home Students in a Multicultural Class in a University in
Eastern China**

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Declaration

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Abstract

As universities strive to meet the growing demands of internationalization, many naturally form multicultural classes for students to experience cultural diversity. Current literature and research focus largely on overseas students on multicultural campuses, limited attention has been paid to the home students. To address this, an empirical study was conducted to explore how a multicultural class might improve home students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) development.

Based on an extensive review of literature on ICC and ICC models, this study has developed an interactive model for students' development of ICC in a multicultural class. This model relies heavily on Byram's (1997) five savoirs of ICC and Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) relational model of intercultural competence, with full consideration of the theories and models developed in China and the research context. With this model, an action research study was planned and carried out over one semester Intercultural Communication Course among 37 home students and 12 overseas students in a multicultural class. In order to provide a holistic evaluation of home students' ICC development, this research collected data from students' pre-course and post-course questionnaires, interviews, the teacher's observation, and students' reflective journals based on their learning experience.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered provide evidence of students' ICC progressive change and indicate that the pedagogical design of the multicultural class was effective in terms of enhancing home students' ICC development in a number of key areas: strengthened positive attitude towards other cultures, broadened knowledge about other cultures, developed intercultural skills, and enhanced critical cultural awareness. Findings also indicated that Chinese cultural values heavily influenced intercultural interaction and should not be neglected in the design of an ICC development model for the Chinese context. Furthermore, in view of the enhancement of English competence, this study highlighted that studying in a multicultural class developed home students' confidence in speaking English and strengthened their understanding of the varieties of English.

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Acronyms

AIC-CCS=Assessment of Intercultural Competence of Chinese College Students

BRI=Belt and Road Initiative

CECR=Chinese College English Curriculum Requirements

EFL= English as a Foreign Language

FLT=Foreign Language Teaching

HS=Home student

IaH=Internationalization at Home

IC=Intercultural Competence

ICC=Intercultural Communicative Competence

IHE=Internationalization of Higher Education

MC=multicultural class

MOE= Ministry of Education

MOODLE=Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment

OBOR=One Belt, One Road

OS=Overseas Student

PC= parallel class

PQ=Pre-Questionnaire

Q&A=Question and Answer

TM=Teaching Module

UNNC=University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China

ZWU=Zhejiang Wanli University

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Writing an EdD thesis is a long journey, but a journey with love.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis reports an empirical study of the experience of a group of Chinese students in a multicultural class in a University in Eastern China where they study together with overseas students. While the current literature relates largely to students who study abroad or overseas students who interact with home students on the multicultural campus, limited attention has been paid to the home students on such campuses. To address this, this study focuses on the home students studying in the multicultural class and the effects of this on their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) development which is widely seen an essential dimension with regard to internationalization of higher education (IHE).

This chapter first introduces the motivation for conducting this study and then illustrates the research background, which is followed by the objectives and significance of this study. The last section ends this chapter with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Motivation for Conducting this Research Project

My research interest in teaching ICC comes from my own experience as an EFL learner and then a teacher. I majored in English at a Chinese university in the early 2000s. At that time, most of the English teachers did not realize the importance of ICC development, and they did not incorporate cultural knowledge, except for briefly introducing some major holidays and customs in the US and the UK. Later on, I went to University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (UNNC) to study a Master degree in Intercultural Communication. As a Sino-British cooperative university, UNNC is famous for its IHE and attracts many international students as well as domestic students. This experience was the first time for me to have a chance to study together with three international students in our class, which opened a window for me to the outside world. Through discussions, group projects, and even in lectures, I learned many cultural differences among us. On the basis of this experience, I published my first research essay in a Chinese academic magazine (Shen, 2008), in which I attempted to describe different teaching styles. At that time, I did not realize that my ICC had been developed by studying together with international students. I just felt lucky enough to have the opportunity to gain more direct knowledge about different cultures and the skills to communicate with international students. After graduating from UNNC, I worked in Zhejiang Wanli University (ZWU) as an English teacher and later as the director of the English department in charge of all the international teachers. I realized that the experiences with my international classmates in UNNC benefited my work considerably. Compared with my colleagues, I am more sensitive, more tolerant, and more flexible in dealing with cultural differences. I sometimes wondered whether my experience could be extended to multicultural class learning so that more students

could benefit from it.

With the development of IHE, ZWU has accepted an increasing number of international students to study in China since 2015. Given the lack of domestic teachers who can speak fluent English, ZWU has arranged these international students to study together with English majors¹ to learn courses such as Chinese Culture, International Business, and Intercultural Communication. I taught Chinese Culture and Intercultural Communication for several consecutive years. Having witnessed the different class make-ups and dynamics between international students and home students, I became increasingly interested in the ICC development of the latter in this multicultural context. This was due to the fact that, after conducting some preliminary reviews of the literature about multicultural classes in China, I found that most researchers seem to be interested only in the experiences of international students, such as their learning style (Ladd & Jr, 1999; Vita, 2001; Wong, 2004), social contact or friendship between international and local students (Halualani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, & Dodge, 2004), and intercultural identity (Karabenick & Urdan, 2012; Tian & Lowe, 2013), whereas the home students received limited attention. It was apparent that home students, as participants in the IHE, also experienced cultural issues in such a learning environment compared with the relatively ‘homogeneous’ class they had previously experienced. Thus, I determine that more attention should be paid to them in my research.

1.2 Background to the Study

Friedman (2005) states that the 21st century is a “flat” world, by which he predicts that the communication between countries will become boundless owing to wider economic globalization. Therefore, overseas study has become a fast-growing phenomenon. Data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2017) showed that approximately 4.6 million students studied outside of their own country in 2015. Moreover, research reveals that an increasing number of students prefer to pursue their academic degrees overseas (Rienties, Héliot, & Jindal-Snape, 2013).

In China, the number of internationally mobile students has also increased rapidly. Underpinning the country’s ambition of using IHE to enhance its soft power, numerous policies and actions have been implemented to attract international students to study in China. For example, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China (2010) launched the “Study in China Program” aimed at increasing the number of international students in China to more than 1.5 million by 2020. Furthermore, since the implementation of the “Belt and Road Initiative²” in 2013, especially after the distribution of

¹The university usually mixed overseas students with local English majors because most of their courses are usually taught in English, in this way the problem of insufficient teachers who can speak fluent English is solved.

² BRI runs through the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, and it is open and welcomes participation of all countries, and international and regional organizations (ibid). The BRI initiative has become an important opening-up initiative in China. Promoting and strengthening higher education cooperation and exchanges with BRI countries are important aspects in this initiative (MOE, 2016)

the “Promote and Co-construct Education Action under the Belt and Road Initiative Program” in 2016, China has been recruiting students from all parts of the world, and thus, the IHE in China has been experiencing unprecedented growth in international student enrollments. To further boost the rapid development of IHE in China, more efforts are adopted, such as the establishment of the “Silk Road” government scholarship and the mutual recognition of academic degrees. Consequently, in 2017, the number of international students in Chinese universities reached 489,200 (International Exchange Office of China Education Association, 2017) and China is considered as one of the major countries that attract international students (OECD, 2017).

The aforementioned circumstance has led to the sharp increase of multicultural classes, which are characterized by a diversity of students in ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, and cultural traditions (Tartwijk et al., 2009). By participating in curricular and extracurricular activities, both home and international students are expected to become engaged with each other, thereby leading to mutually beneficial experiences (Jon, 2013) and creating ideal social forums to develop intercultural communication skills (Volet & Ang, 2012). In this context, many attempts have been made to explore the experiences of international students in a multilingual and multicultural class (Vita, 2001; Krajewski, 2011), whereas home students have received limited attention in the literature, especially in China.

Considering that most Chinese universities lack international teachers or even domestic teachers who can speak fluent English, mixing international students with home students (especially English majors) in these classes taught by teachers with relatively strong competence in English has become a natural phenomenon in China (An & Wei, 2012). In 2011, I conducted a survey of 29 universities in Zhejiang province and found that the majority of the universities arranged international students to study together with local students in one class (Shen, 2011). Nine years later, multicultural class learning remains the most popular design in China for accepting international students. For example, ZWU, the university where I work, had 334 students from 39 countries in 2019. These international students study together with home students, creating at least 30 multicultural classes. As mentioned above, when I was teaching these classes, I noticed that there is a growing diversity in the classes due to the participation of overseas students, such as the diversity in learning style and communication style. The lack of understanding and knowledge of their classmates from other cultures may lead to home students’ misunderstanding and sometimes even cause conflicts. As a teacher, I believed that in such situations, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), as is widely discussed and promoted in the world (see a thorough review in Chapter 2), is important for both home and overseas students. I was therefore curious about the overall experience of these domestic Chinese students who were studying with international students in a multicultural class, and keen to find out how a practitioner like me could intervene to enhance their ICC development. In short, this study was motivated not only by my personal

growth experience, but also by my teaching experiences and my observation in the multicultural class.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to explore whether an interventional action research study in a multicultural class can improve home students' ICC development, and, if yes, what aspects of their ICC could be developed. More specifically, three more detailed objectives can be described as follows. First of all, given that much of the current research is predominantly Euro-American (Miyahara, 1992; Deardorff, 2006), and in China most works on ICC largely borrow overseas conceptualisations and adapt them primarily to the teaching contexts (Wang, Deardorff, & Kulich, 2017), there is growing awareness of the need to explore the theories of ICC from Chinese perspectives. As a result, from the perspective of theoretical construction, this study aims at reconceptualising the ICC development model in the Chinese educational setting thus to provide an integrated perspective for developing students' ICC. Secondly, this study is intended to fill the aforementioned research gap, that is, there being little empirical research which is related to develop home students' ICC in a multicultural class, especially in China. By explicitly exploring the ICC development of home students with an action research study, the third purpose of this study is to provide evidence-based suggestions to ICC teaching practice suitable for the multicultural context in China. Under the general purpose, the study aims to answer the following research question: "Whether and to what extent can the intervention make a difference in terms of students' ICC, particularly the students from the host country, in a multicultural class learning?" (see Section 2.4.1 for more details about research question).

1.4 Significance of the Research

It is hoped that the action research focusing on the ICC development of Chinese students will fill the gap in the era of a rapidly expanding IHE. This work will hopefully lead to some new insights on 'nurturing ICC at home' by bringing together Chinese and Western theoretical frameworks in this knowledge area. At the same time, the findings of this action research study regarding the ICC development of home students will help draw practical implications for future intercultural education in my research context and similar contexts.

1.5 Overview of the Study

This current chapter serves as an introduction to this thesis, outlining the background, the objectives and significance of this study. After this introductory chapter, Chapter two gives a critical review of existing literature on the ICC definition and theoretical models worldwide and in China to set the context for the study. Then the research gap and questions are identified and

elaborated. The chapter also presents a theoretical framework for the current study by drawing on the scholarship concerning ICC components and the specific context of IHE in China.

Following the literature review, Chapter three rationalizes action research as the methodology for this study. The design of the general research procedure and applied research methods are also discussed in this chapter. As an action research study, this chapter presents the detailed design including the educational philosophy of this study from the teacher's point of view and the background information of the participants. The detailed information about Intercultural Communication Course, including the teaching objectives and teaching design, are explained. The final two sections analyse ethical issues and research validity and reliability to ensure the validity of the data and analysis.

Chapter four first presents data about home students' previous interaction experiences with otherness³, their understanding of the concept of ICC, and then reports findings with a focus on students' ICC development from the perspectives of attitude, knowledge, skills, critical cultural awareness, influence of Chinese cultural values and the unique situation concerning the lingua franca adopted by the home and overseas students. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, this chapter provides a holistic view of students' progressive change in their ICC learning experience in the multicultural context.

Chapter five is the final discussion of the study and the concluding part to summarize the findings. In discussing the findings in relation to research purposes, a refined ICC theoretical model in the Chinese context is presented, on the basis of evidence drawn from the study. The limitations of the study and future research directions are also discussed.

³ Otherness is commonly defined as a person or a group of people who are different from oneself or from the group that we see as us (Balibar, 2005; Peng, 2022). Another term similar in meaning is foreign. As Byram (2021, p.4) points out, 'foreign' suggests that "an entity comes from outside, is alien and different, and thus contains some negative connotations." To avoid such a problematic term, and with the aim to make students have a more objective attitude in intercultural communication, this study uses 'otherness' instead of 'foreign'.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The nature of ICC research is interdisciplinary, involving studies in psychology, linguistics, culture, education, sociology, and communication. In this chapter, as a practitioner, I will review the most relevant literature on ICC, focusing on studies that can do the following:

- (1) Establish the need for the current study by highlighting issues raised in the literature and by drawing attention to areas most relevant to the intended empirical investigation;
- (2) Suggest ways to conceptualize ICC and to provide a theoretical framework or model of ICC for this study.

To this end, in this chapter, the following topics are covered: the global and local context of developing ICC, the conceptualisation and theories of ICC development in a multicultural context, and the theoretical framework of this study.

More specifically, Section 2.1 introduces the global and Chinese contexts for the necessity of developing the ICC of university students. Under such background, the concepts and key studies on multicultural classes are critically reviewed. Section 2.2 reviews the theories and models concerning ICC from different scholars worldwide. This section aims to provide a clear description of the current literature to identify the existing gap. Section 2.3 discusses the studies on students' ICC in China, including the research on cultivating students' ICC and the assessment of ICC in China. On the basis of these sections, Section 2.4 draws the implication of the existing literature and proposes the definition of ICC and the theoretical framework for this study. Finally, Section 2.5 provides a chapter summary.

2.1 Global call for Intercultural Communicative Competence Development

2.1.1 Global Context

Globalization, a major current buzzword, constitutes one of the most significant and dominating developments of the present world. Social science theorists use the word to signify that something profound is happening; that the world is changing; and that a new world economic, political, and cultural order is emerging. For instance, Sasaki (2004, p.69) claimed that “globalization can be interpreted from many different perspectives: economic, social, psychological, political, even philosophical and it is now a major characteristic of our daily lives”. Likewise, according to Waters (1995, p.5), globalization is “a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social, and cultural arrangements recede, and people become increasingly aware that they are receding and thus act accordingly”. Representing this increasingly dynamic

human world, globalization calls for the promotion of mutual respect, mutual tolerance, and mutual understanding among different countries. Therefore, ICC, as briefly defined before, becomes an everyday necessity for a qualified citizen living in this global village.

In response to the influence of globalization, Internationalization of Higher Education (IHE) has rapidly developed worldwide. Altbach et al. (2009, p.ii) defined IHE as “the variety of policies and programs that universities and government implement to respond to globalization.” In this process, IHE is often designed as “a broad range of intellectual and experiential activities to help individuals understand the global environment in which they live, communicate across borders, and acquire an understanding of cultural, social, and political systems of other nations and the interactions between nations” (Hayward & Siaya, 2001, p.43). In other words, IHE calls for the development of ICC in education.

The value of intercultural understanding and awareness needs to be reflected and emphasized in higher education to achieve successful intercultural communication because individuals have increased contact with people from different cultures due to globalization. The objectives of IHE should, therefore, center on the preparation of graduates to be globally competent. For instance, Deardorff (2006) argued that one meaningful outcome of internationalization efforts is the cultivation of interculturally competent students. Pearce (2015, p.79) also suggested that developing ICC is vital in the globalized world because “after graduation, all students will live and work in an increasingly globalizing and interconnected world, where cultural diversity is the norm and where interacting with people from various cultural backgrounds underpins effective citizenship”. Similarly, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2017) developed its own global competence framework and assessment tools, which were incorporated into the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test in China in 2018. These updates raise a new requirement for IHE, that is, to “prepare and ensure that their graduates know about the world in which they live, possess attitude about others around the world that reflect appreciation of and respect for diversity, and master the skills needed both to compete and thrive in the world and to improve the quality worldwide” (Xu, 2016). As a result, cultivating all students to become “global citizens” and have “global competence” is the universities’ responsibility in a globalized world. The current research could be seen as the response to this global call for intercultural citizenship as discussed in Byram (2008).

When talking about IHE, “studying abroad” is viewed as one of its most distinguished representations and is a rapidly growing phenomenon (Byram & Feng, 2006). Many universities describe the results of IHE in terms of numbers of international students on their campus. Reports from UNESCO (2007, 2019) find that approximately 2.72 million students studied outside their country of citizenship in 2005, and this number increased to more than 5 million in 2018. In 2018, the most popular destinations of choice for students were the US and the UK, whereas China has become the leading country for sending out students to study abroad. This growth in international

students on campus means universities have the responsibility to develop students' tolerance of differences and their understanding in a global community (Knight, 2006; Bell et al., 2008). This has led to the teaching of ICC.

Having realised that “studying abroad” may not be an accessible or affordable opportunity for every student, colleges and universities in many countries begin to seek ways to internationalize their campuses—known as “internationalisation at home (IaH)” (Nisson, 1999; Paige, 2003; Soria & Troist, 2013). Scholars discuss the implications of IaH for IHE and some suggest that IaH includes four major characteristic elements: an understanding of internationalization beyond mobility (Wang, 2020), an international curriculum (Yemini, 2014; Leask, 2016), cultural sensitive teaching and learning (Teekens, 2000), and cross-cultural exchange of personnel (Otton, 2000). In other words, IaH is seen as a process of combining international educational resources with local strengths to improve the quality of higher education (Lan & Ma, 2021). Theoretical research and practical experience on IaH in various countries show that the apparent issue of inadequacy of real intercultural exchanges between home and overseas students need to be addressed in order to realize IaH (Nilsson, 2003; Dunne, 2011; He & Du, 2021). As a result, it is increasingly important to motivate home students' participation in on-campus international activities, which may yield great benefits for developing home students' competence, especially their ICC, and for enabling them to face the challenges posed by this globalizing world.

2.1.2 Chinese Context

As one way to enhance the power of China, IHE in the country has developed rapidly. Following global tendencies, higher education institutions view student exchange programs, especially the number of incoming students, as one of the main instruments of IHE. According to the MOE of China (2019), 492,185 international students studied in 1,004 Chinese universities in 2018. With the increasing number of international students, China ranked the third most popular host destination in the world, following the US and the UK, as shown in Table 2.1. The expansion of international enrollment is the result of a series of policies to attract international students to study in China. As mentioned above, such policies include the *Studying in China Scheme 2010* and *Promoting and Strengthening Higher Education Cooperation and Exchanges with the One Belt and One Road (OBOR) Countries (2016)*. The former document emphasizes the contribution that IHE can make to improve the quality of Chinese higher education and “enhance China's global position, influence, and competitiveness in the field of education” (Kuroda, 2014, p.448). The latter helps create positive images of China in OBOR countries, which in turn becomes a social foundation for the regional cooperation between China and OBOR countries and is eventually intended to help stimulate economic development in China and these countries (Lu & Tian, 2018). To some extent, international students are ambassadors, building a bridge between their home countries and China, playing a key role in this OBOR aspect of the globalized world. Thus, the

expansion of international students would be expected to expand continually in China.

Table 2.1 Top 3 host countries worldwide in 2015 and 2018 (Institute of Studying Abroad, China, 2019)

Country	2015 total	2018 total	Increase (%)
United States	974,926	1,094,792	+12.2
United Kingdom	493,570	496,690	+0.6
China	377,054	492,185	+30.5

As far as Chinese students are concerned, this rapid increase in international students on campus has clearly created a good opportunity for IaH. Given the increasing number of international students, home students' ICC must be developed to be ready for a diverse campus. Since China's opening-up policy was adopted in 1978, intercultural communication in China has emerged as a field related to foreign language teaching and an increasing awareness is observed in the need to keep up with the pace of globalization. In 2000, the *Chinese English Teaching Syllabus for Higher Education for English Majors* (NSCFLTCU, 2000) emphasized developing English major's ICC for the first time. Four years later, one more influential policy document was launched. The *Chinese College English Curriculum Requirements (CECR)* (MOE, 2004) stated that ICC should have the same important status as English knowledge and proficiency for millions of college English students. In 2015, *CECR* normally required colleges and universities in China to include the course Intercultural Communication as one of the compulsory courses in English education, with the aim to develop students' ICC (MOE, 2015). In 2020, the new version of *CECR* has not only upgraded the course Intercultural Communication to be one of the core curricula for English majors but also made it explicitly clear that educating students to be the "global talents" is one purpose of English education (NSCFLTCU, 2020). It was also the first time for *CECR* to include the task of "building the community with a shared future for mankind" into its guideline. In view of the development of ICC's official position in China, English teachers were urged to perform their responsibilities to develop students' ICC. Thus, intercultural communication education and ICC are gradually being officially integrated into English education across China.

2.1.3 Multicultural Class

Scholars have written extensively on students' participation in multicultural classes, which is seen as an essential part of internationalisation in higher education. According to Homes and O'Neill (2005), classes in tertiary institutions are becoming increasingly pluricultural due to the rising numbers of immigrants. These immigrants originated from a variety of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (Holly & Sripadmini, 2018), which have contributed to the growing diversity in classes. Previously published research indicated that mainstream students—citizens of

the host education culture—often lack understanding and knowledge of their classmates from other cultures (Halualani et al., 2004; Tian & Lowe, 2013). Researchers also pointed out that, according to university policies, members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups should have equal chance to achieve academically in school (Banks, 2004). As a result, there is a call for content integration (i.e., including content about racial, ethnic, and cultural groups into curriculum), prejudice reduction (i.e., reducing stereotyping, increasing inter-group relations by targeting students' racial attitudes through teaching), and equity pedagogy (i.e., using appropriate teaching strategies by recognizing diverse ways of learning and knowing) in multicultural class education. Many attempts have been adopted in this field, such as Furnham and De Wit's (1982) multicultural group work, Holmes and O'Neill's (2005) pair work in a multicultural class, and Petersen's (2017) teacher training for multicultural classes. These scholars explained that the multicultural class leads to the emergence of multicultural group work, which is a specific method to reject the predominantly ethnocentric approach to higher education that is traditionally adopted by universities. This research views a multicultural class as a special setting within IHE, thereby exposing many home students to the IHE environment without going overseas. In this multicultural class, students, whether international or local, have to face exotic cultures and challenge traditional ethnocentric approaches, and as a result, possibly develop better competence for intercultural communication.

Many scholars find that a multicultural class or group work are helpful to students in developing their ICC (Arkoudis et al., 2013; Rafferty, 2013). For example, Volet and Ang (2012) focused on both local and international students, and explored the nature of change in the perceptions of students after a successful experience in the multicultural class in Australia. They believed that a multicultural class is an ideal place to promote cultural understanding, foster tolerance of diversity, and develop intercultural skills. Other scholars have tried adopting different pedagogical designs to promote the interaction between local and international students and to develop their ICC, such as in group activities (Cruickshank, Chen, & Warren, 2012) and the buddy system (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012). The aforementioned studies have proven the value of intercultural interaction in the process of ICC development of students. Holmes and O'Neill (2012) also provided a new methodological resource called the PEER (Prepare, Engage, Evaluate, and Reflect) model for developing and evaluating ICC in their intercultural encounters. This model contains four phases. The first is the Prepare (P) phase which asked students to identify all assumptions they held about their previously unknown Cultural Other. After Engaging (E) socially with their Cultural Other for six weeks, students were asked to Evaluate (E) the concepts of (intercultural) communication, culture, and intercultural competence that they had been introduced to in the course. The last Reflection (R) phase of this model required students to reflect critically on their encounters. Following these four phases, this model guided students through the interaction with their Cultural Other and highlighted the value of intercultural interaction in developing students' ICC.

Whilst the effectiveness of real intercultural interaction in a multicultural class to develop students' ICC is agreed by many scholars, the most noteworthy problem in this area is the lack of spontaneous interaction between Asian and European students (Pritchard & Skinner, 2003; Volet & Ang, 2012). Many scholars call for the intervention of the institution, and the participation of both staff and students. From this aspect, Jon (2013) provided a good example to mix Asian with international students in intervention programs in Korea; mixed methods were used to examine the effect of institutional intervention to promote interaction of domestic with international students. His research gave evidence that the multicultural class has a positive effect on the ICC of students.

Compared with researches on multicultural class carried out abroad, only a few studies have been conducted in China, and their focus is always on international students. An ongoing longitudinal study by Tian (2013) showed that international students were able to increasingly adapt to the Chinese learning and social environments, tried to deepen their intercultural understanding, challenged stereotypes, and showed respect for diversity. Wen et al. (2014) surveyed international students in Tsinghua University and indicated that their intercultural adaptation in China is largely shaped by the nature of their interaction with host nationals. In particular, among international students, those who experienced higher levels of social interaction with Chinese students and teachers and received more social support were better poised for intercultural adaptation. Wang (2016) conducted a large-scale survey among the international students in Beijing, where the overall situation of acculturation is found to be considerably higher than the average level. Students from different countries have different problems in acculturation, due to factors such as skin colour, different interpersonal networking, and information channels. After a critical and reflexive review of recent publications on international students in China, Dervin and Du (2018) concluded that intercultural experiences of international students in China cannot be limited to one model, and proposed suggestions for interculturality which they believe was central to IHE, such as their understanding of culture, intercultural adaptation, and personal growth experience. However, for the experience of home students in multicultural classes, it seems to remain largely unknown. This is a strong reason for me to choose home students as my research target for this study. I aim to explore the experience of home students in the background of IHE to see whether and to what extent their ICC could be developed with interventional action research in such a multicultural class and thus to provide a better understanding of the influence of IHE in local context.

2.2 Definitions and Theories of Intercultural Communicative Competence

This section reviews the scholarship to define ICC and the models and framework that both Western and Chinese scholars try to build, thus to provide a clear description of the current literature.

2.2.1 Definition of ICC

Because of the wide interest from scholars in different disciplines in competence for intercultural interaction, there have been a number of terms to label the same concept. For example, in intercultural training field, cross-cultural effectiveness (Ruben, 1976) and intercultural awareness (Tulejia, 2008) are widely used with the different training purposes for cross-cultural adaption or assimilation. In the discipline of intercultural communication research, intercultural communicative competence (Deardorff, 2006; Arasaratnam, 2006) and intercultural competence (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, 1987) are generally used in consensus. The latter is usually regarded as a part of the former, and the latter usually takes place in the same language while the former involves a foreign language. According to the literature review of conceptualisation of intercultural communicative competence, many commentators such as Fu (2015) conclude that intercultural communicative competence is more acceptable for foreign language educators like Byram (1997, 2008) and Fantini (1997, 2012). Thus, I adopt intercultural communicative competence as the term for this study as it was carried out in the discipline of foreign language education.

From the sheer volume of the scholarship on ICC, it is not difficult to conclude that the nature of ICC research is complex and contested (Spittberg & Changnon, 2009). As a result, different scholars have proposed various definitions of ICC according to different theoretical basis. For example, Lustig and Koester (1995) argued that ICC is combined with key components such as communication and context, effectiveness and appropriateness, knowledge, motivation, and behavior; they emphasized the importance of the relationships and contexts in intercultural communication. Spitzberg (2000) viewed ICC as an effective and appropriate behavior in a specific context. Fantini (1997, 2000, 2001) emphasized language proficiency as an integral part of ICC. In his ICC definition, the complexity of ICC is presented from five dimensions: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and proficiency in the host tongue. According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), ICC is the ability of the different participants to apply both verbal and nonverbal communication appropriately in a given context and the cognitive ability to make choices among behaviors; this idea suggests that ICC is the ability to know what to do and how to react in a communicative circumstance. With the development of research on ICC, most scholars reached a consensus that knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness are the key elements (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 1997; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Different from other ICC professionals, Byram is the first one who relates ICC development directly to foreign language teaching. His model of ICC is, according to the Delphi study (Deardoff, 2004), the best definition. Deardoff (2004, p.255) summarizes this model as follows: "Knowledge of self and others; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors. Linguistic competence plays a key role." On the basis of Byram's prescriptive model, Deardorff (2009) reexamined the concept and pointed out that ICC is the ability to interact effectively and

appropriately in intercultural situations based on specific attitudes, intercultural knowledge, skills, and reflection; the importance of “effectiveness” and “appropriateness” was also emphasized.

A review of the ICC definition shows that a Western-centric view on ICC exists, “a view in which such competence resides largely within the individual” (Deardoff, 2006, p.245). Therefore, an increasing number of Chinese scholars rethink the definition of ICC from a Chinese cultural perspective. For example, Gao (1998) proposed the *dao* (道) and *qi* (器) concepts of ICC based on traditional Chinese culture; *dao* is the internal trait of the subjects of communication, and *qi* represents the specific communication skills and methods. Later, Gao (2002) argued that ICC consists of two levels, namely, “going across” and “going beyond.” The first level focuses on the increase of the target cultural proficiency, whereas the latter focuses on the gain in cultural awareness and reflective tolerant attitudes. Xiao and Chen (2009) proposed a Confucian concept of communication. They indicated that ICC is manifested as nothing less than the power of ethics, that is, the power to move the hearts of people thus to keep a harmonious relationship with people with whom they interacted. For Confucianism, harmony is the most key element Chinese people use to regulate their communication (Chen, 2001). When considering ICC in the Chinese context, harmony is the key element we cannot neglect. Furthermore, according to Wang and Kulich’s (2015) study, three distinctive Chinese characteristics should be mentioned in defining ICC: (1) perception of *xintai* (心态) (literally means heart and attitude in Chinese) psychological/emotional intuitive attitudes; (2) compared with people from more individualist cultures, greater “collective(we/our)” approach to thoughtful attitudes, mutual sensitivity, own or other’s face-related emotions and shared relationship-building; and (3) renewed awareness of Chinese traditional philosophical tenets for helping understand others or promote personal growth for a more indigenous understanding of competence. The focus on ICC in China is generally not the individual but rather ingroup or one’s interpersonal relationship circle (Miyahara, 1992; Nwosu, 2009; Wang & Kulich, 2015). Compared with Westerners, Chinese tend to emphasize ‘the collectivistic tendencies of Eastern perspectives’ (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p.44) such as group harmony, group-oriented attitudes, shared emotions, and relationship-building rather than individual-oriented values or skill-driven aspects (Wang & Kulich, 2017). In general, Chinese scholarship on ICC yields distinct perspectives different from Euro-American traditions. Chinese perspectives, which are culturally rich, relational, and shared-emotion contextual perspectives, are worth considering in assessing or updating other definitions.

2.2.2 Theoretical Models of ICC

With different understandings of the composition of ICC, scholars have constructed various ICC theoretical models. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) believe that ICC models mainly include compositional, co-orientational, developmental, adaptational, and causal process models. Compositional models identify the hypothesized components of communicative competence, such

as emotion, cognition, and behavior. Different scholars hold different views on the relevant or probable components regarding its productivity or contribution to the effectiveness of communication. The co-orientational model shares many of the features of the other models but is focused on the particular criterion of communicative mutuality and shared meaning. Byram's (1997) model is said to be one of the most influential among the co-orientational models. Developmental models retain a dominant role in the time dimension of intercultural interaction, where the process of progression over time is emphasized, as in the U-curve model of intercultural adjustment; this idea was first proposed by Lysgaard (1955), and then expanded by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1962). The core of adaptational models is that competence is manifested in mutual alteration of actions, attitudes, and understandings on the basis of the interaction with members of another culture. The acculturation model proposed by Berry (1997) is a good example of this model. Finally, causal process models reflect a fairly specific interrelationship among the components and are the most easily formalized or translated from or into testable propositions, such as the process model of intercultural competence created by Deardorff (2006).

In this literature review below, Byram (1997) and Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) models are discussed in more detail because I see them as the most relevant to this study.

2.2.2.1 Byram's ICC Model

Byram's (1997) theoretical model of ICC is one of the most influential ones in this research field, especially in foreign language education (Deardorff, 2006; Zhong & Fan, 2013; Gao, 2014), and it is the model that has never ceased to be adopted in ICC research and practice since its inception. Byram (1997) emphasizes that language plays an important role in ICC in its full form, intercultural communicative competence. Intercultural competence (IC) in his ICC model consists of five *savoirs*.

(1)Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

(2)Knowledge: of 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.

(3)Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate to documents or events from one's own.

(4)Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

(5)Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate critically and on

the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. (p.57-63)

The relationships among the five savoirs are presented in Figure 2.1.

	Skills interpret and relate (savoir comprendre)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (savoirs)	Education political education critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)	Attitudes relativising self valuing other (savoir etre)
	Skills discover and/or interact (savoir apprendre/faire)	

Figure 2.1 Factors in intercultural communication (Byram, 1997)

Byram's model is ideal for teaching and assessing ICC in foreign language education. It organically combines the communication process with personal characteristics and reveals the key elements of ICC from the perspective of foreign language education. Byram's contribution to ICC theory's development can be summarized as follows. First, he emphasizes the importance of language skill and indicates that language is "at the center of its concern" (Byram, 1997, p.3) when developing ICC. By contrast, many existing ICC theories have flaws because the importance of foreign language ability is ignored. As Fantini (1995, p.143) indicates, "...interculturalists often overlook (or leave to language teachers) the task of developing language competence, just as language teachers overlook (or leave to interculturalists) the task of developing intercultural abilities." From this aspect, Byram's ICC model is an important development of the former theories. Second, Byram places critical cultural awareness and political education firmly at the center of his model. He claims that "it is a rational and explicit standpoint from which to evaluate" (p.54). Respecting cultural difference does not mean accepting it. Accepting other cultures without any reason or condition is impossible for intercultural communicators. Thus, Byram suggests that insights from education for democracy, human rights, peace, and citizenship education can be drawn to establish universally well-received standards of evaluation and mediation among different cultures (Byram & Feng, 2004). According to Byram, critical cultural awareness is not the ability to change others but the ability to be self-conscious and to develop one's own standard on the basis of in-depth understanding of internationally recognized benchmarks for intercultural communication. From this perspective, the proposal of critical cultural awareness as the key elements in ICC has its enlightening significance.

Byram (1997) also proposes a notion of "intercultural speakers". According to Byram (2008, p.75),

an intercultural speaker is someone who is aware of cultural similarities and differences, and is able to act as mediator between two or more cultures, two or more sets of beliefs, values and behavior. Different from previous understandings, Byram argues that intercultural speakers have the ability to identify ethnocentrism in a “document” or “event” and explain their origins thus to reduce the possible misunderstanding, and this ability is supported and explained from the perspective of communicative language learning. As a result, the final purpose of foreign language education should be changed from native speaker model to intercultural speaker. According to Byram (1997, p.11), developing students’ ICC based on “the use of native speaker as a model” is neither desirable nor attainable. He criticises that learner cannot have the same language ability as a native speaker. Thus, he argues that linguistic and sociolinguistic competence cannot be equal.

To be a “fluent fool” is more dangerous than to be the one who cannot speak English fluently but who is better at understanding social and cultural factors (Bennett, 1997). Most people believe that someone who can speak fluent English can handle intercultural encounters better, whereas in fact, if he/she ignores the values and customs of the target culture, he/she is more likely to fail or even be misunderstood in actual communication. Thus, Byram (1997, p.49) maintains that the teaching of ICC shall emphasize “skills, knowledge, and attitudes other than those which are primarily linguistic” .

Byram (2008) further proposes an idea of education for “intercultural citizenship” for English language teaching, which is derived from the Council of Europe’s education program of “Language Learning for European Citizenship” and Starkey’s (1995) concept of “world citizenship” and “global education.” He believes that being interculturally competent should be more than just being proficient in English, also forming an “insider/member” identity of the global community. Such an identity of being an intercultural citizen implies the moral development of international humanism as an integrated part of ICC. That is, the ICC training should encourage students to develop their sense of belonging within international groups, and to establish their full understanding of the importance of “truth, love, honesty, justice, security, personal relationships based on the possibility of human dignity, decency, independence, freedom, spiritual fulfillment” (Berlin, 1990, p.3, as cited in Byram, 2021, p.75). The definitive relation of ICC development with foreign language education makes Byram’s model distinguished from all others. As a result, his model is most cited and applied in intercultural education, and has been included in UNESCO’s conceptual and operational framework for intercultural competence (2013).

According to Byram and Feng (2004), the study of culture and language should address questions of “how we live” and “how we ought to live.” On the basis of this assumption, they distinguished intercultural research into “what is” and “what ought to be” types. Byram’s ICC theory is no doubt the “what ought to be” type, which presents a comprehensive model for how to develop and assess ICC in foreign language education. Considering the research context of this study, after reviewing the current ICC-related literature, I believe that his theory is the most useful. First, as I intend to

conduct an action research study, “what ought to be” can guide the process step by step in designing teaching and thus contribute to the development of students’ ICC. Second, an increasing importance has been attached to the context in ICC, and Byram’s theory values “context” considerably, especially in the foreign language teaching context, thereby fitting this study aiming to contextualize the theoretical model in developing home students’ ICC in multicultural classes in contemporary China. Third, the five savoirs in Byram’s IC model are crucial for intercultural speakers to master, such that they can mediate among the differences, especially for critical cultural awareness, which is essential for learners to be trained as a global citizen in this globalized world (Guilherme, 2002). After all, for 21st-century educators, including myself, it is intercultural citizenship that ‘ought to be’ nurtured for the contemporary society in which we live.

2.2.2.2 Spitzberg and Changnon’s IC Model

The second model that contributes considerably for this study is the causal model of IC, which was first proposed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) and then modified by Imahori and Lanigan (1989). Spitzberg and Changnon (1997; 2009) remodified the model after considering the key notion of the intercultural context. Spitzberg and Changnon’s (2009) IC model is based upon the theoretical framework of interpersonal communicative competence, in which IC is “considered as an impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context” (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 380) and should not be simply judged by the behavior because a variety of outcomes are likely to result in the intercultural interactions (e.g., effectiveness, relational satisfaction, intimacy, commitment, and uncertainty reduction). The model they constructed has received extensive attention from academic circles (Martin, 1993; Xu & Sun, 2013; Dai & Chen, 2015).

The most important feature in Spitzberg and Changnon’s (2009) model is that it describes the process of two actors’ communication, in which their relationship is like a mirror image (Figure 2.2). Motivation, skills, and knowledge are key elements in this model. Communication goals and the experience of sojourners and host-nationals influence the entire process. “To the extent either or both interlocutors are motivated, knowledgeable, skilled, and goal-driven toward productive experiences, a variety of outcomes that index competent intercultural interaction are likely to result” (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, pp. 32–33).

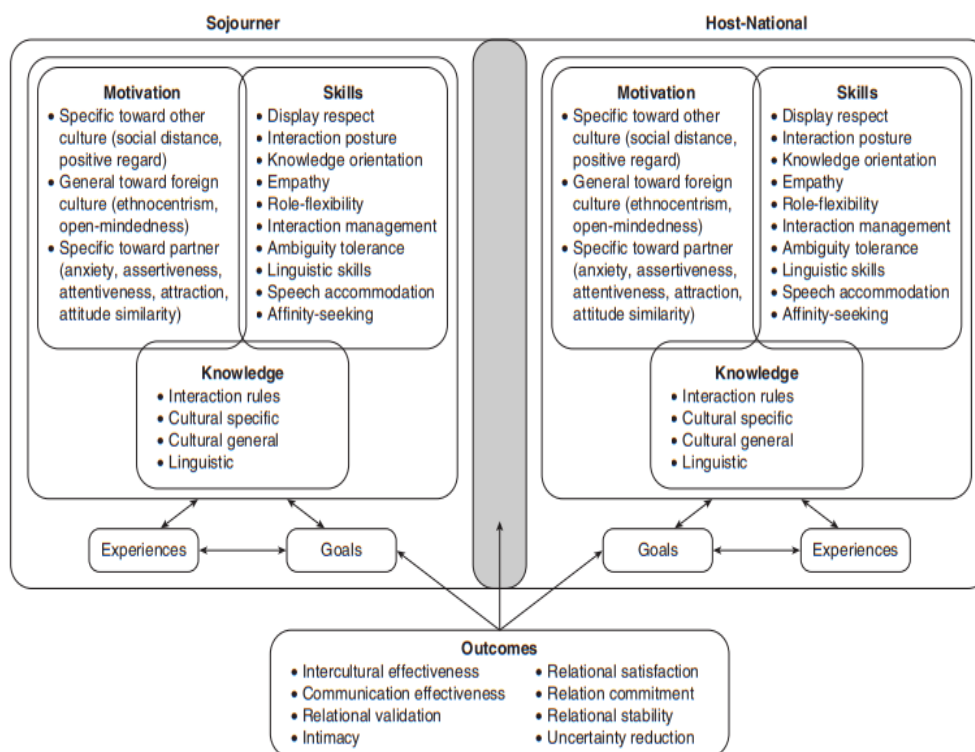


Figure 2.2 Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) Relational Model of Intercultural Competence

As shown in Fig. 2.2, this model comprises three psychological domains, namely, affective (motivation/attitude), the cognitive (knowledge), and psychomotor (skills) domains. The elements of all these domains do not fundamentally differ from Byram's (1997). What Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) model clearly emphasizes is their elaboration of the close relationship between interactions and the dynamic outcomes which is also the focus of my study. When most scholars consider ICC as personal competence, they expound ICC from the perspective of interrelationship, which provides a unique approach to defining the concept of IC and constructing the IC through interactions. Everyone involved in the interaction contributes to the realization of the goal, and their achievements benefit from the joint efforts of both parties. As the model presents, successful intercultural communication results in the effectiveness and appropriateness of interaction. The relational process and outcome of communication should be considered in designing my research and assessing individuals' ICC.

2.2.3 Theoretical Models of ICC in China

Wherever one conducts ICC research or implement an ICC-oriented curriculum, one should always have a thorough understanding of the context she/he works in. ICC research started relatively late in China, roughly from the 1980s. It began with the introduction of concepts related to ICC (Hu, 1985; Gao, 1995; Jia, 1997) and later the integration of ICC into foreign language

teaching (Gao, 2002; Yang & Zhuang, 2007; Zhang, 2007; Xu & Sun, 2013), in which the majority of the researchers are foreign language teachers. Thus, ICC models in China were mostly derived from Western cultural perspectives and the inductive method. In recent years, however, several models have been proposed, including those by Sun (2016) and Gu (2017), which provide Chinese perspectives on ICC.

2.2.3.1 Sun's ICC Model

Sun (2016) proposed an ICC model which has been viewed as one of the representatives of ICC theoretical models in China (Dai, 2019). He strongly agreed with Byram (2008) and called for the cultivation of intercultural speakers in the Chinese context. His ICC model includes six dimensions, as shown in Figure 2.3. Most of his dimensions are almost the same as Byram's ICC model, except the fifth and sixth dimensions which refer to the external standards of ICC assessment. As he argues, to be an intercultural speaker, learners should have the ability to help others, who do not know the particular language being used in the intercultural communication event, to have a smooth intercultural communication; in other words, they should have excellent translation skills. This notion is Sun's contribution to ICC conceptualization in foreign language education in China. Considering the fact that many English majors are involved in the intercultural communication process as interpreters, many other Chinese scholars agree that this dimension should not be neglected.

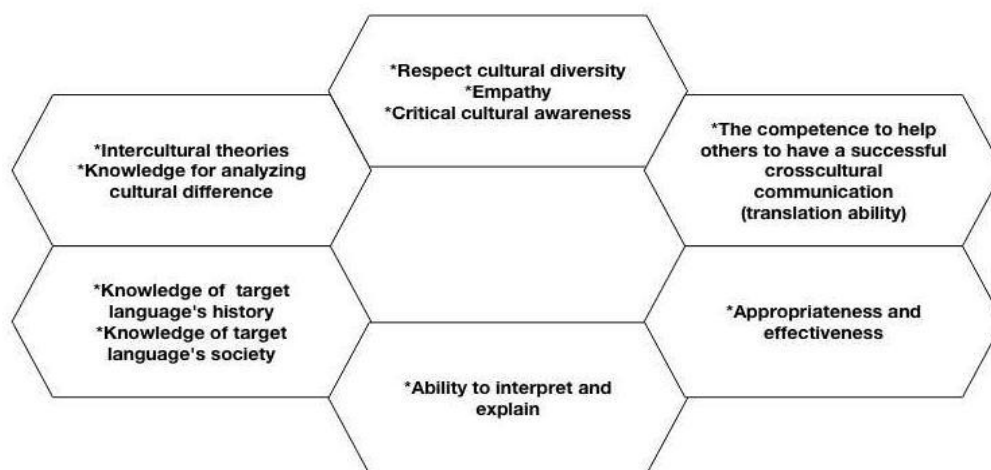


Figure 2.3 Sun's ICC Model

Moreover, Sun believed that foreign language education in China should be the chief avenue of education for intercultural communication, and educators shall not only focus on the language ability training but also make time investment on teaching ICC. Sun's model provided a useful view for foreign language educators, especially for developing students' research ability and

stressing the importance of interpreting, which should be taken into account for developing ICC in this study.

2.2.3.2 Gu's ICC Model

More recently, Gu (2017) proposed a theoretical model for ICC training that is seen as more sophisticated and compatible with foreign language teaching in China (see Figure 2.4). This model focuses on what to teach about ICC and includes the components of attitude, knowledge, and skills. These components are further divided into various subcomponents related to language, culture, and communication, all of which facilitate interactors' transformation from intracultural identity to intercultural identity through cooperation, negotiation, and adaptation.

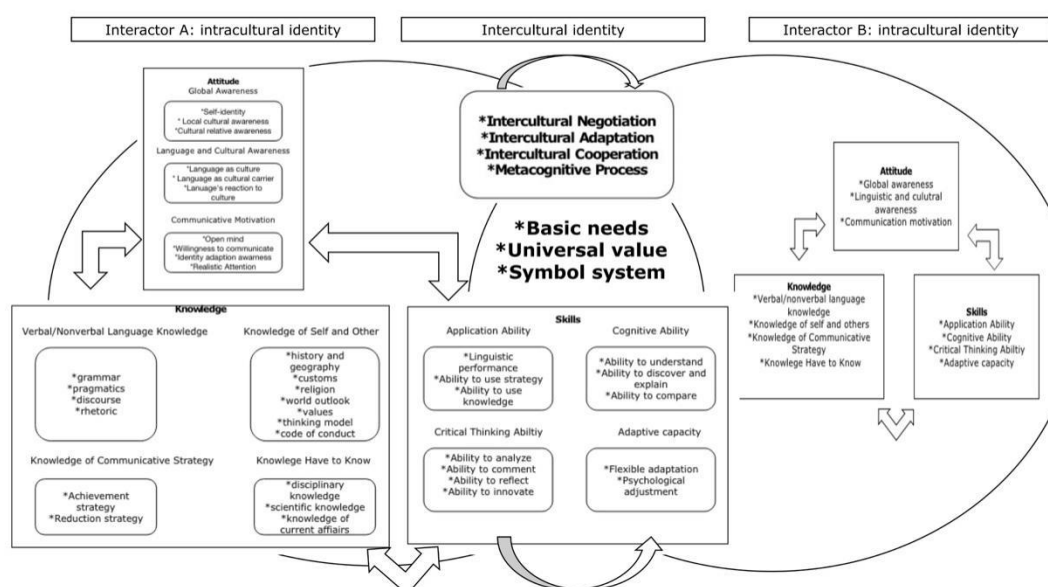


Figure 2.4 Gu's ICC Theoretical Model

The most attractive feature in Gu's model is that it focuses on the interrelationship among interactors. It emphasizes that communication is a dynamic process and that students should develop their ICC through communication; thus, interaction plays an extremely important role in constructing ICC theories. Furthermore, Gu's model highlights global and local awareness, which echoes Byram's ICC model. In her opinion, global awareness refers to the realization that all humankind is interconnected and interdependent (Yang & Zhuang, 2007), while local awareness is self-awareness of the origin, formation process, characteristics, and development trend of the local culture (Fei, 2003). This element is of great practical significance to the ICC education of college students in China, since the MOE (2020) places "cultivating global citizens" and "telling China's stories well"⁴ in its *English Curriculum Requirements*. It is believed that university students

⁴ "Telling China's stories well" is an important expression put forward by General Secretary Xi Jinping in the 12th collective study of the 18th Politburo of the CPC Central Committee in 2013. General Secretary Xi Jinping

shoulder the mission of cultural dissemination and exchange in the global world. With the aim to cure the “cultural aphasia” (Xiao et al., 2010), Gu suggests that it is necessary to integrate more local culture into ICC teaching, thus to promote internationalization of education. Therefore, in constructing the theoretical framework of this study, interaction and especially the notion of global and local awareness deserve to be considered. As in the globalized world, university teachers are duty-bound to educate their students to be a global citizen, and at the same time to enable their students to “tell good Chinese stories”.

However, most proposals discussed here remain at the level of theoretical exploration. Few researchers have conducted studies into how “cultivating global citizens” and “telling China’s stories well” could be integrated into English curriculums, particularly in the multicultural classes that we often see in universities today. As a result, theoretical and empirical research on Chinese home students’ ICC development becomes relevant and timely as it may shed new insights into “ICC development with Chinese characteristics” as many call it today.

2.3 Research on Students’ ICC in China

Various investigations have been conducted in developing students’ ICC by college English teachers nationwide. For example, Yang and Zhuang’s (2007) review of domestic and overseas research suggest a framework of ICC that include global mentality, cultural adaptation, knowledge, and communicative management. They also suggest that developing the ICC of students should permeate the training of English language skills. Chang and Zhao (2012) carried out action research to investigate intercultural teaching in a college English integrated course showing the effectiveness of teaching towards “cultural knowings” in raising students’ intercultural awareness. Fu (2015) also cultivated Chinese intercultural students through a three-round action research-based investigation model of intercultural competence. Her research put forward that culture needs to be conceived as cognitive process and mechanism, instead of uniquely the content of teaching. Referring to the concept of ICC, Ge and Wang (2016) proposed that intercultural teaching is the entry point of the cultivation of college English teaching, and its content involves language foundation, practical application for specific tasks, and quality education in the forms of classroom teaching and themed extracurricular activities. However, Zhang (2012) noted two weaknesses in intercultural teaching for foreign language teaching in China: (1) the affiliated, or simply secondary, role of intercultural communication teaching to foreign language education which is therefore often ignored by teachers; and (2) unclear aims and less systematic content in intercultural communication teaching.

In the current context of advocating Chinese culture “going global”—known as “tell good Chinese

stressed that telling the Chinese story well, disseminating the Chinese voice, and showing a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China is an important task to strengthen China's international communication capacity building.

stories”, there is a re-orientation in FLT on the cultivation of students’ ICC which moves emphasis from target language culture to a focus on two-way culture teaching. Scholars believe that two-way culture teaching which balances and integrates foreign and native cultures is an effective strategy to solve the problem of students’ “Chinese Culture Aphasia”, and to promote global talents cultivation in higher education (Han, 2011; Huang, 2015; Lv & Yu, 2021). Many attempts have been made in this area. Gao (2000), for example, suggested that great attention should be paid to the recognition and inheritance of Chinese culture in the development of students’ ICC. Based on Bakhtin’s (1988) theory of dialogue and empirical data of intercultural communication, she proposed the term “dialogical communicator” as an ideal identity for an intercultural communicator who has good ability to “tell own cultural stories” and converses on the basis of respect and reflection. Sun (2021) explores how to integrate “telling Chinese stories in English” into the intercultural communication module in her teaching practice through a focus on patriotism. By presenting how to cultivate patriotism in pre-class, in-class and after-class phases in this course, Sun’s study served as an example of incorporating Chinese culture in courses of intercultural communication. Apparently, these scholars’ interpretation of “going global” or “dialogical communicator” has tilted towards how to “tell good Chinese stories”, which has been interpreted as patriotism, which has been viewed as an indispensable part of ICC education in China.

Another hot issue on the ICC of students in China is how ICC is and should be assessed. Three Chinese context-based studies on ICC worth mentioning were conducted by Hu (2005), Wu (2013), and Huang (2017a). By testing the intercultural awareness and communicative competence of 186 English majors in China, Hu (2005) found that (1) most of the learners lack profound intercultural communication awareness, and (2) the intercultural communication course can improve the ICC of students. Based on Byram’s ICC assessment model, Wu (2013) reported an empirical study on the ICC dimensions and assessment tools. The ICC dimensions investigated in this systematic and comprehensive study include awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills. By using explorative factor analysis and certification factor analysis, they have developed an assessment tool for measuring Chinese college student’s ICC, which has proved to have good validity and reliability. Among the six factors (namely, knowledge of others, knowledge of self, attitude, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and intercultural awareness) considered for the measurement in the Chinese context, knowledge of others is the most decisive one, which is followed by skills of interpreting and relating. Skills of discovery and interaction play a rather weak role, and intercultural awareness the weakest role. These highlight criticisms that the practices of intercultural teaching in China still mainly focus on knowledge and skill-oriented training. Huang (2017a) conducted the most recent empirical study on the assessment tools by surveying 1,200 Chinese students using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), and found that Chinese students’ understanding of intercultural sensitivity is not the same as western students. The study tentatively developed a localized Chinese version of ISS. Some changes have been made, such as adding

“open-mindedness,” merging the “interaction engagement” and “interaction attentiveness” factors into “empathy,” and omitting “interaction enjoyment.” Among these three studies, Wu’s model has been very influential and continues to be used in research into ICC (eg. Hu & Fan, 2014; Peng et al., 2015), and it is specifically applicable for foreign language teaching-learning settings (Dai, 2019), as a result, the current study adopted it as the assessment tool.

2.4 Implications of the Literature for this Study

This chapter has reviewed the global context calling for ICC development in education and beyond and many of the major works relevant to the conception of ICC, the models of ICC, and current ICC studies on students in the Chinese foreign language education context. As the purpose of this chapter is to set out theoretical perspectives for this study, implications from the literature review are summarized as follows.

2.4.1 Generation of Research Questions

First, ICC studies in China have originated and developed in the realm of foreign language education, which have also set the rationale for the present work. As aforementioned, ICC models are developed academically and practically in English-speaking countries. Hence, Chinese foreign language teachers in the universities, who get to know these ‘Western’ models, are more likely to conduct research on ICC and to introduce ICC to classes in China without adequate consideration of the context. As a result, my study will not simply adopt a ready-made, ‘universal’ model in foreign language teaching, but identify a model on the basis of the review above to suit developing students’ ICC in China.

Second, from the perspective of research type, most existing studies in China have focused on theory building, whereas empirical studies on developing the ICC of students are rare. As previously discussed, the majority of Chinese theories are used initially for guiding foreign language teaching. However, although ICC has been claimed as a goal, few empirical studies have been conducted to verify the validity and reliability of the models and their practicality in actual teaching. In principle, theoretical development of any model should be based on the interplay between needs and practice, such as the birth of ICC and growth of its assessment from intercultural training in the US (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992) and the development of ICC in FLT for CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference of Languages) in Europe (Byram, 1997; Bennet, 1997). Referring to the Chinese context, I find a lack of practical relevance and this could cause deficiency among the ICC development in China. I see no ICC development model that has been established by Chinese scholars suitable for English teaching practice with an explicit aim for ICC in Chinese colleges.

Third, from the perspective of research targets, focus on the experience of home students in the

multicultural context is rare. With the influx of international students in China, scholars now prefer to conduct research on the experiences of these students, such as those concerning academic integration (Guo & Chase, 2011), learning style (Ladd & Jr, 1999; Vita, 2001; Wong, 2004), social contact or friendship between international and local students (Halualani et al., 2004), and intercultural identity (Karabenick & Urdan, 2012; Tian & Lowe, 2013); however, the experience of home students remains under-researched. Given the research challenges identified, this study attempts to investigate how the multicultural class influences home students' ICC development in a Chinese university. To be more specific, an interventional study is to be carried out over a semester through a self-designed Intercultural Communication Course for a natural group of English-major students studying with a small group of international students, with a focus on ICC development of the former. Therefore, the major research question of this study is raised as: "Whether and to what extent can the intervention make a difference in terms of students' ICC, particularly the students from the host country, in a multicultural class learning?" The following specific questions will serve to answer this main research question and will be explored by this study:

- (1) To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of intercultural appropriate attitudes?
- (2) To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of knowledge?
- (3) To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of skills?
- (4) To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of critical cultural awareness?
- (5) To what extent do the key values instilled/inculcated into the home students influence their ICC development in the multicultural context?
- (6) To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of enhancement of English competence?

2.4.2 Key Components of ICC to Be Nurtured and Assessed

ICC is thus defined in the context of this study on the basis of the research questions derived from the critical review above. The necessary components of ICC include critical cultural awareness, knowledge, skills, attitude, values in contact and the target language competence in the context. This study selects these components as its conceptual basis. It is immediately noticeable that two components are brought into the IC model developed by Byram (1997; 2021), namely values in contact and English language competence, as separate components in my interventional study. This section provides an explanation for this decision.

Considering the features of the multicultural class, I became convinced that the sets of values of

both home and overseas students should be emphasized and set aside as an independent dimension and integrated into students' ICC development in this research. My routine observation informed me that when we put students with different backgrounds together, misunderstanding and tensions due to mismatch of values occur because people usually view things from perspectives of their own. For example, Chinese students seem to emphasize more on group harmony and collective interests whereas students from North America and Europe tend to emphasize individualism. Such a phenomenon is widely noticeable because values are inherent in everyone's behavior no matter whether they are aware of them or not. According to Nanda and Warms (2004), values guide society in response to the physical and social environment. Therefore, it is crucial to know the values both home students and overseas students bring into this multicultural context as these values affect the interaction between them.

For the values that Chinese students bring to this multicultural context, interpersonal harmony is the first value to be considered. Harmony, in the view of the Chinese, is the most important in their social life; it is the end rather than the means of human communication. In Chinese culture, "heaven-and-human oneness"⁵ is one of the few extremely important core concepts that reflect the Chinese world outlook, life view, and fundamental values (Dong, 2012). Starting from this basic idea, most Chinese have designed their cultural pursuit, that is, harmony, or more specifically, harmony between human and heaven, families and the state, and human and human. In short, many Chinese believe that all relationships should be harmonious. As Chen and Chung (1994) claimed, Chinese communication is to pursue a conflict-free interpersonal and social relationship. Thus, the ability to reach a harmonious state of human relationship becomes the main criterion for evaluating whether an individual is competent in the process of Chinese communication.

Patriotism is the second one to be added into Chinese values. According to the survey of 700 college students conducted by Zhang (2010), patriotism ranks among the most influential values in their life. This notion is understandable, because "pride to be a Chinese" weaves all members of China into a common fabric which shows the importance ascribed to this value by the MOE. From primary education, "core socialist values" are the first and key education content for all the students, and "patriotism" is one of the key elements. As a result, patriotism plays an important role in Chinese students' communication with overseas students. Thus, in developing students' ICC, patriotism shall not be neglected.

For values brought by overseas students, equality and individualism are the two most important elements. As majority of overseas students in the multicultural class in this study come from Western countries, such as the US and European countries, values that are most influential in these countries shall be considered here. Individualism is the first one to be discussed. According to Gannon (2004), individualism is the cornerstone of American culture. Sayings such as "God helps

⁵ The original Chinese words are "天人合一 (tian ren he yi)."

those who help themselves” and “A person tends to be judged on his or her own merit” (Kim, 2001, p. 31) show that in American culture, they believe that each person has his own identity and should be recognized. Although equality is the one closely related to individualism in Western countries, examples can be found from the way of forming a government (everyone has the right to vote), as well as the relationship among family members (children are friends of parents), which is relatively different from Chinese culture. However, doubt about these two values exist in Western countries, such as discrimination on race, ethnicity, and social class. This study clarifies that individualism and equality are important in Western countries and, to some extent, they rank themselves as “more equal than others” (Maconis, 1998, p. 37). Such values influence the way of their communication. Thus, the sets value of overseas students in this study considers these two values.

Equally important, linguistic competence, as separate component focusing on the feature of English as lingua franca, deserves to be brought into my ICC model in this specific context. On one hand, linguistic competence is a key part of ICC in the Chinese educational context as the *Chinese College English Curriculum Requirements* (MOE, 2020) claimed that intercultural communication education should be integrated into English education. Differing from the mainstream ICC researchers in the West where cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions predominate, Chinese scholars unanimously render linguistic competence as an inseparable element of ICC (Sun, 2017). Because English is used in China as an intercultural language to communicate with people from different countries, failure or misunderstanding in intercultural communication in Chinese contexts is believed to be caused primarily by linguistic deficiency (Fu, 2015). Therefore, to the language teachers, including myself, linguistic proficiency is the most important competence in the process of education for ICC. On the other hand, English served as the main lingua franca between home and overseas students in this study. Considering the features of multicultural classes, the function and the influence of English should never be neglected. Moreover, improving students’ linguistic competence is one of my teaching objectives for this course as I am curious about the effectiveness of real interaction on the enhancement of students’ English proficiency.

In summary, ICC in this study is a combination of critical cultural awareness, sets of values both home students and overseas students bring to the multicultural context, knowledge, attitudes, skills and language competence; and context applied through action that enables one to “respond appropriately, effectively, and respectfully when interacting and communicating with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself” (Barrett et al., 2013, p.7).

2.4.3 Theoretical Framework for this Study

Based on an extensive review of literature on ICC and ICC models, the following integrative and interactive model on students’ development of ICC in a multicultural class is proposed for the

current study (see Figure 2.5). This model relies heavily on Byram's (1997) five savoirs of IC and Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) relational model of IC. In addition, the values as discussed and emphasized in many policy documents and the literature in China and the context concerning lingua franca in the multicultural class are taken into account in this framework. Hence, synthesis has been exercised according to the research design of the current study.

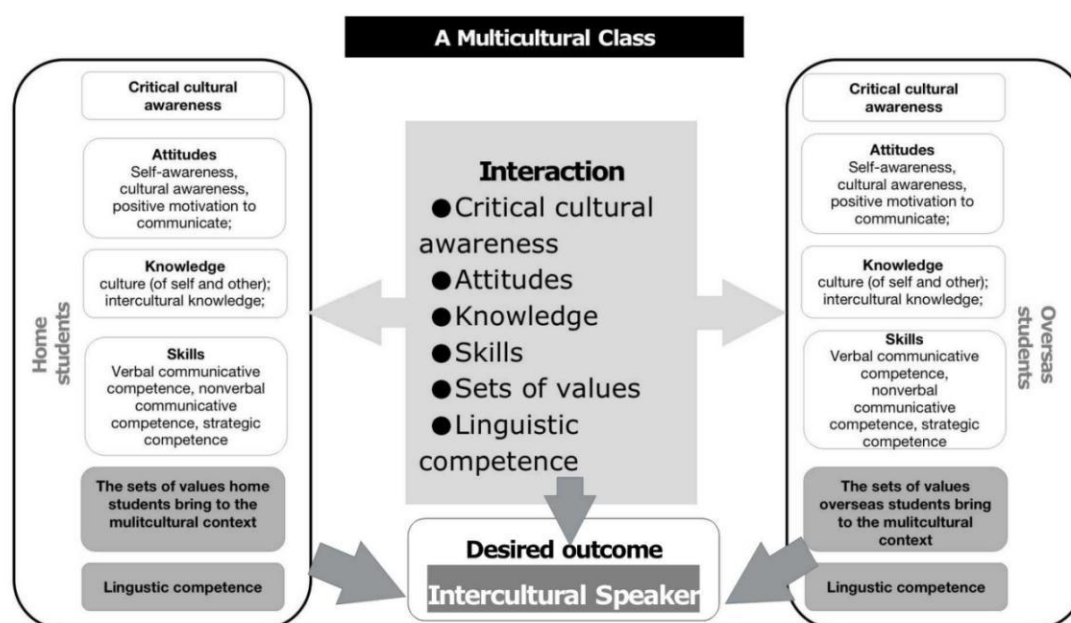


Figure 2.5 Theoretical Framework of this Study

First, this model follows the graphic representation of Spitzberg and Changnon's model, with a focus on the interaction between home students and overseas students. Spitzberg and Changnon's model emphasizes "the importance of including all of the participants involved and their interaction process" (ibid, p.44), suggesting that authentic relationship-building can help develop students' IC. However, in their model, the sojourner and host-nationals are isolated as "mirror-image interlocutors" (ibid, p.32), without building any connection between the two. To address this gap, it is necessary to add an arrow here to connect the home students with the overseas students, putting an emphasis on the substantive intercultural interactions, which happen in the multicultural class under research. Secondly, as discussed in the previous section, this model adopts Byram's five savoirs in IC as the chief components, with only a few minor changes made on the content. And lastly, the model highlights the sets of values students bring to this multicultural class as these values influenced students' interaction a lot, such as the collectivist values of Confucianism which was discussed in the previous sections and patriotism instilled through education and socialisation. All the elements in this model will be further elaborated as follows.

(1) Multicultural class: The present study argues that the context of intercultural communication should be fully considered in designing the development of the model because "context becomes fundamental in understanding the true complexity of intercultural competence" (Deardorff, 2009,

p. 268). Following Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) argument that ICC should be located in the interaction itself and be defined from more relational perspectives, this study emphasizes the importance of context by considering the dynamics in intercultural interaction. In this study, the context is a multicultural class where home and overseas students study together. To a certain extent, the multicultural class is a small global village where students come from different countries, and as a result, the communicative partners and their cultures cannot be ascertained. This communicative environment is considerably diverse, and ICC is no longer limited to the communicative ability to adapt to the target language culture. Thus, within this multicultural context, ICC development should come with the idea of cultivation of multicultural awareness. By doing so, this competence enables the students to engage in intercultural communication beyond any particular culture and still maintain their cultural identity.

(2) Home students and overseas students: Two major parties in the context are termed home students and overseas students. The home students refer to the Chinese local students, whereas the overseas students are those with foreign passports. I was aware of the simplicity of this broad categorization as key factors such as ethnicity, nationality, self-identification, and even linguistic background may not be as straightforward as what the passports can indicate. For the specific class I looked into, such broad grouping, however, could be used as a starting point for curriculum planning, class activity organization and data collection and analysis.

(3) Interaction: This model emphasizes a dyadic interactive perspective; that is, interactions between the home and overseas students are emphasized in this model. As Imahori and Lanigan (1989) predicted, ICC is a relational competence and the sojourners and host nationals are mirror-image interlocutors. Deardorff (2009) also called for an emphasis on relational aspects in developing future models of ICC, which means focusing beyond the individual to the relationships and all the interactors involved. In the interaction, home and overseas students will meet tension, conflict, and accommodation, and they should adjust themselves according to the real situation. For example, they will meet cultural difference, by which their understanding about culture is enhanced. They can also reflect on the real communication, thereby developing their critical cultural awareness. As a result, this study believes that the interaction between the home and overseas students has an important role in the development of intercultural competence, and both groups of students must simultaneously evaluate the communicative outcome instead of taking the effectiveness and appropriateness of the standard measurement of intercultural competence for granted.

(4) Components of ICC: This model incorporates critical cultural awareness, values both home students and overseas students bring to the multicultural context, linguistic competence, knowledge, attitudes, and skills as the key components of ICC for home and overseas students, as discussed in Section 2.4.2. The manner of developing each component is introduced as follows.

① Critical cultural awareness: Critical cultural awareness has been placed first among all the

components. Byram (2008) indicates that “taking action” is crucial in ICC. Critical cultural awareness “enhances the transferability of skills and attitudes so that learners have a generalizable critical cultural awareness as a basis for study of other cultures or for coping with interaction in other cultural and linguistic environments” (Byram, 1997, p.103). In order to develop home students’ critical cultural awareness, critical reflections on self in relation to otherness were adopted according to different learning subjects.

②Attitudes: This study aims to develop the self-awareness, cultural awareness, and positive motivation of the students, such that they can communicate without obstacles. For the development of appropriate attitudes of home students in my study, student-oriented learning by real case analysis and group work should be implemented, thus to fully motivate students’ curiosity and openness to interact in real life.

③Knowledge: Knowledge refers to the target language’s cultural knowledge, other cultural knowledge, and intercultural knowledge. This study aims to develop students’ ability to acquire new knowledge of other cultures and cultural practices in various ways available via real interaction with overseas students. As indicated in the review earlier, focused knowledge in this study also includes the cultural self for acquisition and dissemination.

④Skills: This study emphasizes developing the verbal and nonverbal communication and strategic competencies of students. In this phase, real practice provides enough chances for home and overseas students. Sufficient tasks, such as group discussion, case analysis and role play, are designed for them to practice their interpretation skills as well as discovery and interaction.

⑤Of all key components the students are expected to become critically aware of are the values both home students and overseas students bring to the multicultural context for they play an important role in the communication among students from different cultures. The most influential values of both parties are added, and the reason for selecting these elements has been discussed in Section 2.4.2.

⑥Linguistic competence: As foreign language education is expected to shoulder the responsibility of teaching ICC, linguistic competence is thus an integrative part of ICC education. The Intercultural Communication Course in this study is purposefully devised with its focus not only on students’ ICC, but also their linguistic competence. Moreover, in the multicultural class, English serves as the intercultural language for both home students and overseas students, many of whom are not native speakers of English. Thus, linguistic competence of a language that functions as a lingua franca plays a crucial role for successful intercultural communication in this multicultural context.

(5) Desired outcome: This model emphasizes achieving an “intercultural speaker” (Byram, 1997) as the desired outcome. According to Byram, an intercultural speaker is “aware of cultural similarities and differences, and is able to act as a mediator between two or more cultures, two or

more sets of beliefs, values and behavior” (Byram, 2008, p. 75). This definition echoes “Global Citizen Education,” which highlights the essential functions of education related to the “formation of citizenship [in relation] with globalization,” and to the preparation of young people who are able to “deal with the challenges of today’s increasingly interconnected and independent world” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 15). Therefore, this action study was designed to direct students’ attention to their self-development as intercultural speakers who would finally have the ability to “negotiate their own modes of interaction, their own kinds of texts, to accommodate the specific nature of intercultural communication” (Byram, 2021, p.61).

To sum up, this model argues that critical cultural awareness, values both home students and overseas students bring to the multicultural context, linguistic competence, knowledge, attitudes, and skills should be learned in a progressive mode; and the real interaction between home and overseas students plays an essential role in achieving outcomes and developing ICC. This model can be seen to represent the content, goal, and process of ICC development in a multicultural class, and it will be used as the theoretical and methodological framework for constructing and evaluating intercultural competence development in home students in my study. Its rationality and feasibility will be tested empirically in this study.

2.5 Chapter Summary

As listed in the beginning, this chapter sets out to achieve three purposes for reviewing the ICC literature. Section 2.1 establishes the need for the current study. This section first discussed globalization and internationalization of higher education, followed by the agreement for the necessity in educating students’ ICC for the new era, in both the global or Chinese context. Especially in China, with the growing economy and the desire to contribute its national power to the world development, China faces more intercultural contact than ever before. Thus, the importance of developing students’ ICC is most apparent.

The next two sections review the scholarship to define ICC and its models relevant to this study. Reviewing the models and framework that both Western and Chinese scholars try to build, both merits and demerits of these models have been discussed, and the most influential and relevant ones have been explained in detail, namely, Byram’s ICC model (1997; 2021) and Spitzberg and Changnon’s (2009) model. These two models become the theoretical base of my research. Discussion on ICC studies in China helps to provide a Chinese component for this research. First of all, this research establishes there is a close relationship between ICC development and foreign language teaching in China. Secondly, it also puts emphasis on Chinese context, that is when constructing ICC model in China, the Chinese values, and patriotism in particular, are made the core objectives in education. What is more, by reviewing the current research, several limitations are revealed, such as the lack of empirical studies, and lack of focus on home students. Based on these, this chapter generates research questions.

The last section provides the theoretical framework for this study, which serves as a guidance for developing students' ICC in a multicultural class. It has been presented at the end of this chapter, because it is based on the context, the theories and models that have been critically reviewed in this chapter and the gaps identified. The following chapter will rationalize action research as the methodology for study.

Chapter 3 Methodological Approaches

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this research. With regard to the paradigm, pragmatism appears to be the most beneficial approach to this action research as it values “what works” to answer a research question (Cohen et al., 2007). To investigate beneath the surface of the action research and multicultural class influence, a mixed methodology, with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, is adopted to collect data. The rationale of using action research and a mixed methods research paradigm is explicated and fully discussed in the next section. Ethical issues and research validity and reliability are also analyzed to ensure the validity of the data and analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm and Method

Appropriate choice of research paradigm and methodological approaches helps to answer research questions effectively. This section explains the reasons for choosing the appropriate methodology for this study.

3.1.1 Pragmatic Paradigm

Given that the research questions in the current study are about “what” and “how”, conducting this research using only one method is less likely to explain the dynamics in interactions. Accordingly, a mixed methods research paradigm is necessary to find answers to these questions. Denscombe (2008) explained that a mixed methods research paradigm enables researchers to conduct an analysis and build on the original data. This feature results in a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study than would be yielded by a single approach, thereby overcoming the weaknesses and biases of single approaches. The mixed methods research paradigm also aims to produce extensive and dynamic data that are confirmatory and exploratory. Unlike the positivist paradigm which is based on scientific and objectivist ontologies and epistemologies, or the interpretivist paradigm on subjectivist and humanistic ontologies and epistemologies, the mixed methods approaches are premised on pragmatic ontologies and epistemologies (Cohen et al., 2007). Education research has an established tradition of using mixed methods as a set of systemic procedures to analyze individuals in different groups with a view of the complex cultural, social, and human interaction. Hence, adopting the mixed methods paradigm could lead to the determination of the reality of local student experiences in a multicultural class in a sufficiently flexible, permeable, and multilayered manner.

A mixed methods paradigm rests on an ontology that recognizes that phenomena are complex to the extent that single methods approaches might result in partial, selective, and incomplete understanding, and on an epistemology that requires pragmatic combinations of methods—in sequence, in parallel or in synthesis—in order to embrace and comprehend the phenomenon and to do justice to its several facets (Cohen et al., 2007). For the philosophical stance of this study, I choose pragmatism for considering the current research as exploratory and interventional in nature and thus adoption of this paradigm suits the purpose.

As the philosophical partner of mixed methods research (Rescher & Nicholas, 2016), pragmatism adopts a methodologically eclectic and pluralist approach to research, thereby drawing on positivism and interpretive epistemologies based on the criteria of fitness for purpose and applicability and regarding reality as objective and socially constructed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The rationale for adopting pragmatism is to attempt to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the positivist and interpretive paradigms. A positivist believes that education researchers should eliminate their biases, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study, and test or numerically justify their stated hypotheses. Whereas, depth, nuance, and context are the key elements of qualitative epistemology. The adoption of a pragmatic paradigm can facilitate the rechecking of data and discovering possible errors in single approaches. This paradigm probes meanings of the data by gathering considerably substantial data. The pragmatic paradigm as defined above is indeed what I need for the evaluation of the effectiveness of an interventional study which relies upon both objective data and deep and nuanced investigation in specific contexts. In my research, interviews were used to explore, describe, and explain experiences and meanings and to “suggest concepts and themes” (Rubin, 2005). A questionnaire was also adopted to enable me to formulate the generalization that can represent an overview of the experiences of local students in a multicultural class. Data can be compared and verified by each method. Thus, triangulation for maximum validity and reliability can be practiced.

To conclude, the world is becoming substantially complex and dynamic in the 21st century. Therefore, adopting a pragmatic paradigm enables me to comprehensively answer my particular research questions by combining and matching complex and interwoven methodological design components.

3.1.2 Methodological Choice

My research is primarily focused on how an educational intervention in a multicultural class can improve home students' ICC development, and what aspects of their ICC could be developed. The research itself is, on the one hand, an attempt at using a teaching paradigm, and a documentation of students' growth trajectory on the other. Simply put, the research is to both take “action” on its subjects and observe the consequences after the action. The following section is the rational for

my selection of action research.

3.1.2.1 Introduction to Action Research

Kurt Lewin, who is one of the most influential social and experimental psychologists in the world, is widely recognized as the founder of “action research” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998). Lewin (1946) defines “action research” as “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action.” In his work, action research is characterized as “a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting” (Lewin, 1946, p.37). This spiraling cycle begins with problem identification, which involves the researcher identifying a problem in his/her research field. Next, the researcher formulates a plan to solve the problem. In the process of solving the problem, the researcher is not outside the process but participates in the action, observes the process, and collects systematic data, analyzes his/her reflection, and finally redefines the problem. When a new problem emerges, he/she will reflect on the originally designed plan and update it to make an improved or new plan to achieve his/her objective. The spiral process enables the researcher to determine the most appropriate way to solve the problem. Thus, in action research, the teacher becomes an “explorer” and participant in his/her teaching field.

Based on this definition, different scholars presented different models, such as the “Action Research Cycle” by Calhoun (1994), an idealized model of the “Action Research Cycle” by Wells (1994), and the “Action Research Helix” by Stringer (2004) (listed in Mills 2007, p.15-18). Among the different models, the “Action Research Cycle” by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) is the most famous and useful construct, as it succinctly summarizes the essential phases of the action research process (Bruns, 2011). This model is cyclical and includes all the essential characteristics of Lewin’s spiraling process of action research (Figure 3.1). It is the basis of my research design as it provides clear steps for carrying out my research in this multicultural class.

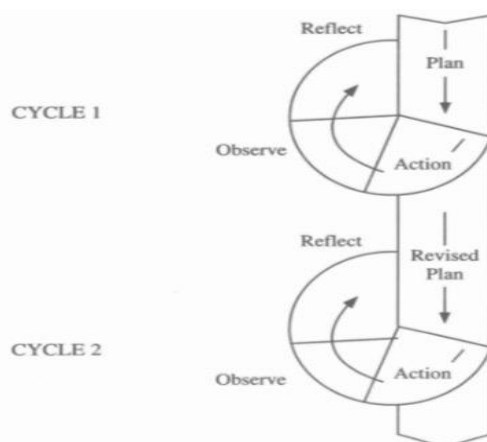


Figure 3.1 Cyclical AR Model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988)

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), action research gained popularity in educational research, because its purpose is to “reinvigorate our teaching, lead to positive change, raise our awareness of the complexities of our work, and show us what drives our personal approaches to teaching” (Burn, 2011, p.8). To this extent, action research is helpful to “teachers” who want to change, consistently enhance the progress of their teaching effects, and want to increase their knowledge about their practice, their classroom, and their students. Growing evidence shows that language teachers worldwide attain immense satisfaction from conducting action research (e.g., Burns, 2011; Fu, 2015). However, the scope of action research in China is limited. According to Zhang and Guo (2009), action research garnered attention in China around 2000, but studies using action research are scarce and developed slowly. A limited number of published papers employed action research, and among such articles, most focused on the term “explanation” or “theory introduction and building” (Wang, 2014; Li, 2015). Thus, it can be argued that increased action research is needed in Chinese academia, if the benefits as identified above are desired.

Action research is characterized by two features (Burns, 2011). First, researchers are reflective practitioners concerned about issues encountered in their practice, which in the present study is how to foster students’ ICC through educational intervention in a multicultural class. Second, researchers address such issues through a systematic investigation that is integrated with teaching activities and follows “a more subjective approach” than the experimental model (Burns, 2011, p. 5). Moreover, in an action research project, the linking of “action” and “research” highlights the essential features of this method, that is, trying out ideas in practice to increase knowledge on or improve the curriculum, teaching, and learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In my research, I attempt to create an ICC development model for my teaching practice to increase the intercultural knowledge and improve the ICC of my students. Furthermore, action research is a small-scale intervention in the workings of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention. This principle is best applied to my research owing to its concern about how multicultural class learning experiences can facilitate students’ ICC development with my intervention in a real-world classroom.

In action research, data collection is performed systematically using observational tools (which answers the question, “What do I need to see?”) and non-observational tools (which answers the question, “What do I need to know?”). Choice of methods depends on the type of data needed to best answer the research questions. Although action research is generally qualitative driven, a mixed approach is typically employed in educational contexts. In this research, to get descriptive and interpretive data, interviews, reflective journals, surveys with open-ended questions, and classroom observations were utilized. By contrast, a survey with close-ended questions was adopted to evaluate the teaching effects.

3.1.2.2 Why is Action Research Used for this Study?

I completely agree with Burns's (2011, p. 8) statement that "for a teacher who is reflective, and committed to developing as a thinking professional, action research is an appealing way to look more closely at puzzling classroom issues or to delve into teaching dilemmas". Being reflective and changing the "puzzling classroom" are my main motivations for conducting this research and can explain my methodological choice.

Self-reflection is the fundamental element of the action research cycle. Hopkins (1993, p.9) predicted that action research is "a systematic self-conscious inquiry with the aim of understanding and improving practice." Action research can provide me with an opportunity to explore my intervention to develop students' ICC and determine what has and has not been done. In classroom observations, I took notes during teaching and learning sessions and criticize the practice to gain an in-depth understanding. Through this process, I, as a teacher and researcher, develop from "knowing" to "thinking" to "reflecting." This doing-in-reflection cyclical process is helpful for improving my intervention. Most important, action research facilitates my professional and personal growth.

The central idea of action research is to induce changes and improvements in education practices (Burns, 2011). As my primary focus is to develop the ICC of home students in a multicultural class, the effect of my intervention (see section 3.3 for more details) and the changes experienced by the home students are the focus of this research. This research aim matches the targets of action research, that is, action taken and results changed. As a teacher, I want to change and improve students' ICC ability with my intervention. As a researcher, I want to frame a model for developing students' ICC based on my observations of students' changes and growth in their learning process. Thus, action research, which leads to changes and improvements, is the best choice.

3.2 The Teacher and the Students in Action

In an action research project, it is essential to, first of all, take into account the teaching philosophy of the teacher-researcher and the characteristics of the sample students involved. Below is a brief description about the teacher and the students in this study.

3.2.1 The Teacher

In action research, the researcher is not only a researcher but also a teacher. Since a teacher's teaching philosophy is believed to influence his/her teaching practice, this is important to consider when conducting action research (Burns, 2000). My teaching philosophy has consciously and unconsciously influenced my teaching practice, so it is important for me to reflect on this when conducting my research. Thus, a statement on my teaching philosophy is necessary.

First, I believe that "education" means not only imparting knowledge or skills to students but also cultivating and moralizing students. In Chinese, the word that means "education" is "jiaoyu" (教

育), which contains two Chinese characters. According to the *Analytical Dictionary of Chinese Characters* (《说文解字》) (Xu, 1963), which is the first book in ancient China that systematically analyzes the shapes and sources of Chinese characters, the first character, “jiao (教)”, means “teaching students so that they are able to acquire knowledge by following the instruction of their teacher (教, 上所施, 下所效也).” The second character, “yu (育)”, means to moralize students to become a virtuous person (育, 养子使作善也).” Specifically, this word “jiaoyu” means that, on the one hand, in the process of teaching, a teacher should impart professional knowledge. On the other hand, a teacher should use his/her moral values and charm to guide students to find the meaning of their life and to shape their personality. Accordingly, I believe that as an ICC teacher, I should provide students with knowledge about ICC and motivate them to engage in actual intercultural interaction with my precepts and deeds. Moreover, the goal for my teaching is to develop the student as an “intercultural speaker” who is not only proficient in English and ICC knowledge, but also has moral development of international humanism that the student forms an “insider/member” identity of the global community.

Second, I agree with John Dewey’s (cited in Mitra, 2014) famous belief of “education as growth.” I believe that as human beings, we should learn throughout our life, especially in this modern rapidly developing world. In teaching ICC, maintaining a learning spirit is important, as knowing everything about ICC is impossible for a teacher. To a certain extent, I am a teacher as well as a student, acting as a role model by continuing to enhance my practice. Moreover, I believe that I should encourage my students to become lifelong learners too. The ultimate goal of school education, especially higher education, is to enable students to grow and know how to live their life. Thus, lifelong learning is a philosophy that guides my teaching and research.

Lastly, I want to clarify the relationship between a teacher and a learner. Traditionally, the relationship between a teacher and a student in China is similar to that between a speaker and a receiver. To show respect, students must not interrupt their teacher any time during class. Such a teaching culture has dominated Chinese classrooms since the time of Confucius. Presently, examination-oriented education worsens this situation, as examinations are considered by nearly every Chinese as the only way to guarantee a good future. This belief reinforces the high status of teachers, especially in primary and secondary education. As a result, university students who received such education for more than 12 years remain “silent” and become accustomed to such teacher-centred classrooms. However, given my learning experience in UNNC, I am aware that the power distance between teachers and students will influence teaching and learning effects, especially in action research. Thus, I intended to adopt a student-centred classroom to provide students with as many opportunities as possible to change them from passive receivers to active learners. To realize this objective, I focus my teaching intervention on students. First, students have the right to choose the topics they wanted to discuss in the teaching process. I adopted this practice at the beginning of the semester and used a questionnaire to determine the topics that

interested students. During the teaching process, I also changed my teaching materials according to my students' preferences. Second, I encouraged my students to work in pairs, groups, or independently depending on the target of the activity. Third, evaluations were conducted not only by me but also by the students. Such a practice aroused the students' motivation to learn, thereby they became very active. Interestingly, my classroom is constantly 'noisy' and busy, and my students enjoy interacting with me and their classmates. Thus, in my action research study, I wanted to pursue this type of teacher-student relationship.

3.2.2 The Students

The research sample of this study is a multicultural class from foreign language college at ZWU (a Tier-2 university in Eastern China), where I work. I selected this university as the research setting owing to the 300 overseas students who study in this institution every year. These overseas students are arranged by the international office to study in the same class with the home students, thereby creating numerous multicultural classes. The multicultural class used for this research includes 37 local students and 12 overseas students. Table 3.1 lists the demographic information of these overseas students. It is the first time for these overseas students come to China, except OS10 whose grandfather is Chinese as a result he has a little bit more first-hand experience of Chinese culture compared with the other overseas students. Moreover, the English language requirement for bachelor's degree entry in ZWU is IELTS 5.5 with the writing band no less than 5.0, which predicts that all the overseas students have a qualified English ability.

Table 3.1 Demographic Information of Overseas Students

No.	Code name	Nationality	Gender	Knowledge about China
1	OS1	Spanish	Female	The first year in China
2	OS2	Spanish	Male	The first year in China
3	OS3	Swedish	Female	The first year in China
4	OS4	Swedish	Female	The first year in China
5	OS5	Mexican	Male	The first year in China
6	OS6	Mexican	Female	The first year in China
7	OS7	American	Male	The first year in China
8	OS8	American	Male	The first year in China
9	OS9	French	Male	The first year in China
10	OS10	Indonesia	Male	The first year in China and his grandfather is Chinese
11	OS11	Malaysia	Male	The first year in China
12	OS12	Belgian	Female	The first year in China

As discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1), ZWU prefers to arrange overseas students to study with junior English majors for at least three assumed reasons. First, there is less distinct language

barrier that exists in communicating with overseas students. Secondly, compared with freshman and sophomore, junior students are more familiar with campus life and culture thus can help these overseas students to better adapt to their new life in China. Furthermore, this arrangement is helpful to home students to acquire intercultural knowledge. Thus, in this study, junior English majors were selected as the research sample.

In this study, all Chinese students were required to complete the pre-course questionnaire (see Appendix 1) at the very beginning of the semester. The purpose of this questionnaire was to get a complete picture of the participants, including their demographic information, understanding of ICC, and experiences with foreigners (further details supplied in Section 3.4.1). Interestingly, the multicultural class has only one male student, which illustrates the very common phenomenon in China that female students generally outnumber male students in the English department. As a result, analyzing the data from the perspective of gender is meaningless. Given that all the participants are juniors, they are between the ages of 21 and 24 years, with an average age of 21.46 years. In terms of language proficiency, more than 70% of the participants passed the TEM-4 (Test for English Majors in China, Band 4) or CET-6 (College English Test, Band 6), which indicates that their language proficiency is higher than that of average Chinese students who failed to pass those kind of English tests and that they are upper-intermediate or advanced English speakers. To a certain extent, the CET-6 is equal to the IELTS band 5.5. Thus, no distinct language barrier exists.

The original sample size of the multicultural class was 37 students. However, during the middle of the semester, one student applied for a gap year because of illness; thus, 37 students answered the pre-course questionnaire, and 36 students answered the post-questionnaire.

3.3 The Action --- Intercultural Communication Course

3.3.1 Objectives of the Course

As mentioned in Section 2.1.2, the 2020 version of the *Chinese College English Curriculum Requirements* (*Requirements* in short, 2020) changed the Intercultural Communication Course to become one of the core subjects for English majors and clarified that cultivating students to become “global talents” is one of the main objectives of English education. The *Requirements* also provides a concrete description of the goals for ICC development in ELT. Following the guidance of the *Requirements* and the objectives of teaching ICC which was proposed by Byram (1997), the Intercultural Communication Course in this study was intentionally devised with the theoretical framework of this research and its designed teaching objectives are described below.

- (1) To encourage students to be curious about and open to cultural issues, be ready to engage and interact with other cultures, be sensitive to and tolerant of cultural

differences, and be empathetic toward culturally different people.

(2) To enable students to gain cultural knowledge about China and other countries, learn how to compare and contrast other cultures with the Chinese culture, and to learn key ICC concepts and theories.

(3) To enable students to mediate conversations with interlocutors from different cultures by using appropriate combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real-time.

(4) To enable students to identify and explain documents or misunderstandings in interactions.

(5) To enable students to develop “critical cultural awareness” and evaluate perspectives, practices, products, and other cultures and countries independently based on explicit criteria.

(6) To enable students to learn about their own culture, realize the influence of their own cultural values in contact, develop a multicultural outlook, and to become to be “intercultural speakers”.

(7) To improve students’ language abilities, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating skills.

Among these teaching objectives, development of critical cultural awareness is considered as one of the most important objectives considering students’ learning environment and future development. According to the Higher Education Academy (2011), transferable skills are portable skills that can be transferred and used after graduating or throughout one’s life. Critical cultural awareness, as a “transferable skill,” should be developed by students during university. Moreover, the “absence of critical thinking” among English majors in China is a widely acknowledged phenomenon (Huang, 1998; Wen et al., 2010). Such students are widely found to be accepting everything delivered by teachers without self-understanding. As a result, developing English majors’ critical thinking ability is one of the primary objectives of EFL teaching in China. Hu (2008), president of the China Intercultural Communication Research Association and the China English Language Education Association, stated that the talents we cultivated should have strong critical cultural awareness, thus they can be qualified for various kinds of jobs in the globalized world after graduation. By placing critical cultural awareness at the center of my teaching objectives, I wanted to combine this awareness with the other goals to cultivate students to become intercultural learners, that is, reflective learners who can learn critically from other cultures, relate to the Chinese culture, and continue to grow from such a process. In addition, I hope that the abilities my students would develop in my course are useful not only during the semester but also throughout their life.

3.3.2 Course Content

For the selection of teaching materials, I found it difficult to identify one textbook that can serve to achieve all the teaching objectives as listed in above section. The content for the Intercultural Communication Course is a mixture of resources drawn from both textbook-based teaching and other ICC-related material. The textbook selected for this course is titled *Cross-cultural Communication* (Li & Mo, 2009), which has been in use in ZWU for at least five years. The book provides detailed instructions on the key concepts and theories in the area of ICC, offering a solid theoretical foundation for the content development of my teaching.

One problem is that most of the ICC teaching materials adopted by Chinese universities places a high priority in developing students' language competence (Zhang, 2007). However, in my intervention I did not intend to simply enhance my students' English proficiency, nor did I want to confuse my students with concepts too complex and controversial. Instead, I highlighted the practical aspects of ICC development by adopting some of the most relevant topics and scenarios in intercultural communication as supplementary teaching content, which were collected mostly from our daily lives (with aliases). It is hoped that students can participate actively by reflecting their own lives to practice new skills in intercultural communication with better understanding of the theories, and then feel the true changes.

Furthermore, it is not realistic for me to identify one particular book to cover all issues that are essential to the theoretical framework of my ICC teaching. Take intercultural knowledge for an example, the majority of the existing textbooks do not address intercultural knowledge and practice in China. Among the textbooks available, the content is about intercultural issues in other countries. Therefore, to achieve the teaching objectives, it is crucial to select supplementary materials and combine them with the textbook for delivering the ICC course.

In addition, following my model of teaching practice, all the content used was carefully selected and systematically organised to support the teaching delivery in each stage. For instance, intercultural knowledge and intercultural attitude was conveyed in the process of textbook learning, which contributed to the development of students' ethnorelativistic attitudes (Bennett, 1993) towards cultural differences, that they gradually developed their cultural attitude from acceptance to adaptation and to integration of cultural difference. As a result, students' ICC was developed in parallel with their communicative proficiency in English. To sum up, all the content for the teaching of ICC was incorporated into students' English language learning process as illustrated in my teaching practice design.

3.3.3 Teaching Practice Design

Cooperative learning is the primary instruction method used in this study. According to Barrett

(2018), cooperative learning involves students working together on tasks with specific cooperative features built into their structure. Cooperative learning is extremely effective in boosting students' intercultural competence. Taking my class as an example, I designed group projects for cooperative learning to promote interaction between the home and overseas students. The students were suggested to form multicultural groups (seven students per group), with at least one or two team members from different countries. The groups occasionally needed guidance and intervention, because my observation proved previous research that shows that students prefer working with members of their own culture (Volet & Ang, 2012). After the groups were formed, each group was required to finish the assignment together in each teaching session. The group project served to raise the students' motivation, and the entire process was intended as an opportunity for them to practice and develop their skills based on the knowledge they learned in class. It should also be mentioned that ZWU is famous for its teaching reform in cooperative learning (Xu, Qian & Cui, 2010), which has been adopted since 2009. Nearly every class in ZWU employs this teaching method which leads to a solid foundation for conducting this research.

Furthermore, people learn from their experiences. Kolb (1984, p.38) believes that "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". Merely teaching students to consider Hall's (1976) descriptions or Hofstede's (2001) dimensions does not contribute to their intercultural understanding and skills. According to Krajewski (2011), intercultural communication can be learned to a certain degree, but ICC must be developed over time and can best be developed through 'actual' intercultural experiences. Thus, a teaching design focusing on 'simulated' practice was the main instruction method I adopted, such as in-class role-playing, task-based group activities, and group discussions. I encouraged the students to write down their cultural stories and explore simulated communication and actual intercultural communication.

The pedagogical model, which is based on the aforementioned instruction methods and the theoretical framework of this research, is described in Figure 3.2.

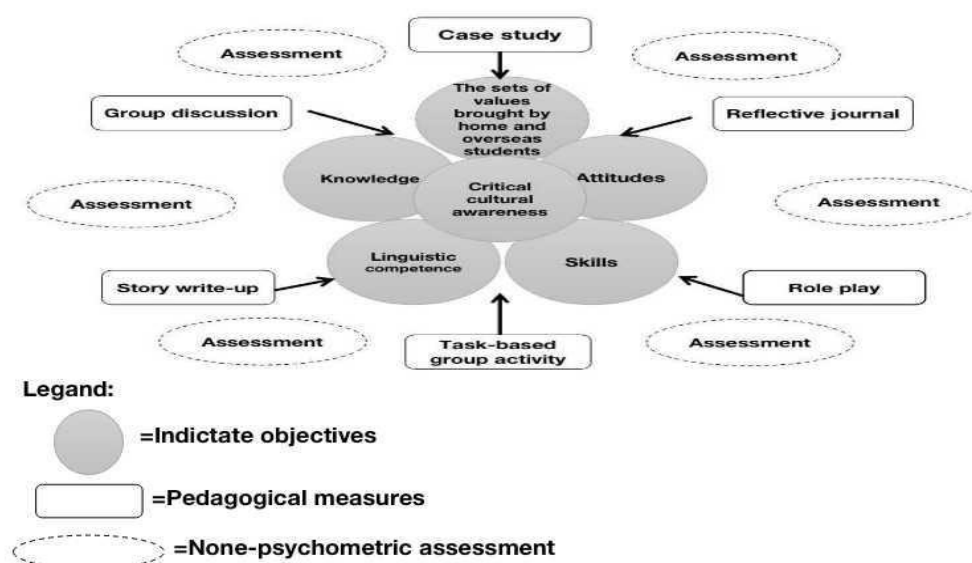


Figure 3.2 Pedagogical model for the action research

This model contains the objectives of teaching, pedagogical measures in the teaching procedure, and non-psychometric assessment. At the center of the model are the teaching objectives. These are the key components of ICC: critical cultural awareness, the sets of values both home students and overseas students bring to the multicultural context, knowledge, attitudes, skills and linguistic competence. At the periphery are the pedagogical measures I adopted, such as group discussions, case analysis, role play, story write-ups, reflective journals, and task-based group activities. Some of these activities were interchangeable for different teaching purposes, such as case analysis, role-playing, and group discussions. In the teaching procedures, non-psychometric assessment ran through the entire process, which can motivate students' participation and help me examine my teaching practices. Throughout the action research, all these dimensions were taken into account from planning, action, observation to reflection.

3.4 Instruments for Collecting Data

Having presented the 'action', I am now turning to data collection from students' pre-course and post-course questionnaires (Appendix I), interviews, the teacher's observation, and students' reflective journals based on their one semester's learning experience in this multicultural class. The following subsections provide a detailed account of data collection tools and the rationale for the use of these methods applied, and also discuss how data were analyzed in this study.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The first step in collecting data was based on questionnaires which include pre-course and post-course questionnaires. The objective of the pre-course questionnaire was to identify home students' basic information and assess their ICC before the research. This pre-course questionnaire

has three parts. The first part surveys for demographic information, such as gender, major, and language proficiency. The second part presents open-ended questions for comments on any issue-related attitude toward multicultural class learning and life with overseas students. A self-evaluation questionnaire called Assessment of Intercultural Competence of Chinese College Students (AIC-CCS) designed by Wu (2013) was adopted in the third part. With regard to the post-course questionnaire, it aimed at assessing whether home students' ICC was developed after they participated in this multicultural class. Thus, the demographic information part and the AIC-CCS were adopted.

The AIC-CCS was selected as the assessment instrument for this research for the following reasons. First, this AIC-CCS is mainly based on Byram's (1997) ICC multidimensional model which fits the research theoretical framework. That is, intercultural knowledge, skills, attitude, and critical cultural awareness are the key concerns of this assessment instrument. Secondly, from the perspective of research targets, AIC-CCS was the best choice for this research not only because it uses Chinese but also for its design. The design of AIC-CCS fully considered the actual situations of Chinese college students, and it focuses on "measuring specific ICC components such as tolerance, respect, harmony, and relationships, which are specially related to traditional Chinese culture" (Peng et al., 2015, p.147). Thus, it is much more suitable for this research compared with simply adopting foreign scholars' instrument. Thirdly, since the reliability and validity of AIC-CCS are extensively acknowledged in China, it could be used as an external instrument to assess learner's ICC at different stages of my research. Furthermore, the results of AIC-CCS serve as guidance for me to improve my teaching and could generate a great self-awareness of the participants. Thus, AIC-CCS is an appropriate and useful instrument for both my research and the target participants.

However, there are some items in AIC-CCS that are poorly designed, with double-or triple-barreled questions. Thus, I made some modifications to them. Take Question 1 for example:

The original version:

1. I know the history, geography, and politics of China. (1 2 3 4 5)

This question is triple-barreled and the modified version became:

1. I know the history of China. (1 2 3 4 5)

2. I know the geography of China. (1 2 3 4 5)

3. I know the politics of China. (1 2 3 4 5)

In this way, I made this questionnaire more accurate and easier for students to choose their answers. As a result, the original version of AIC-CCS has 28 questions all together, whereas the modified version has 40.

The data collected by AIC-CCS used a 5-point Likert-type scale, that is ranging from 5 (completely agree) to 1 (completely disagree). High scores in AIC-CCS imply better ICC. All the data collected by AIC-CCS were coded and inputted in SPSS (v25.0) for statistical analysis. Whereas, for qualitative data obtained from the other two parts, I conducted substantial interviews to interpret the results of the questionnaire and provided a holistic view of home students' ICC development. Therefore, the synchronic description of the adaptation of home students in a multicultural class was depicted.

An interesting point I would like to point out is that as it happened that there was a parallel class which was very similar to the multicultural class in which I conducted my action research. It was called a parallel class is because, for each grade, owing to its large number, the students are divided randomly by the university into two classes. Thus, in theory, the parallel class was almost the same as the multicultural class, with regard to English level, textbook and teaching methods, and taught by the same teacher. The only difference was the absence of overseas students in the parallel class. Although my action research was focused on the multicultural class, to demonstrate the effectiveness of my intervention, I made a comparison by using the AIC-CCS measurements both for the multicultural class (MC) and the parallel class (PC) at the beginning of the research and by the end. My expectation was that the measurement would, to a certain extent, reveal interesting outcomes brought about by different dynamics created in MC and PC by differing compositions of student population.

3.4.2 Interview

According to Mason (1996), interviews can assist the interviewers and interviewees to express their understanding of the world and explain how they view situations from their own perspectives. So, the second method used for data collection was the interview, which triangulated and complemented the quantitative data and also served as the main method of data collection. The interview is the most widely used method in education and ICC research (Wang, 2016), and it can help the researcher to reassess the validity of the questionnaire data and enable an adequately coherent interpretation of the data. The current research conducted two types of interviews, namely, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. For semi-structured interviews, the interviewer followed the guide but was able to follow the topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide if appropriate. In unstructured interviews, the conversation is informal or the respondents can chat freely on any related issue, thus allowing for personal experiences to be shared. By using these types of interviews, I can fully explore the perceptions and conceptions of the intercultural communicative experience of the home students under investigation.

This research conducted a three-round series of interviews, that is, at the beginning, middle, and end of this research. The reason for carrying out three-round interviews follows Seidman's (2006) suggestion that for substantial opportunities to analyze the data, research that is mainly based on

interview data should involve more than a single interview. In the first round, I adopted the unstructured interview to determine what appeared relevant to my research questions and collect realistic and natural data from less formal conversation. My office and the self-study classroom were chosen to be the interview place following the principle of convenience and tranquility. Usually before the interview started, some small talk and drink were prepared to establish rapport. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the second and third rounds on the basis of the data collected from the first round. As Cohen et al. (2007) explained, the semi-structured interview is sufficiently open-ended to provide the content with additional new avenues to be recorded, considerable digressions and expansions to be made, and further probing to be undertaken. This gave me flexibility to dig deeper into the home students' ICC development.

Six students were interviewed in English in this research. All of them were randomly chosen by their student number and with their consent. Each interview lasted from 36 minutes to 57 minutes, and recordings were made under the consent of the interviewees. The transcription presented whatever the interviewees said in the interview and were free from grammatical correction or other tidying-up issues to ensure precise transcription. After reading these raw data interpretively and reflexively, I attempted to identify the popular themes among the interviewees that were worth further exploring. The data collection process was ethnographic in the sense that the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the participants were truthfully recorded and described without imposing any external constructs. Maxwell (2005) suggested that data analysis should be conducted immediately after completing the first interview and observation and analysis of data should continue as long as the research is being conducted. Hence, I performed the analysis immediately after each interview and refined the data on time by coding or sorting the transcript into small themes, which I returned to iteratively throughout the period of this research.

3.4.3 Observation

Observation is a practical tool for action research and provides extensive data. First, the data yielded through observation are consistently flexible (Bailey, 1994). Accordingly, adopting observation enabled me to interact in the social context, thereby leading to the collection of systematic records using various methods. Observation can lead to an improved understanding of the situation that is being described because this method provides opportunities to record nonverbal behavior. Observations occur over an extended period, thereby enabling me to develop substantially intimate and informal relationships with the participants in more natural environments than those where surveys are conducted. The data collected through observation can also be used as a test or stimulus for the content of the interviews.

I used an unstructured class observation method to observe this multicultural class, with a detailed record of observational notes that included reflective and analytical observations. After each class, I wrote my teaching logs and aimed to describe the teaching activities objectively and in detail. Moreover, I kept asking self-reflective questions like "What is really happening in this

multicultural class?” and “What roles are my students and I taking?” By doing these, the observation notes helped me make insightful reflection about my research practices.

I maintained non-reflective and reflective journals separately as a rigorous documentary tool of my research procedures (Flick, 2002). A non-reflective recording of observations throughout the action research assists in identifying certain activities and the frequency of occurrence (Arnold, 1999). Meanwhile, I wrote a reflective-diary to record emergent ideas and personal reflections, as well as my thoughts and feelings about the class, the process of teaching, learner’s reactions, activities, etc. The reflective journal offered new perspectives that were not articulated in either interviews or directly through observation.

3.4.4 Reflective Journal

Keeping a journal, diary or log is important in action research as it has a pedagogical function as well as a research function (Burns, 2011). In this study, all the home students were suggested to keep writing their reflective journals after each teaching module. This reflective journal has two functions: one is to check and record students’ reflection on their developing ICC, including intercultural communicative knowledge, attitudes, skills, critical cultural awareness, values in contact and the target language competence in the context; the other is to collect their evaluation of the course teaching contents and instructional methods. The collection of these journals was useful for both my professional practice and research, to motivate me in the renovation of my teaching and to provide me with enough evidence of tracking students’ change and growth in the learning process. It was also significant to the students who reflect the gains and losses from writing journals and recorded their development as a motivation in their study.

Generally speaking, the collection of reflective journals did not go smoothly. In the whole semester, I suggested students write in their reflective journal six times, and all together I collected 206 journals, while among them 184 were valid. There were two major reasons for causing this. First of all, some of them did not finish their journals every time. Second, some of the students viewed the journal just as an assignment required by the teacher. They did not express their thoughtful thinking based on their own experience. Some of them even copied other students or their formal journal in order to hand it in on time. In addition, English language ability was another problem that influenced students’ writing. Some of them could not express themselves freely, as a result, their journal was very simple and general. Such journals were viewed as invalid data.

Among the 184 valid reflective journals, I sorted and analyzed these data according to content and chronology. Thematic analysis was applied as the main data analysis strategy in this process. The benefits of thematic analysis are its accessibility and theoretical flexibility in analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, word-cloud as one of the data visual displays was also adopted in analysing students’ reflective journals. According to Verdinelli and Scagnoli (2013),

visual displays has been considered as an important step during the qualitative data analysis or the writing up stages. It does not only add life to qualitative data (Yin, 2011), but also helps to present themes and categories and highlight the content. With the using of word-cloud, it portrays these recurring themes in students' journal succinctly and efficiently, and illustrates details provided in longer textual information.

3.5 Ethical Issues for Consideration

Ethics is the moral deliberation, choice, and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012). This study aims to explore the change of the ICC of home students in a multicultural class by involving a few personal matters that students may not want to share. The research itself was constantly an intrusion into the life of the participants, be it in the light of time taken to join in the research or the possible invasion of privacy. Therefore, I was cautious in the research process for all possible ethical problems. Before my study was started, I applied for the ethics approval first.

In the research process, five main ethical principles of Hammersley and Traianou (2012) were considered. The first principle was avoiding harm, that is, before executing any research action the first question to be asked was "Will my research cause harm to participant?"

The second principle was autonomy. I was subject to the principle of informed consent (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). In the first class with the overseas and home students, I provided the participants with a clear description of the current study, including research purpose, design, methods, sample needed, time management, and assurance of confidentiality. I also provided the textual content and request for the participants' agreement. To strictly follow the rule of informed consent, I asked for the consent of each participant. To allow for participants who would not want to be interviewed, I e-mailed the request prior to the interview via Moodle. The participants who were interested could then email back to me.

The third principle was privacy. Numbers replaced the students' names. The participants may feel uneasy if their names were directly used in the thesis. Out of respect for the privacy of participants, the interviews were recorded only after they had provided their consent. All texts cited in this study had prior permission from the participants and the relevant people. Moreover, the participants were asked to proofread the text and for their agreement prior to publication.

The fourth principle was reciprocity. The corollary of non-maleficence is beneficence, that is, what benefits will the research bring and to whom (Cohen et al., 2007). The participation of the participants in the current study can improve their intercultural competence and language ability, thereby contributing to their future career. Furthermore, studying the experiences of local students in a multicultural class enables this study to be a possible model for future improvements of IHE.

The fifth principle was equity. Everyone was treated equally in this research regardless of their attitude toward the study. Especially for the class I taught, the relationship between us was fully considered. Chinese students are usually found to be used to the “teacher-centered” class, and teacher-authority still dominates the majority of classes. To address this concern, I tried my best to let the students understand the relationship between us was equal and there was no harm for them to express themselves freely in this research.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are significant to any research. Validity means the trustworthiness of the research, particularly if it is qualitative, while reliability means that the measurement is reliable and can be used in another time to obtain the same results. Silverman (2001) explained that validity is another word for truth, and suggested that when we prepare our study, we should not be overly defensive. As for this research, according to the research methods I have chosen, the validity I considered was not the assumption that my participants necessarily told me the truth, but their feelings and interpretations of perceived reality. What is more, precise data are necessary in considering reliability, which requires accuracy of techniques. To achieve these objectives, several measures were adopted in the rigorous research process.

- (1) Complete engagement with the participants and systemic data collection in the multi-cultural class setting were important for me to realize reliability and validity (Cohen et al., 2007).
- (2) Easy understanding for all the questions of the interviews and questionnaire guarantees that the participants could completely understand the tool without any language barrier (Oppenheim, 1992). Thus, in this action research project, both Chinese and English were provided for conducting questionnaires and interviews. Consequently, the participants could respond to these questions freely and completely.
- (3) A mixed-research methodology can avoid the diversity of the sample (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this study, huge differences exist among the participants in various areas, such as motivation to participate in this course, overseas studying experience, and personal characteristics. Accordingly, these differences influence the research foundation. Thus, trustworthiness was realized by presenting a detailed and clear account of the researching methodology including various data collection tools and data analysis procedures. In addition, the diversity of the sample did not influence validity because the objective of this research is not to investigate the relationship between these variables but to focus on the perception and cognition of the subjects.
- (4) Triangulation is highly recommended in action research as to reduce bias, to increase the credibility of the research (Murphy, 2011), enhance the trustworthiness of analysis, and compensate for the weakness of one method over the other (Gorard & Taylor, 2004). In

collecting data on home students' development in the learning process, I used both qualitative methods and quantitative methods in order to fully reflect the accurate situation of the procedure. This allowed me to look at the issues from more than one perspective, and guaranteed the data analysis with greater depth and credibility.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has rationalized action research as the methodology for this study. It has given a detailed account of the educational principles, course content and approaches I adopted in the course design to achieve the goal of this research. Data were collected and analyzed simultaneously in the process for the purpose of identifying the evidence and assessing the effectiveness of the project. The next chapter will present the data in detail to show students' learning outcomes after participating in this multicultural class by reporting data about students' ICC development from the perspectives of different elements of ICC as defined in the theoretical framework.

Chapter 4 Research Findings

This chapter shows the home students' ICC development in the multicultural class through the Intercultural Communication Course. It first presents their positions before this course, including their previous experiences with otherness, and their understanding of the concept of ICC. The following sections report data about students' ICC development during the course with regard to their intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, critical cultural awareness, influence of values in contact, and nuanced effects in using English as the lingua franca. The presentation of each component begins with quantitative data analysis which is followed with qualitative data analysis. As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the Assessment of Intercultural Competence of Chinese College Students (AIC-CCS) was adopted to statistically assess Chinese students' ICC in this research. This instrument comprises the following four dimensions: knowledge (18 items), attitudes (7 items), skills (9 items), and awareness (6 items) (Wu, 2013). Whereas, the qualitative data included three sets of data, i.e., the interviews with 6 home students; the observation of class teaching; and home students' reflective journals. These qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously with the statistical data in the process, to provide related evidence of students' ICC in terms of the key components of ICC.

4.1 Home Students' Positions before the Intercultural Communication Course

In the orientation session of the course, all the home students were required to complete the pre-course questionnaire (Appendix 1). Their answers were considered as the database in terms of their positions and perspectives before taking this course. Three themes stood out strongly and will be discussed in this section.

4.1.1 Previous Interaction Experiences with otherness

Questions 1 to 3 in the pre-course questionnaire were to check home students' previous experiences with otherness, directly or indirectly, including the other cultures they are most familiar with (question 1), their previous interaction experiences with people from other cultures (question 2), and problems encountered in interacting with people from other cultures (question 3).

The answers to Question 1 give some indications about the home students' familiarity with other cultures. Among the topics mentioned by the students in the questionnaire, food ($n = 31$), table manners ($n = 20$), and festivals ($n = 19$) are the three most common topics. However, when asked to give examples of topics they were familiar with, most of the students chose not to answer the question or used very simple words in their answer. This scenario was also observed during the follow-up interviews, as HS2 said, "I think I know a lot, but on second thought, I know nothing, or in other words, what I know is all general." Moreover, the examples students provided were

mainly from the United States or the United Kingdom, such as “beef,” “hamburger,” and “French fries” for food culture; “fork and knife” for table manners culture; and “Christmas,” “Halloween,” and “Easter” for festival culture.

In terms of previous interaction experience with people from other cultures, nearly half (n=18) of home students reported to lack such an experience. Among the students (n=19) who claimed to have such experience, the people from other cultures most home students mentioned were their international teachers; thus, the frequency of communicating with cultural others is only once a week.

Question 3 is about the difficulties the home students encountered in the process of interacting with otherness. Language barriers or poor language abilities are the main problems that influenced students’ interactions. 28 home students mentioned that other than their limited vocabulary, people from other cultures’ fast speech and accent also affected their understanding. Moreover, half (n=19) of them mentioned that cultural differences influence actual communication, such as differences in thinking and communicating. In the following interview, HS5 described her experience: “In greeting, they (overseas friends) like giving me a hug and a kiss, but to tell you the truth, I cannot get used to that.” This student clearly noticed the cultural differences but did not know how to deal with them appropriately. Furthermore, about one fifth (n=8) of the students in their answer to this questionnaire expressed that they feel nervous when communicating with people from other cultures, which indicates a psychological barrier. After interviewing the students, I learned that lack of interaction experience is the main reason for their nervousness.

4.1.2 Previous Experiences in Intercultural Misunderstanding

Question 4 asks the home students to give examples of situations in which they experienced a misunderstanding when interacting with people from other cultures. However, nearly half of the home students did not answer this question. This lack of an answer is understandable when considering only 19 students have previous intercultural communication experiences. As for examples students provided, two categories, namely misunderstandings caused by linguistic proficiency and misunderstandings caused by lack of cultural knowledge, could be identified. Some examples from the first category are listed below:

An overseas student asked me the way to the lecture hall...I met her again in another part of the campus and realized...Because of my poor English, I could not express the route properly, so **I took her straight to the destination**. I felt very sad. (PQ, HS2)

My international teacher always speaks very fast. I cannot follow her, and I always miss some information. Every time I feel nervous about talking to her...I try to concentrate...but **because of my poor English, I still cannot follow her**. (PQ, HS15)

An international friend sent me a message with just the word “deal.” Based on my

understanding, I think this word is used in business, so I was puzzled. **I did not know how to reply to him**, so the communication stopped there. (PQ, HS7)

These three cases are misunderstandings caused by lack of linguistic proficiency, specifically, different pronunciation, fast speech speed, and limited vocabulary. When HS2's language abilities cannot serve her properly, she used body language to "take her directly to the destination." When HS15 could not follow her international teacher, her first reaction was to concentrate on the dialogue and practice her English. The third situation is the worst scenario, as the student chose to avoid the topic completely, which in turn influenced the entire conversation. The data suggest that, for most of the Chinese students, ICC means language abilities, and cultural misunderstandings originate from a lack of language proficiency.

The second category was about misunderstanding caused by lack of cultural knowledge, some examples are listed as follow:

I used a "dragon" as one of the decorations in my PPT, but my international teacher seemed not to like it. I was very sad. One of my Chinese teachers told me about the **different cultural meanings of "dragons,"** but I think, as an international teacher, she should know this. I did not want to use the PPT anymore. (PQ, HS5)

I like addressing my oral teacher as "Mr. Teacher" or "Teacher," but it seems that he has not gotten used to it. He asked me to call him "David" directly, but for me, **this addressing is really rude.** (PQ, HS22)

Last year, I went to the Czech Republic for an exchange program. I went to the supermarket to buy some sausages. I pointed to the sausages and gestured "six" (a Chinese gesture), but the salesperson gave me only two sausages. I was puzzled, as my Czech was poor at the time, I did not explain. Now, I think **I can write "6" on the paper to show the salesperson.** (PQ, HS26)

The above examples indicate that language proficiency is not equivalent to ICC, and students should adopt other strategies in the actual process of communication. In addition to lack of knowledge about other cultures, in cases of HS5 and HS22, the power gap between teachers and students in China influenced communication, that is, the students did not dare to question their teacher and tried to avoid communicating or to end the dialogue. In the last case, the student figured out a solution to the problem when she returned to China. Despite her late awareness, she realized the usefulness of nonverbal communication. From these cases, it can be concluded that the students may notice misunderstandings but do not know how to solve them properly. For the students, curiosity and openness, knowledge on social groups, and communication skills are all necessary to deal with such misunderstandings.

4.1.3 Previous Understanding of ICC

Question 5 is about the students' understanding of the concept of ICC. Language abilities, knowledge of other cultures, and communication skills are the most common answers. First, language proficiency is their primary concern when defining ICC, as 30 students believe that ICC is a way to "speak English fluently to communicate with people from other cultures" or "one way to make me better understand otherness." Second, 24 out of 37 students hold the view that ICC is one way to increase their knowledge about cultures of other countries, such as taboos, social rules, festivals, and so on. The third most frequently mentioned answer is communication skills (n=21). However, these students did not provide clear explanations for their answers, which indicates that communication skills remain a vague concept. Approximately one fifth (n=8) students mentioned that ICC means mutual respect, which implies their awareness of the importance of cultural differences. Several other interesting answers demonstrate the students' multiple perspectives, such as "to spread Chinese culture" (n=4) and "to pave the way for my future job" (n=2). The former answer demonstrates the students' strong patriotism, whereas the latter answer shows their motivation for self-realization.

4.1.4 Interim Summary

In summary, the analysis of the students' answers above shows that their ICC development is limited. First, most of the students believe that failed communication originates from limited language ability. In their minds, satisfactory English abilities mean successful communication, which in turn represents the prevalent EFL teaching philosophy in China, specifically, that language ability is equivalent to ICC (Sun, 2016; Yuan, 2021). Second, Chinese values, such as "harmony," play a key role in communication between Chinese students and international students. In most of the situations, when encountering a misunderstanding, some students would "choose to avoid the topic to end the communication smoothly" (I1, HS1). Third, from the analysis of students' previous experience in intercultural interactions, it could be stated that they were not well equipped with ICC or knowledge of ICC. The key elements of ICC, such as critical cultural awareness, skills to interpret and relate, skills to discover and/or to interact, valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors, are seldom mentioned by and not known to the Chinese students. As a result, this action research considered integrating a combination of intercultural components into teachings to develop students' ICC.

4.2 ICC Development over the Course

As described in Chapter Three, I carried out this action research over one semester. During this period, evidence of home students having met, or not met, the teaching objectives of the Intercultural Communication Course was collected through their reflective journals, post-course questionnaires, interview, and my observations. This evidence is presented with a focus on instances of home students' ICC development, or lack of it, and these instances are divided into six dimensions as specified in the theoretical framework for the study (see section 2.4.3), namely attitudes, knowledge, skills, critical cultural awareness, influence of values in contact, and lingua

“adaption” stage (willing to). These stages indicate gradual attitudinal change from the ethnocentric stage to the ethnorelative stage, which echoes Bennett’s (1986) development model of intercultural sensitivity too.

To go deeper, in order to provide a holistic view to describe and analyze these dynamic and interactive data, the subsections below begin with a discussion on the results of quantitative data, continue with illustration on the qualitative data and end with an analysis of the similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative data.

4.2.1.1 Quantitative Data

In the AIC-CCS questionnaires, questions 19-24 are used to measure students’ intercultural attitude level with the focus on their willingness. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive analysis of students’ attitude scores before and after the research.

Table 4.1 Descriptive analysis of Attitude development before and after the research

Attitude dimensions		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev
Willingness to interact (Aa)	Before	37	1	5	4.19	0.877
	After	36	2	5	4.36	0.833
willingness to discover cultural differences (Ab)	Before	37	3	5	3.62	0.681
	After	36	3	5	4.44	0.695
Willingness to know different cultural values (Ac)	Before	37	2	5	4.19	0.739
	After	36	3	5	4.53	0.654
Willingness to know different eating habits (Ad)	Before	37	2	5	4.19	0.739
	After	36	3	5	4.53	0.654
Willingness to know cultural taboos (Ae)	Before	37	2	5	4.19	0.739
	After	36	3	5	4.53	0.654
Willingness to learn English and other cultures (Af)	Before	37	3	5	4.32	0.669
	After	36	2	5	4.53	0.696
Sum	Before	37	2.714	4.714	4.116	0.458
	After	36	3.286	5.000	4.512	0.431

The above statistical analysis showed that the attitude of all participants before the study measured 4.116 as the means of all answers to the relevant question items. After they participated in this course, their attitude increased to 4.512. This result indicates that their attitude had significantly improved as shown by the T-test (Table 4.2). Moreover, the score of 4.512 demonstrates that students have a very high level of ICC-positive attitude. In addition, all attitude dimensions were considerably improved. Students’ responses to Attitude dimensions Aa to Af were almost at the same level. Although its growth had slight differences in terms of degree, it showed students’ openness toward cultural differences and their strong desire to learn English and other cultures. It could also be found that Ab (willingness to discover cultural differences) was improved most in

comparing their scores before and after the research (from 3.62 to 4.44).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there was a parallel class (PC) which was very similar to the multicultural class (MC) in which I conducted my action research. The AIC-CCS measurements were used both for the MC and PC as to measure students' intercultural attitude development. Table 4.2 demonstrates the comparative results of the MC and the PC students' attitude scores before and after the research.

Table 4.2 Comparative analysis of Attitude development of the MC and the PC

	Group name	Before	After	t	P
Attitude	PC	4.13±0.50	4.33±0.39	-2.061	0.039
	MC	4.12±0.46	4.52±0.43	-3.697	0.000
t		-0.121	-2.228		
P		0.904	0.026		

Table 4.2 shows that students from the MC and the PC had the similar level of attitude before the research. After the research, the mean value of the attitude scale is 4.52 for the MC, and 4.33 for the PC. This result showed a significant difference between the AIC-CCS results of the two classes after the tests ($p \leq 0.05$). Students from the MC achieved better improvement in attitude during the research, and the studying experience in a multicultural context appeared to be effective in enhancing students' intercultural attitude.

4.2.1.2 Qualitative Data

Quantitative data provide a brief, holistic view of home students' attitudinal development, whereas qualitative data provide an in-depth description of their perceptions and conceptions on such issues. This section begins by displaying instances from home students' reflective journals, continues with analyzing my observation and interviews data, thus providing an integrated understanding of home students' attitude development.

4.2.1.2.1 Reflective Journals

A total number of 142 pieces of attitude evidence are recognized from students' reflective journals. I sorted and analyzed these data according to content and chronology. In the content analysis, the data were sorted, coded, and categorized by common themes manifested in their journals. In the chronological analysis, the students' progressive change or development in learning were tracked.

4.2.1.2.1-1 Content Analysis

Content analysis, which is frequently used by sociologists, is a research method to analyze social life by analyzing words and images from documents, oral communication and other cultural products and media through coding its key themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable

effect (Crossman, 2020). By adopting this approach, I followed the process of categorizing, coding, and extracting the themes to analyze home students' reflective journals. Table 4.3 shows the frequency of each theme that students mentioned in their reflective journals.

Table 4.3 Number of instances of Attitude written in students' reflective journals

Sub-category	Number of instances	Percentage
Willingness to learn about other cultures and languages	45	31.7%
Willingness to interact in real life	38	26.8%
Willingness to discover cultural differences	34	23.9%
Willingness to know cultural differences	17	12%
Willingness to question one's own values	8	5.6%

The 142 attitude-related instances students wrote can be divided into five themes, namely, willingness to interact, willingness to discover, willingness to understand, willingness to question one's own values, and willingness to learn cultures and languages (Byram, 1997; Wu, 2013). Considering that willingness to learn language and willingness to learn other cultures are closely related, and students' reflections on these two dimensions are intertwined, the two themes are combined as one dimension. These instances indicate that most students have a very strong desire to learn about different cultures and languages, and this dimension ranks first among all the themes. The willingness to interact in real life and willingness to discover cultural differences are the second and third, respectively, most frequently mentioned themes in their reflective journals, with a cumulative percentage of approximately 50%. The thematic analysis shows that the motivation of students' curiosity and openness to cultural diversity had been successfully developed. Furthermore, many students showed their willingness to question their own cultural values and to understand cultural difference, which demonstrates the development of their attitude after participating in the multicultural class. Because of the word limitation of this thesis, the following sections will analyze the most frequently addressed three themes.

①Willingness to Learn Other Cultures and Languages

The most frequently occurring attitude-related theme is the willingness to learn other countries' cultures and languages, with an occurrence percentage of 31.7%. Table 4.4 displays specific examples that show home students' enthusiasm for learning about other cultures and improving their English communication skills. The examples are sub-categorized into two groups according to their criteria, namely, willingness to learn other cultures and willingness to learn foreign languages especially English.

Table 4.4 Representative instances of Attitude from students' reflective journals

Willingness to learn other cultures	<p>I am interested in learning more about Western culture from my overseas classmates. (TM1, G4-1)</p> <p>I am curious to know more about Spanish, because I want to make friends with OS1. (TM2, G2-1)</p>
Willingness to learn English	<p>I think I should practice speaking and writing in English more so that I can communicate better with my international classmates. (TM1, G1-3)</p> <p>After numerous conversations with overseas students, I realize that improving my English communication is necessary. (TM5, G1-2)</p>

The students' reflections in Table 4.4 show that "the willingness to learn" was mainly derived from their interaction with overseas students. Phrases such as "make friends with them" and "communicate better with them" signified their motivation to learn more about other cultures and English language. Many students realized the importance of language and culture in the process of real intercultural communication. Hence, they tried various ways to achieve a successful interaction. For instance, G3-2 wrote in her journal:

If you want to make friends with people from other countries, then you should **be interested in their culture**. If you do not know their culture, then you can **ask them questions** that are relevant and not offensive. (TM2, G3-2)

Like G3-2, many students mentioned that they asked questions directly to know more about others' culture. Another way frequently reported was searching on the Internet when they are interested in their overseas classmates' culture. These actions showed students' strong willingness to learn a new culture by finding their way to solve problems that they encountered in real interaction.

②Willingness to Interact in the Real Life

The second most frequently addressed attitude theme is the willingness to interact with overseas classmates, with an occurrence percentage of 26.8%. They are "willing to" interact with these overseas classmates and feel that such interactions are "enjoyable". Moreover, they hope for more chances to communicate not only "in class," but also "after class" and "in the future". Below are examples that show students' enthusiasm to seek the opportunity to communicate with their overseas classmates.

Having a face-to-face talk with my overseas classmates is **an enjoyable experience**. (TM1, G3-1)

I seize every opportunity and actively participate in all activities in and after class to communicate with my overseas classmates. (TM5, G7-2)

I consider the overseas student as one of my friends. **I want to be her friend** as well, and not only talk to each other only when finishing tasks. (TM6, G2-1)

It is clear that in the process of enjoying their interaction with overseas students, these home students gradually realized that their interaction is not simply for “finishing tasks”, but a true pursuit of friendship. Nearly half of them mentioned this motivation for communicating with overseas students. Like G2-3 mentioned in her journal:

I am growing interested in intercultural communication. Like our teacher said, I hope my overseas classmates will **be my friends for life.** (TM5, G2-3)

In addition, G2-5 stated in her journal:

It is amazing to have friend from afar, different cultures, different ideas, sometimes bounce. I am eager to communicate with overseas students and **become true friends.** (TM3 , G2-5)

In her opinion, having a good relationship with her international friends is an amazing experience. Thus, her willingness to be a friend with her international classmates becomes her motivation to communicate more with them.

Compared with the findings from home students’ first round interview, a distinguishing feature can be found for students’ motivation to interact with overseas students. Before they participated in this multicultural class, their willingness to interact with overseas students was because of the motivation “to practice English” (I1, HS1) or “to learn about the culture of other countries” (I1, HS4). While after participating to the multicultural context, the motivation turns out to be the enjoyable experience of the interaction itself and the motivation to make friends with overseas students. Hence, they are keen to seek every opportunity for intercultural communication.

③Willingness to Discover Cultural Differences

The third most identifiable theme is the willingness to discover cultural differences, which accounts for 23.9% of all instances in students’ reflective journals. Almost all home students expressed their eagerness to discover cultural differences. Specific examples are provided below:

Hearing many different things in the world is interesting. We exchanged a lot of things, and **I am eager to discover the uniqueness of different cultures.** (TM2, G3-1)

I am interested in intercultural communication. **I think the differences between different cultures are worth exploring.** (TM2, G7-1)

Given the students’ willingness to discover cultural differences, the Q&A session was the most well-received teaching session. This sentiment was reflected in the reflective journal entry of G5-2:

The most interesting part of the class is the Q&A session after watching the clip *Chinese hospitality*. The two international girls shared amazing and new ideas that surprised me... I realize that **our different backgrounds gave us different perspectives.** (TM2)

G2-3 expressed a similar opinion:

We actively explore different answers to the same question and look for cultural differences.

Realizing our difference is a very interesting process, we are so different! (TM2)

Students were intensely curious about cultural differences yet they demonstrated the Chinese value to “seek common points while retaining difference” (TM2, G4-1). Five students specifically mentioned “respect differences” in their journals. Take G5-5 as an example:

Every culture has its pros and cons. We should not neglect the cultural difference or force others to accept it. **Be open and respect each other**— that’s enough. (TM6)

In G6-4’s reflection, she wrote that no matter how different they are, their friendship was the most important aspect.

We all come from different countries, speak different languages, and lead different lifestyles. Many ideas are different from one other, but **with mutual understanding and respect, we can still be friends**. (TM3)

These reflections indicated that the learning experience in the multicultural class successfully aroused home students’ curiosity for cultural differences. Moreover, driven by the pursuit for friendship, home students become more open toward cultural difference, this is their attitude development as well.

4.2.1.2.1-2 Chronological Analysis

By chronological analysis, I mean the data was generally analyzed in order to track the progressive change or development of the home students in the process of their learning (Huang, 2017b). I have noticed that in this one semester’s learning, the home students adjusted and struggled as they strived to communicate effectively with their overseas classmates. Their growth and development throughout the process are evident in their self-reflection over the research period. Take G1-1’s journal for example. In the first week, she analyzed herself in this way:

I am a little bit shy when communicating with my overseas classmates. However, I appreciate this opportunity, so I will try my best. (TM1)

She tried to overcome her shyness in the next few weeks, and she wrote in the journal:

I used to think it is hard to communicate with foreigners, but after a few weeks, I had changed my mind. Well-preparing for the assignment... **I tried to express myself loudly**. Although I made grammatical mistakes, they did not influence our communication. I think that collaborating with international students is delightful, and I hope we can have many classes like this. (TM3)

In her last journal, she summarized her growth more generally like this:

Thinking twice before doing or saying something and respecting different perspectives are good practices I have learned from this course. I gradually adapted to this multicultural class; **I adjusted my learning style, social skills, and even my mindset according to different communication scenarios.** (TM6)

From G1-1's self-reflection, the most conspicuous theme that emerged was "change", as she was "a little bit shy" at the very beginning to "change her mind and try to express loudly" after several weeks' participation, and finally to "gradually adapted and adjusted herself to this multicultural class". It was clear that her attitude towards communicating with overseas classmates had been progressively developed, which may represent many of her Chinese cohorts in this multicultural class. G1-7 is another example of such growth, or partial transformations. She realized that:

My interest in other cultures has grown even more. I noticed that I asked more questions about Spanish and Indonesian cultures. I don't know much about these cultures, but want to learn more about them. (TM3)

By the end of the semester, she concluded,

"I feel more and more interested in communicating with international students, and **I know more** about their cultures". (TM6)

From the above cases, it is clear that students' attitude was developed progressively, that is from "shy" to "confident", and from "not know" to "know more". In this process, interaction plays a key role, which provides students with the opportunity to develop their interest in other cultures and their confidence in speaking in English. Hence, the multicultural context allows the development of students' attitude, especially on the willingness to interact and willingness to discover cultural difference.

4.2.1.2.2 Observation and Interviews

My teaching journals documented both my observations and reflection as field notes. Given that I want to focus on students' interaction in the multicultural class, my observation and field notes focused mainly on their group participation and my reflection afterward.

With regard to the interview, the data confirmed the change and growth in home students' attitude in the learning process. All six interviewees claimed that their attitude had been changed, their willingness to interact with overseas students had been strengthened, and their curiosity toward other cultures had increased. Expressions like "eager to know", "willing to interact with", and "more aware" occurred frequently in the interviews, which echo the findings from students' reflective journals as well as the high attitude scores of the AIC-CCS.

To further explore the findings, my observation and interviews were focused on two key questions: (1) what kind of change has happened? and (2) what factors lead to such change?

4.2.1.2.2-1 What has Changed?

① From Passive Listening to Active Participation

I organized six group discussions, and present four segments of my observation journal about these discussions for analysis. These sections are all about the changes in students' performance in group participation that impressed me the most.

My first journal entry on September 10, 2019 was about their first group discussion:

This was the first class for the home students and overseas students. Most of the **home students were very shy**. It was a little bit quiet especially at the very beginning of the discussion. The overseas students were the ones who broke the ice. Some home students seemed to want to make a statement. They **hesitated** for a while, but finally listen to the overseas students.

On September 24th, 2019, I wrote in my journal:

This was the second group discussion. Home students **were more active** than last time, and some of them even became to be the ice-breaker of their groups. After class, I asked them why they were more active. One of home students told me, "It is because we are familiar with each other now, and the overseas students in our group always encourage us to speak up." During the discussion, I also noticed that home students sometimes experienced difficulty in expressing themselves, but they tried to overcome it by using body language or by referring to their e-dictionary. I think these behaviors signal major progress from the first group discussion.

In my journal entry on November 26, 2019, I recorded my observation on the students' participation after I introduced the concept "stereotype":

The subject of this week touched them deeply, especially for a black Swedish student, who had a strong feeling toward it. Simply because of her skin colour, people assume that she came from Africa, which offended her. After her sharing, home students participated in the hot discussion. In the process of their discussion, I noticed that phrases such as "uh...en...nage (Chinese 那个)" were frequently spoken when home students were speaking. Each time, those words made overseas students laugh, it seemed that they were quite understandable about these words. **All home students tried to express themselves**. Unlike in previous instances when they faced difficulty, they chose to stop talking or simply cut the long story short.

I also noted down my observation toward the last week's group discussion:

This is the last group discussion of this semester. Home students and overseas students worked together well. Some home students even performed better than overseas students.

Specifically, they **played a leading role in the group discussion** and these students did not look shy to present themselves anymore.

My observation data reveals that students' willingness to interact with overseas students had been aroused in the process of group discussions. Chinese students used to be reluctant to speak. However, in this multicultural context, to make friends and participate better in the group work, they need to be confident and actively engage. Such a change in attitude was reflected in the interviews too. For example, HS1 tells her story:

I think the majority of my group members experienced the same thing as me. From the very beginning....shy...**we were very shy**. Nonetheless, to be honest, we want to say something. We worried a lot ... grammar, vocabulary... After several weeks of classes, I think my attitude has changed. **I dared to** communicate with them and tried not to be as shy as before. I do not mean my English is better, but through the learning experience with them (overseas classmates), I could finally overcome my timidity. It's worthwhile even with mistakes. It is absolutely okay to communicate in your own way with the help of gestures or even speak word by word as long as people can understand you...I am **gradually more confident** now than before. I am not afraid to talk with them in English. I believe I will progress even more if with enough effort and time. I think the most important aspect of communication is understanding or the transfer of right information, and not grammar. (I2)

Interestingly, five interviewees emphasized their transformation from being “shy” to “brave” and “lack of language confidence” to “confidence in language” in the interview. As the students progressed in this multicultural class, their worries about poor language ability were gradually eliminated. Thus, their attitude toward group discussion is developed from passive listeners to active participants.

② From Surprise to “Empathise”

Considering students' attitude development, a distinguishing change was from surprise to understanding of cultural differences they have experienced. I noted many in my journals and present one of them below which refers to their willingness to know cultural difference and their attitude towards different eating habits.

In class, Chinese students usually bring a cup of bubble tea with them, whereas overseas students bring a cup of coffee (often iced). Many Chinese students asked me: “Marcia, on such a cold day, is drinking cold good for their stomach?” Moreover, some overseas students are used to bringing potato chips to the classroom. Some Chinese students kindly reminded them that snacks were not allowed in class, but overseas students felt puzzled about the rule. To allow them to understand each other, I asked them to talk about the drinking habits and classroom rules in their countries. **Everyone was surprised at the cultural difference.**

.....

A few weeks later, overseas students were no longer bringing chips to class, whereas some Chinese students started bringing coffee with them in class.⁶

The above case represents most home students' attitude change toward cultural differences. They were surprised at noticing these differences at first. With intensive interaction with overseas students, they gradually developed their openness and understanding to these differences.

Furthermore, students' attitude toward cultural differences varies according to the different values of culture. Cultures such as food, festivals, and language are easy to be accepted and some of them may even be developed to be internalized as their own. As HS2 explained in the interview,

It is noticeable that **some of the western food have already been part of my eating habit**, because there are yummy and easy to be taken which is a good choice when I do not have enough time. (I2)

Compared with these surface cultures, students take a tolerant attitude toward unseen culture such as concept of time, touching, and personal space. For example, some Mexican students were usually late for class, and sometimes late for their after-class group work, many home students expressed that they could "tolerate for their late, but would not behave the same way, as being late for class has been viewed very rude in Chinese culture" (I3, HS6). However, "tolerance can hinder mutual understanding" (Bryam, 2021, p.45), there is still a gap between "tolerant to cultural difference" and "successful intercultural communication".

Moreover, some deep cultures such as religion, decision-making, privacy were not that appreciated and tolerated by home students. But after they participated in this research, their attitude was developed from "not interested" to "want to know" and even for some of these culture values they could empathise. Take HS3 as an example,

It is impossible for me to appreciate everything of their culture, for example, their religious belief. **It is far from my life...** But after study together with these overseas students, I get to know it plays a crucial role in their life, **I now understand that their behaviors and beliefs are influenced by their religion a lot.** (I3)

To conclude, some home students' attitude toward cultural difference were developed from mere tolerance, to compromise, and empathy. It is important to point out that this development was not a linear process; instead, it varied according to different cultural values, and there was value negotiation between individual home students' own culture and others' culture, which calls for more attention to be paid to the study of culture values.

⁶ The University does not seem to have specific rules governing drinks in the classroom.

4.2.1.2.2-2 Some Factors Leading to Changes

Answers for the second question also show that direct intercultural communication in the multicultural class caused the attitude change. In HS4's case, she was the one who described the details about how her attitude was changed in the learning experience.

When we discussed whether having a baby without marriage was legal. The overseas student in our group said it was allowed. She gave us reasons and told us that this choice was protected by laws. **I suddenly realized that we have different cultural backgrounds, thinking patterns, and cultural values.** Truthfully, I am aware of their culture from watching movies and reading books, but this discussion was a stark example of our cultural differences. Can you image? The overseas student is so surprised by Chinese student's attitude towards this case too. **I am eager to know more about cultural difference.** (I2)

In HS4's case, her attitude changed from "surprise" to "understanding" following the explanation from OS1. Having a baby without marriage is not that understandable in China, while in the Spanish student's view, it is allowed. Through such discussion, Chinese students first realized cultural difference, and gradually moved to the stage of "wanting to know more". Like HS4, the majority of home students' knowledge of other culture is derived from mass media or the Chinese National Curriculum English textbooks, and they seldom have direct interaction with otherness. Studying in the multicultural class provides them with two-way interaction, in which their ideas were bounced. And that kind of experience, to some extent, not only aroused their curiosity to discover more about cultural difference, but also helps them to be more open to cultural difference.

The second reason for their attitude change is their strong desire for making friends with overseas students. Almost every interviewee emphasized that the motivation to interact well with their overseas classmates encouraged them to know more about other cultures. As HS3 said,

In consideration of my international classmates, **I have to know their culture;** otherwise, I can't communicate well with them. (I2)

Befriending overseas students also developed their attitude to be more open. HS2 extended her understanding like this:

Mutual understanding is very important for true friendship. Surely, there is difference, even with people from the same cultural background, not to say people from different countries. But we can **seek common points while reserving difference,** right? (I3, HS2)

It is obvious that with the motivation to be friends with overseas students, these home students come to be more open toward cultural difference. In other words, studying together in the multicultural class developed their friendship and lead to their attitude development of openness.

4.2.1.3 Interim Summary

Concerning the attitude dimension of ICC, the data collected from multiple sources in this section demonstrate considerable similarities despite some difference. First, students showed a strong willingness to interact, to discover, and to learn English and other cultures. The questionnaire survey and reflective journal findings show that students have very high scores for these dimensions, despite slight differences in their frequency or rankings. The results were also confirmed by the observation and interview findings. On the one hand, I observed how these student's attitude changed from being shy to confident, and from being surprised to compromise and empathy. On the other hand, almost every interviewee corroborated their attitude growth in terms of their willingness to participate in real-life interactions and curiosity toward different cultures.

The only difference that lies here is that the statistical analysis showed that most home students had a strong willingness to know cultural taboos of other cultures, but no relevant example was identified in the qualitative data. The data show that Chinese students usually want to show goodwill toward others owing to cultural sensitivity. Such sensitivity could be found in HS3's statement in the interview: "As a Chinese saying goes 'it's delightful to have friends coming from afar (有朋自远方来, 不亦乐乎).' We feel so happy to meet them, and we would like to show our respect and try our best not to offend them. Hence, we had no time to identify taboos" (I3). Given the value many Chinese students hold to mutual respect and the limited time the students spent together, they hardly noticed cultural taboos of other countries. This reason can be used to explain the difference in the results.

In summary, home students' attitude has been developed, especially in the dimension of "willingness to discover cultural differences", "willingness to interact", and "willingness to learn English and other cultures". These attitudinal dimensions have different development patterns, which shows that attitude development was not a simple process. Considering that attitude is the precondition for ICC development (Byram, 1997), these transformations are important for the development of students' ICC. The next section will discuss students' ICC development in the knowledge dimensions.

4.2.2 Knowledge

According to Byram (1997, p.58), knowledge of ICC refers to "knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general process of societal and individual interaction". Based on this theory, Wu (2013, p.77) divided intercultural knowledge into three broad and related categories, namely "knowledge of self-culture, knowledge of others' culture and knowledge of intercultural interactions". This section investigates home students' knowledge development from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data from the above mentioned three categories.

4.2.2.1 Quantitative Data

In the AIC-CCS, questions 1-18 are used to measure the students' intercultural knowledge development. Among them, questions 1-8 are about knowledge of own culture, questions 9-16 are about knowledge of others' culture, and questions 17-18 are about knowledge of intercultural interactions. Table 4.5 gives the descriptive analysis of students' knowledge scores before and after the research.

Table 4.5 Descriptive analysis of Knowledge development before and after the research

Knowledge Dimensions		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Knowledge of self-culture	Before	37	1	5	3.32	0.53
	After	36	2	5	3.79	0.53
Knowledge of others' culture	Before	37	1	4	2.79	0.61
	After	36	2	5	3.31	0.70
Knowledge of Intercultural interactions	Before	37	1	4	2.36	0.69
	After	36	1	5	3.33	0.86
Sum	Before	37	1	4	2.98	0.48
	After	36	2	5	3.52	0.55

The above statistical analysis showed that all the knowledge dimensions have a low score before the research, and improved a lot after the research. Before the research, knowledge of intercultural interaction was the lowest; knowledge of others' culture was the second lowest; and knowledge of self-culture fared better than the other two dimensions. Understandably, knowledge of self-culture refers to their knowledge of Chinese culture, which students are more familiar with. Moreover, students' knowledge of intercultural interaction improved the most; their scores before and after the research was 2.36 and 3.33, respectively. This result predicts that the study experience in the multicultural context is helpful in the development of their knowledge.

To measure the statistical significance of the differences, the T-test and the Mann-Whitney U test were run and the results of comparing both the MC and the PC's knowledge scores before and after the research are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Comparative analysis of Knowledge development between the two classes

	Group	Pre-	After	t	P
Knowledge	PC	3.02±0.31	3.39±0.35	-7.249	0.000
	MC	2.98±0.48	3.52±0.55	-4.575	0.000
Z/t		-0.031	-1.245		
P		0.975	0.218		

Table 4.6 indicates that there is no significant difference between the AIC-CCS results of the two classes before and after the research, because the statistical significance for the scale was $p=0.218$

($P \leq 0.05$). The result is understandable, given that Chinese students were exposed to the same knowledge delivered by the same teacher. The score of the MC is slightly higher than that of the PC, which indicates that the multicultural context provides more chances for developing home students' intercultural knowledge.

4.2.2.2 Qualitative Data

In order to provide an in-depth description of home students' knowledge development, this section analyzes instances from students' reflective journals and interviews.

4.2.2.2.1 Reflective Journal

A total of 180 instances of knowledge are identified from home students' reflective journals. They are generally divided into three categories that are similar to the standard of quantitative data: knowledge of self-culture, knowledge of others' cultures, and knowledge of intercultural interactions. Table 4.7 displays the frequency of each category. It is evident that students' feedback related to the knowledge dimension are highly concentrated on "knowledge of others' culture", whereas "knowledge of self-culture" and "knowledge of intercultural interactions" each have an occurrence percentage 16.7%. This result shows that these home students were very curious about the cultural others and gained considerable knowledge of other cultures from their multicultural class learning.

Table 4.7 Number of instances of Knowledge in students' reflective journals

Sub-category	Number of instances	Percentage
Knowledge of self-culture	30	16.7%
Knowledge of others' culture	120	66.6%
Knowledge of intercultural interactions	30	16.7%

Moreover, Table 4.8 displays the number and occurrence frequency for each "knowledge of others' culture" category respectively.

Table 4.8 Details of Knowledge of others' cultures identifiable from students' reflective journals

Category	Number of instances	Percentage
Education	19	15.8%
Festival	16	13.3%
Behavior	14	11.7%
Religion	10	8.3%
Food	10	8.3%
History	9	7.5%
Love	9	7.5%
Custom	8	6.7%
Time concept	8	6.7%
Thinking mode	6	5%
Health	5	4.2%
Politic	4	3.3%
Cultural taboos	2	1.7%

The above table displays various facets of other culture that students have learned in this course. Among them, “education”, “festival” and “behavior” comprise the top three, with a frequency of 15.8%, 13.3%, and 11.7%, respectively. Students are interested most in these facets in their real life. The examples below are extracts from their reflective journals, with the key points highlighted.

4.2.2.2.1-1 Specific Instance of Differences in Education

It is noticeable that students learned both similarities and differences between the Chinese education system and education systems of the overseas students’ countries. In their journals, different grading methods, educational system, and different subjects are the most common topics that students shared.

I know about the **differences between Chinese education and Western education**. They also need to learn second foreign languages and other courses, but not as many as in China. (TM3, G3-3)

I found that every country has its own way for **admission into universities**. It is not the same like our College Entrance Exam, but their standard is not as easy as what I anticipated. (TM3, G2-5)

The student from Indonesia told me that they have **religious education** in their school, which is interesting. (TM5, G1-4)

When the two Swedish girls presented about Sweden’s culture and when they introduced their **grading system**, I found out that their ways are completely different from ours. (TM3, G2-4)

From the last two quotes, we could see that the knowledge concerning religious education in Indonesia and the grading system was gained only from the multicultural class. This is a clear advantage of being in contact with cultural others.

4.2.2.2.1-2 Specific instance of difference in festivals

It is also noticeable that students gained more knowledge on festivals through their learning in this multicultural class. In their journals, most of them talked about different ways of celebrating and the origins of festivals in different countries. Some of these instances are listed below:

In my mind, all foreigners celebrate Christmas. Today, I am a little bit surprised that even in Spain, **not everyone celebrates Christmas**. Christmas is a festival for Christian. (TM2, G4-3)

During the class, I learned about **Lesser Bairam** in Indonesia, which is an important festival. I find this event is very similar to the Tomb-Sweeping Day and Spring Festival in China. (TM2, G3-5)

The Swedish students in our group said there is **no Labor Day in their country**. (TM2, G3-6)

From the quotes listed above, we could see students' knowledge on festivals was enlarged in this multicultural class. On the one hand, they get to know more about different festivals in different countries, such as "Lessar Bairam" in Indonesia. On the other hand, they realized that there is misunderstanding in their existing knowledge about festivals. For instance, almost half of participants mentioned their surprise after they found out that "not every Westerner celebrates Christmas". This inaccuracy shows a limitation of Chinese textbooks, which are mostly sourced from the UK and the US. As a result, more efforts should be paid to the selection of proper content of textbook.

4.2.2.2.1-3 Specific Instance of Differences in Behavior

The third most frequently mentioned knowledge of other cultures is knowledge about otherness' behavior, and the majority of instances were focused on greetings.

Take greetings as an example, home students have different understanding. For instance, G5-3 realized that "overseas students are used to touching, such as hugs", Chinese do not behave the same way. Some of them found "greeting each other with a kiss on the cheek is interesting and would like to try it" (G2-4). Moreover, some students realized that the same gesture may reveal different cultural meanings, such as G3-1 indicated that "I understand that many overseas friends like to hug each other when they meet and leave. It is not a way to express their appreciation or love to others, but simply a part of their culture". This realization is another advantage of being in contact with cultural others.

Aside from the three themes mentioned above, other aspects of culture have been mentioned by the students, such as religion, food, and history. Hence, they broadened their views through discussions and interactions in this multicultural class. They also changed their first impression about other cultures and recognized that what they had known may or may not be true for the other counties, such as the erroneous understanding that "every Westerner celebrates Christmas". Categories such as politics and cultural taboos are less frequently mentioned in their reflective journals. "Knowledge about politics" has only four related pieces of evidence, and "knowledge about cultural taboos" has only two instances identified.

A simple reason is explained by G 4-1 in her journal:

I know the culture that I am interested in, such as the history and some representative holidays in Western countries. However, I do not want to know about their religious beliefs or political ideas, **because I am not interested in those**. (TM3)

From her reflection, lack of interest serves as the reason why she didnot want to know about politics and cultural taboos of other country. In fact, there should be more reasons than lack of

interest, but in this study this reason is the most frequent one occurring in students' feedback. Interest is the best teacher and the premise of independent learning. It also can be used to explain the popularity of other topics, like education, festivals, and behavior, because students have a high affinity with these topics.

4.2.2.2.2 Interview

Some interview questions aimed at examining students' knowledge development. These were framed with two general questions as the guideline for the discussion:

(1) Do you think you have gained new cultural knowledge? If yes, give some examples.

(2) How did you get to know this new cultural knowledge?

The first question was targeted at the self-reflection on their knowledge acquisition and the second focused on their manner of gaining knowledge.

In answering the first question, the six interviewees commented that they had gained substantial knowledge in this multicultural class by sharing several examples. Among these examples, "knowledge of others' culture" was the most frequently mentioned topic, "knowledge of intercultural interactions" was the second, which echoes the findings from the students' reflective journals. "Knowledge of self-culture" was the least mentioned. It is very interesting that most of the home students think that they know their own culture well but fail to tell others about their own culture in English. In their mind, knowledge of self-culture equals to expressing knowledge of self-culture in English in the intercultural communication context. This is the reason for the less frequency of knowledge of self-culture to be mentioned. Even when questions of "knowledge of self-culture" were mentioned, students' responses were always to express their regret for being weak at introducing Chinese culture in English. As HS2 said:

Several times, I want to introduce my own culture, but **I don't know how to express it properly**. So I think I should have **more practice on improving my language ability** to tell about Chinese story. (I3)

Students' answers to the second question can be divided into two groups, that one is from lectures and the other is from their overseas classmates. Concerning the lecture, all the students shared their experience of class learning, as HS5 said:

Last week, you gave us a very good lesson. Central and Eastern Europeans don't like being compared with Russian because of their history. **Without this lesson, I may make this mistake**. (I2)

HS4 also shared:

I am deeply **impressed by** the case on the stereotype that you shared **in the class**. Truthfully, I behave like the man in the video, and now I am realizing that stereotype influences our

daily communication a lot. (I2)

Regarding learning from their overseas classmates, interviewees emphasize two ways: from group discussion and from after-class activities. HS1 and HS2 acknowledged that group discussion provided them with enough opportunities to know more about other cultures, and they thought that having such groups was meaningful. HS1 shared the following:

By discussing with our group, I learned about their way of naming someone. For example, the Spanish girl in our group has such a long name. After her explanation, I got the right order and meaning of each of her name. (I2)

Student HS2 also shared her experience in the class discussion, which helped her understand the concept of stereotype:

In group discussion, the Swedish girl told us that her experience as a black girl in Sweden is the same as the girl in the clip you shared with us. **Her sentiments saddened me, I feel really sorry for what I have done. I never considered that I have “colored glasses”, but in fact, I do.** (I2)

The interviewees also mentioned that daily routine with their overseas classmates is another way for them to broaden their knowledge. HS6 specifically recollected her experience and feelings in this aspect:

What shocked me the most this week is about our **first date**. We ask OS1 what is the most suitable time for her to have a group discussion after class, and she suggested that it could be after dinner. We agreed. That day, we all waited for her, but until 8:00 pm, she hadn't called us. We asked her via WeChat, and she told us that she had just started her dinner. To be honest, I feel a little bit angry. OS1 told us that Spanish is used to having late dinner, and there are five meals in a day! She was also surprised about the time we Chinese have dinner. **This experience remind me the polychronic and monochronic views of time culture you mentioned in class.** (I2)

In HS6's case, the different meal time caused misunderstanding between Chinese and Spanish students. For Chinese students, dinner usually would be finished around 6:00 pm, whereas for the Spanish student it would be finished around 8:00 pm. Because of insufficient knowledge of both home and overseas students, the first date they arranged did not go smoothly. The Spanish girl's apparent improper behavior could be explained by her lack of information about Chinese students' time schedule as this was the first time for her in China, which also reveals that insufficient work has been done by the international office in charge of international students management. Hence more efforts should be made within the institution to solve this kind of misunderstanding.

Interestingly, in the interview, almost every interviewee shared his/her “real experience” of encountering cultural differences with their overseas classmates, and that kind of real experience

helped them to gain new knowledge about other countries. Sharing their experiences indicated that their understanding of “knowledge of other cultures” was profoundly improved. Although they mentioned how surprised and sad they felt sometimes, they all benefited from this activity affectively.

4.2.2.3 Interim Summary

With regard to the knowledge dimension of ICC, the data collected from the multiple sources in this section demonstrate a lot of convergence, although some differences exist. The first divergence occurred on knowledge of self-culture in its order and its score in the result analysis for the questionnaire. According to the data from Table 4.6, students’ knowledge of self-culture was the least developed. However, its score ranks first in the knowledge dimension, which shows that students have a better understanding of their own culture than other cultures. This result is understandable. As HS5 said in her interview,

Our own culture is rooted in our blood..., whereas **other culture is difficult to internalize by simply reading from text books and relying on insufficient real-life practice.** (I3)

Her explanation shows that real knowledge comes from practice. Moreover, home students’ high score of knowledge of self-culture can be attributed to school education in China since they have been studying and experiencing their own culture and customs from kindergarten to university. While considering the development of this dimension, it is worthwhile to mention that the multicultural context is a new intercultural encounter for home students. Due to their natural curiosity, their increase in awareness of otherness is more obvious. Another factor to consider is that most of home students in this multicultural class focused more on their own competence in “telling Chinese stories” to overseas students. When they failed to “tell Chinese stories well”, they viewed it as their poor knowledge of self-culture. Thus, it could be claimed that their claim for lack of self-cultural knowledge was not due to knowledge itself, but to lack of oral competence in articulating it.

Second, students’ knowledge of intercultural interactions developed the most according to the findings from questionnaire, although the instances in the qualitative data that support this development are not as convincing as the quantitative data. This result could be explained by HS3’s comments in her interview,

I think my knowledge of intercultural interactions was greatly improved. However, when you ask me to give examples, some theories would occur in my mind, but they are **not as vivid and impressive as the cultural facts about other counties.** (I3)

Her answer indicated rather superficial knowledge of interaction, as she seemed to rely on hard facts for intercultural interactions. Though knowledge for interactions was shown to have developed most according to the questionnaire scores, the qualitative data appeared to provide

insufficient evidence.

The most distinguishing feature is the abundance of instances recognized from the qualitative data on the knowledge of other cultures, which indicate the absence of accurate knowledge of other cultures in their previous academic education. HS4 commented on her learning experience of knowledge:

Although I usually read a lot of books and can understand some cultural phenomena, I can't apply them in real life, so **my understanding is very superficial**. Moreover, the other cultures **I've learned before were all about the UK or the USA**. When I was exposed to this multicultural class...you know... so many **new knowledge surprised me**. (I3)

HS4's answer indicated two reasons for students' knowledge limitation. First, the lack of real practice explains the birth of superficial knowledge, which demonstrates that a multicultural context contributes to the development of students' intercultural knowledge. Secondly, the limitation in Chinese education that is only focusing on British and American culture is insufficient for this globalized world.

In summary, home students' knowledge has been developed, especially in the dimension of "knowledge of other's culture" and "knowledge of intercultural interactions". These gains are important for the development of home students' ICC. The next section will discuss students' ICC development in skills dimensions.

4.2.3 Skills

According to Byram (1997, p.33), the nature of intercultural communication is "a demonstration of the skills that a person brings to an interaction". Based on Byram's theories, Wu (2013) divided intercultural skills into two broad and related categories, namely skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. The first category includes six items and the second includes three items in his instrument for assessing students' ICC. This section will discuss the quantitative data and qualitative data from the above mentioned 9 items.

4.2.3.1 Quantitative Data

In the AIC-CCS, questions 26-34 are used to measure the students' skill level. Table 4.9 gives a descriptive analysis of students' skill scores before and after the research. The statistical analysis indicates that home students' intercultural skill had clearly improved (from 3.38 to 3.91). Moreover, a score of 3.91 demonstrates that students' skill levels are high. It is noticeable that students' ability to acquire new cultural knowledge substantially improved in comparing their scores before and after the research. This result echoes the finding that they have a strong willingness to learn other culture in their attitude development.

Table 4.9 Descriptive analysis of Skills development before and after the research

Skill Dimensions			N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Skills of interpreting and relating	Identifying areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in interaction and explaining them in terms of cultural systems present (Sa)	Before	37	1	5	3.38	0.98
		After	36	3	5	4.03	0.70
	Communicating with otherness using body language or other nonverbal cues when language barriers arise (Sb)	Before	37	1	5	3.54	0.93
		After	36	3	5	4.08	0.73
	Communicating with people from different cultures by speaking in English (Sc)	Before	37	2	5	2.95	1.00
		After	36	2	5	3.69	0.79
	Avoiding prejudice (Sd)	Before	37	2	5	4.08	0.76
		After	36	3	5	4.36	0.68
	Avoiding violating otherness' privacy (Se)	Before	37	2	5	4.14	0.75
		After	36	3	5	4.36	0.64
	Overcoming conflicting perspectives (Sf)	Before	37	2	5	3.22	0.85
		After	36	2	5	3.69	0.89
Skills of discovery and interaction	Improving communication in English by using diverse kinds of routes and procedures (Sg)	Before	37	1	5	3.19	0.88
		After	36	2	5	3.61	0.80
	Acquiring new knowledge about cultures and cultural practices from diverse sources and strategies (Sh)	Before	37	2	4	2.68	0.71
		After	36	2	5	3.61	0.80
	Applying knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (Si)	Before	37	2	4	3.24	0.68
		After	36	2	5	3.75	0.65
Sum		Before	37	2.56	4.56	3.38	0.48
		After	36	2.89	5.00	3.91	0.48

To measure whether the differences have statistical significance, the T-test and the Mann-Whitney U test were conducted and Table 4.10 shows the comparative results of the MC and the PC students' skills scores before and after the research.

Table 4.10 Comparative analysis of Skills development of the two classes

	Group	Before	After	t	P
Skills	PC	3.35±0.48	3.67±0.29	-3.543	0.000
	MC	3.38±0.48	3.91±0.48	-5.713	0.000
Z/t		-0.253	-2.076		
P		0.801	0.038		

Table 4.10 showed a significant difference between the AIC-CCS results of the two classes before and after the research. The statistical significance for the scale was $p=0.038$ at a significant level

of $P \leq 0.05$. Therefore, students from the MC achieved better improvement of skills during the research, and studying in a multicultural context can be considered effective in enhancing home students' skills.

4.2.3.2 Qualitative Data

This section begins by displaying instances from home students' reflective journals, continues with analyzing interviews, thus providing an integrated understanding of home students' skill development.

4.2.3.2.1 Reflective Journal

A total of 206 instances of skills-related quotes were identified from students' reflective journals, and they are divided into nine categories according to the nature of skills. Table 4.11 displays the frequency of each category.

Table 4.11 Number of instances of Skills in students' reflective journals

Sub-category	Number of instances	Percentage
Identifying areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in interaction and explaining them in terms of cultural systems present (Sa)	40	19.4%
Communicating with otherness using body language or other nonverbal cues when language barriers arise (Sb)	35	17%
Communicating with people from different cultures by speaking in English (Sc)	27	13.1%
Avoiding prejudice (Sd)	2	0.9%
Avoiding violating otherness' privacy (Se)	2	0.9%
Overcoming conflicting perspectives (Sf)	12	5.8%
Improving communication in English by using diverse kinds of routes and procedures (Sg)	10	4.9%
Acquiring new knowledge about cultures and cultural practices from diverse sources and strategies (Sh)	46	22.3%
Applying knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (Si)	32	15.5%
TN	206	

It is evident that the Sh dimension has the highest number of instances, which was 46 (22.3%); whereas Sd and Se were the least frequent dimensions with only 2 instances identified. The result

for Sd and Se could be understood as they were seen to refer to real-life intercultural communication that the limited time span of this research lead to these insufficient experiences of confronting cultural conflicts. Furthermore, most home students have taken a very cautious approach to prejudice and privacy, since they pursue harmony as their communication rule, which will be explained further in section 4.2.5. Many instances have been identified for Sa, Sb, Sc, and Si, which show students' skills development. Sf and Sg have a similar number of instances: 12 (5.8%) and 10 (4.9%) respectively. The three most frequently addressed skill dimensions are Sh, Sa, and Sb, with Sh having the highest frequency.

Due to the word limitation of this thesis, in the next few pages, we can take a close look at the three most-frequently mentioned skills in terms of their acquisition process, which would arguably help identify the possible causes for home students' ICC skill development.

4.2.3.2.1-1 Acquiring New Knowledge about Cultures and Cultural Practices

As the most frequently mentioned skill dimensions, Sh has an occurrence percentage of 22.3%, which accounts for one-fifth of all the examples. According to Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) knowledge acquisition is one of the skills of ICC development. Byram (1997, 2021) holds the same view and he emphasizes in his statement on the objective of skills of discovery and interaction, that an intercultural speaker can use sources (e.g., books, newspapers, historical accounts, expert opinions, lay informants) to understand and analyze the contemporary and past relationship between one's own culture and society and that of others. Sufficient instances identified from students' journals demonstrated their ability to acquire new knowledge about a culture through different sources and strategies. These sources and strategies are categorized into five sub-categories namely, searching from the Internet, asking overseas friends, asking teachers, watching a TV program, or reading books, and studying or traveling abroad.

Table 4.12 shows home students' strategies to acquire new knowledge in real life. The instances demonstrated that students use different sources to help themselves understand and analyze cultures that interested them. Among all the sources, it is evident that the Internet plays a dominant role, which proves the popularity of the "internet+education"⁷ approach among the young generation and pushes us, as teachers, to rethink our way of education. Hence, traditional methods for acquiring knowledge, such as asking teachers and reading books, faced challenges. Two students refer to studying and traveling abroad as their intended method of acquiring knowledge, which shows the multicultural context fostered their interest in intensive intercultural communication.

⁷ The State Council of China issued the Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Actively Promoting the "Internet+" Action in 2015, which calls for deeply integrating the innovative achievements of the Internet into economic and social domains, especially for education (SCC, 2015).

Table 4. 12 Students' strategies in acquiring new knowledge

Strategies	Frequency	Instances
Searching on the Internet N=24	52.2%	OS4 once told me that clothes in Sweden do not have many colors, and I wondered why. It was interesting and I wanted to know more, so I searched on the Internet . Maybe, using color is taboo. (TM2, G1-1) Before I interacted with foreigners, I will look for cultural practices of that country from the Internet. I think the internet is a very good helper . (TM6, G3-4)
Asking overseas friends N=12	26.1%	According to OS10's description , I gained more knowledge about the religious culture of Indonesia. After class, I asked him for relevant information. I learned that most Indonesians believe in Islam, and others believe in Catholicism, Christianity, and Buddhism. (TM3 ,G3-6) OS1 is our "encyclopedia" . Each time I have questions about Spanish culture, I will ask her. (TM5, G2-1)
Asking teachers N=6	13%	I want to learn more, and when I don't know something, I will ask my teachers . (TM6 ,G3-7) Marcia is always ready to help . Each time we have a conflict or misunderstanding, I'd like to ask her. (TM4, G6-1)
Watching TV shows, movies and reading books N=2	4.35%	I have seen many films and TV series about other countries, and I learned a lot about other cultures through them. It is a very good way for me to know about foreign culture. (TM 1, G5-2) The books I have read provided me with a good understanding of their culture. (TM2, G5-3)
Studying or traveling abroad N=2	4.35%	After studying in this class, I want to study abroad to expose myself to an international environment and to learn and feel diverse cultures. (TM6, G2-5) If I have enough money, I want to travel to Spain , so that I will have a chance to experience what OS1 described about her country. (TM5, G4-4)

4.2.3.2.1-2 Identifying Areas of Misunderstanding and Dysfunction

The second most frequently addressed skill is the ability to identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction, with an occurrence percentage of 19.4%. According to Byram (1997, p.61), it refers to identification of "causes of misunderstanding and dysfunctions; and can explain the errors and their causes by reference to knowledge of each culture involved". This definition indicates two steps to achieve the ICC objectives. That is, identifying the causes of misunderstanding and dysfunctions can be regarded as the preliminary step, which requires students to have a good knowledge of ICC. Explaining the errors and causes is the advanced step, which helps students achieve successful intercultural interaction. Altogether, 40 instances were identified from students' journals. Some typical examples are provided below:

We Chinese students like to greet each other by using "have you eaten?" My overseas

classmate told me that it made him feel that we want to invite him to have dinner. I did not expect that such a greeting would cause misunderstanding. **I explained it by telling something about Chinese history.** Finally, he understood, and now, I am more cautious in using this question as a greeting. (TM2, G3-4)

We were confused when we saw the clip, in which the boy says: “I like them, but I only love you.” OS7 explained to us that “like” is different from “love”. However, in Chinese culture, most of us consider “like” as equal to “love”, as the literally translation for “like” in Chinese is “Xihuan” which also means love, especially for a young boy who would like to express his affection to a girl. We realized that **one word may have different meanings in different countries.** (TM4, G1-5)

I have realized that both of us have a stereotype of each other. For example, she thinks we Chinese speak loudly; whereas in our mind, foreigners have a strong smell because they like to use perfume. After Marcia’s explanation today, both of us realized we lack mutual-understanding. **We tried to explain the cultural reasons behind our behaviors. We should not have this thought of before.** (TM3, G3-5)

The above cases demonstrate home students’ ability in identifying reasons of misunderstanding and dysfunction in real interactions. The examples also show their ability to determine suitable strategies for solving conflicts to reach mutual understanding. When facing misunderstandings, home students did not make compromises, but strived for mutual satisfaction of the interlocutors. This approach shows the development of their skills in identifying misunderstanding and dysfunction.

4.2.3.2.1-3 Using nonverbal communication

The third most frequently addressed developed skill in ICC is the ability to use nonverbal communication to achieve a successful communication. According to Byram (1997, p.62), an intercultural speaker can use their knowledge of conventions of verbal and non-verbal interaction to establish agreed procedures on specific occasions. Students are aware that language facilitates intercultural communication, and the function of nonverbal language has been developed in their real-life interactions. Several instances were recognized from their real interaction. For example:

My international classmates asked me the way to another campus of our university, he failed to catch my words, I feel very sorry about my poor expression. But **I draw a map picture** for him, and the problem was solved. (TM2, G4-3)

In the group discussion, OS6 doesn’t know the meaning of “Renzhong (philtrum, a Chinese medical term)”. Even we don’t know how to express it in English, but **we used body language to explain it.** (TM5, G1-3)

It is evident that both G4-3 and G1-3 realized the importance of nonverbal communicative

competence in real intercultural communication. By using nonverbal language, the students eliminated language barriers and carried out their interaction without disrupting interaction, thus achieving mutual satisfaction. In summary, real practice aroused students' awareness of the importance of nonverbal language and developed their ability to use nonverbal language in real-life interaction.

4.2.3.2.2 Interview

According to Byram (1997, p.98-99), most ICC skills should be developed in "real-time communication and interaction", which is also emphasized by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) that interaction plays a key role in ICC development. The multicultural class in this study provided home students with opportunities for interaction and helped develop their ability to "interpret and relate" and the ability to "discover and interact". Simply discussing students' skill development on the basis of the data presented in the reflective journal is not enough, because genuine evidence for skills development could only be obtained in the context of real-time interaction. Hence, I placed more value on the instances from interviews, as they resulted from real-time interaction and students gave more detailed explanation on their real actions. When analyzing interview data, it shows that home students have developed their own communication strategies in intercultural communication via their real-time interaction. This following section will focus on explaining their developed communicative strategies which proved their developed intercultural skills.

4.2.3.2.2-1 Taking a Neutral Stance

The first strategy reflected from the interviews is the home students' tendency of "taking a neutral stance" when facing conflict. This strategy, to a great extent, showed the influence of the Chinese philosophy of harmony. Home students do not want to offend others and always want to maintain a good relationship with others. The following example from HS3 is one of the related statements:

I am from Quzhou (a city in China), you know, which is famous for "three heads" (dishes made of rabbit head, duck head, and fish head). My overseas classmate criticizes me for this dish. Though I tried to tell them how delicious the dish is, they still can't accept it. I don't want to offend them, and I don't want to ruin our good relationship...so I don't eat these things when I am with them... In summary, I think I can overcome our cultural differences, because **I can use a more neutral perspective to observe others' cultures.** (I3)

This student has clearly made progress after studying in this multicultural context. On the one hand, she acknowledged the cultural difference between her overseas classmate and herself as she told the classmate "How delicious the food is". On the other hand, to mediate the conflict, she chooses to stand in a neutral way that she decided to avoid "eating these when I am with them". Several students mentioned neutral attitude when reconciling differences. However, a neutral position may not be an effective approach to solve conflicts, and the gap between "neutral" to

“successful interaction” remains. From this point, the following strategy developed by the students perhaps showed a more positive way forward.

4.2.3.2.2-2 Mutual Respect Comes First

Mutual respect is the most frequently mentioned strategy used by students. The six interviewees addressed this strategy as their way for mediation. HS6 shared:

I know that cultural differences exist between us, but **with mutual respect, all conflicts can be solved**. For example, we Chinese like to use chopsticks, whereas they use forks and knives. When we have lunch together, I suggest to them to try using chopsticks. If they like it and accept it, then that’s good, but if they do not like it, I simply let it go. **Never force them to follow your way. Sometimes, what we think is good may not be good from their perspective.** (I3)

HS2 also expressed that “no one is wrong in intercultural communication”:

An objective attitude is necessary when encountering cultural shock or misunderstanding. Respect the differences, and always remember that **no one is wrong**. For example, last week, we discussed about abortion. Both of us had completely different opinions. We were surprised when OS1 indicated that it was illegal in her country, and she felt surprised too for our attitude. We shared each other our respective history and cultural background. Finally, we understood. It doesn’t mean that she should agree with us, nor should we agree with her. Instead, we choose to respect others’ choices and keep a harmonious relationship. I think **successful intercultural communication is when all speakers feel comfortable.** (I3)

Students like HS6 and HS2 had shared their own experiences with overseas students in real interaction, which demonstrated the development of their communication skills in mediating conflicts by upholding mutual respect. Their statement shows their ability to identify possible causes of misunderstanding and attempt to find a strategy to achieve mutual understanding and satisfaction. In HS6’s statement, when encountering cultural differences, she did not compromise, but tried to solve this problem by deciding to “persuade others to try”. More importantly, her acceptance of different preferences shows she learned to put herself in others’ shoes.

Similarly, on the one hand, HS2 tried to share insight from Chinese history to make overseas students understand the Chinese perspective on the issue of abortion. On the other hand, she uses her knowledge, skills, and attitude for mediation of differing values. Both approaches emphasize the importance of mutual respect, which made their communication seamless.

For home students, mutual respect does not necessarily require compromise or changing their own beliefs, but an understanding of and appreciation for differences. I appreciate what HS2 said “successful intercultural communication is when all speakers feel comfortable.”

4.2.3.2.2-3 Do as Romans Do

Home students developed communicative strategies including their ability to follow the saying “when in Rome, do as Romans do”. This adage echoed by the Chinese saying, “Ru Xiang Sui Su (入乡随俗),” which means a guest should do as the host does. This communicative strategy captures the cross-cultural empathy described by Pusch (2009, p.70) that “an intercultural speaker should be able to participate in another person’s experience vicariously; to think by using the same level of intellectual communicative strategies, and to feel the same emotions”. The interviews of students reveal sufficient evidence:

When in Rome, do as the Romans do. For example, I **adopt their way of thinking and speak directly** when communicating with them. I also take the initiative to **adapt to their concept of time** when coordinating schedules. (I3, HS5)

More questions, less judgment — this is what I learned from this course. When seeking to understand people from different countries, we should **try to set aside our own worldview and try to put myself in their cultural context**. (I3, HS3)

These cases showed students’ awareness of cultural differences. Their strategy in negotiating conflicts is first to put themselves in others’ shoes. Then they tried to listen actively and mindfully. Most importantly, they learned to view situations from more than one perspective. Thus, their intercultural communicative skills were developed.

4.2.3.2.2-4 Learning by Doing

In the interviews, “learning by doing” comes to be another strategy students mentioned for developing their intercultural skills, because practice makes perfect. As HS3 said:

I love this course. All what we have learned before is empty talk. We did not have the chance to practice. But for this course, we had **a lot of real interaction, which allowed me to practice my knowledge on my own**. For example, you introduced the concept of “otherness” today, but without the “Bafa Bafa” game, I think it remains a concept for me, not acquired knowledge. It’s the same in our daily practice with our overseas classmates, many of the concepts have turned out to be “my knowledge”. (I3)

A “Bafa Bafa” game is a simulation game for cross-cultural training (Shirts, 1976). This game is used to raise the awareness of “otherness” and develop the understanding of differences in interacting interculturally. According to HS3, it is clear that students like her had realized the importance and the necessity of practice in real interaction. With such motivation, I believe they will try to seize every chance to practice their ICC skills.

4.2.3.3 Interim Summary

The data obtained from the questionnaire, reflective journals, and interviews with the home

students under study showed great development of students' intercultural skills. Among all the sub-dimensions of intercultural skills, the skills of acquiring new knowledge, skills of identifying misunderstandings, and skills of using nonverbal language are the most developed. Skills of using English and improving English achieved the lowest score, and fewer instances had been recognized from the qualitative data. It seems that this intervention failed to enhance students' English as an intercultural communicative skill. The cause of this insufficiency will be discussed in section 4.2.6.

Findings of this section also reveal that different students' intercultural skills development are different. Some of them are still on the initial stage of successful mediating as they choose the strategy to "take a neutral stance" when dealing with cultural misunderstanding. Some of them are more advanced as they developed their strategy to "put themselves in other's shoes" or "put mutual respect as the first rule". Awareness of these characteristics indicated a need to redesign the teaching content together with the learning activities.

Furthermore, students' responses reveal that intercultural skills can be developed through authentic interactions, which echoes Su's (2011) findings that the best way to enhance students' intercultural skills is to engage in real-time interactions. Like the instances shared in the data collected from the interview, home students' intercultural skills were developed progressively, that is, from knowledge acquirement to knowledge practice and from knowledge (re)construction to knowledge application. Finally, this knowledge becomes their own. To a great extent, the improvement in intercultural competence depends on students' subjective knowledge and personal experience in real-time interactions. Thus, more opportunities for real-time interaction should be provided for students. And a multicultural class benefited the students with exactly these precious opportunities.

4.2.4 Critical Cultural Awareness

Critical cultural awareness, seen as the most important and the key dimension of ICC development (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2006; Deardorff, 2009), is defined more specifically as "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p.63). According to Byram (2012, p.9), critical cultural awareness emphasizes comparisons and evaluation and "embodies the education dimension of language teaching" when compared with the other components of ICC. In other words, it is critical cultural awareness that makes a difference in language teaching. Guided by this concept, this research focuses on critical cultural awareness development in the teaching process. This section investigates home students' critical cultural awareness development from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

4.2.4.1 Quantitative Data

In the AIC-CCS, questions 35-40 are used to measure students' critical cultural awareness level.

The following Table 4.13 gives a descriptive analysis of students' scores before and after the research.

Table 4.13 Descriptive Statistics of the development of students Critical Cultural Awareness

Critical Culture Awareness Dimensions		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Realizing that generalizations are only accurate for groups and may or may not be true of individuals (Ca)	Before	37	1	5	3.19	0.88
	After	36	2	5	3.72	0.78
Realizing that cultural differences and similarities may arise when communicating with otherness. (Cb)	Before	37	2	5	4.05	0.81
	After	36	2	5	4.19	0.79
Realizing differences in cultural identity when communicating with otherness (Cc)	Before	37	2	5	4.03	0.73
	After	36	3	5	4.14	0.68
Realizing that cultural differences influence our life and work (Cd)	Before	37	2	5	3.92	0.76
	After	36	4	5	4.50	0.51
Realizing that language differences influence our life and work (Ce)	Before	37	2	5	4.14	0.79
	After	36	3	5	4.42	0.65
Judging cultural situations from one's own perspective and that of others (Cf)	Before	37	2	5	3.95	0.78
	After	36	3	5	4.50	0.56
Sum	Before	37	3.00	5.00	3.88	0.49
	After	36	3.50	5.00	4.25	0.44

The above statistical analysis showed that the critical cultural awareness of all participants had been greatly improved after they participated in this course (from 3.88 to 4.25). The score of 4.25 also indicated that in general students' critical cultural awareness was at a higher level. Among all the dimensions of critical cultural awareness, Cd (realizing that cultural differences influence our life and work) and Cf (judging cultural situations from both one's own perspective and that of others) received the highest score, which demonstrates students' developed awareness in terms of degree. Ca (realizing that generalizations are only accurate for groups and may or may not be true of individuals) had the lowest score but the highest development (from 3.19 to 3.72), which predicts students' increased awareness of the danger of over-generalization.

To measure the statistical significance of the differences, a T-test was run and the results of comparing both the MC and the PC's scores of critical cultural awareness before and after the research are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Comparative analysis of the development of Critical Cultural Awareness in the two classes

	Group name	Before	After	T	P
Critical cultural awareness	PC	3.86±0.55	4.00±0.31	-1.538	0.132
	MC	3.88±0.49	4.25±0.44	-3.916	0.000
t		-0.161	-2.737		
P		0.872	0.008		

As shown in Table 4.14, students from both classes had a similar level of critical cultural awareness before the research. After the research, the mean value of the critical cultural awareness scale increased to 4.25 in the MC and increased to 4.00 in the PC. The above statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the AIC-CCS results of the two classes before and after tests ($p \leq 0.05$). Thus, students from the MC achieved more improvement of critical cultural awareness during the research, and studying in a multicultural class appeared to be effective in enhancing the critical cultural awareness.

4.2.4.2 Qualitative Data

According to Byram (1997, p.101), critical cultural awareness is, to some extent, “related to skills of interpreting, relating and interaction but add the evaluative dimension”; it is also evident when in “real-time” and its evidence can only be “indirect evidence”. He also emphasizes the crucial role that critical cultural awareness plays in his model of ICC, which should be realized by well-structured teaching design. Following Byram’s guidance, I have intentionally integrated the critical cultural awareness objective into the course syllabus. I have also designed a series of teaching activities to excite students and develop their critical cultural awareness. As a result, the majority of the qualitative data are from my teaching activities. Thus, observing how students behaved in-class activities is the main source of data to prove students’ critical cultural awareness development. In addition, students’ reflective journals and interviews help me to draw a holistic view. Owing to the word limit of this thesis, I present my findings from only two major class activities in this section: watching the Chinese National Day Parade and group discussion on “what kind of Asian are you?”

4.2.4.2.1 Critical Reflection on Watching the Chinese National Day Parade

The first case comes from the discussion about the Chinese National Day Parade. A big ceremony was held to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. I asked students to watch the live show in their spare time. We then discussed the differences in countries celebration of their national day. Each group was tasked to present a report on their sentiments and findings. I had three purposes for conducting this activity. First, I would like to

provide an opportunity for home students and overseas students to familiarize themselves with each other at the beginning of the semester. Second, watching the TV show helps develop home students' ICC, especially on their ability in "interpreting the event and explain the origins" of China. In this process, they would be able to practice their English skills as well. Third, the Chinese National Day provides an opportunity for students to discuss ideological perspectives, which is an important domain of critical cultural awareness.

In my journal on Oct 15th, 2019, I noted down one of my observations:

During break time, one home student told me that she was surprised when searching for different countries' ways of celebrating their national day. In her mind, the parade should be performed in a way similar to the Chinese way, or at least showcase beautiful rhythm. To her surprise, in some countries' parades, the armed forces performed in a very uncoordinated manner. She asked me "what should be the standard?" I asked home and overseas students to discuss this question. After their discussion, she told me, "I realized that it doesn't mean they do not like their country...We should respect the variety of parades...Cultural differences are really amazing...**Not every country celebrates the national holiday like we do.**" Moreover, she asked me, "Is it suitable to ask overseas students to watch the live parade show? They are not Chinese students, and they may not understand our patriotic sentiment." **I don't think she would ask such a question if she were not in this MC.**

The above example shows the development of this student's critical cultural awareness — from challenging her pre-established beliefs, thus taken for granted, to changing her views on celebrating national days. To some extent, her view may represent the perspective of several home students: that a "parade" should be performed like the Chinese way. She then realized her own experience influenced her understanding, as she started to question "what is the standard for a national day 'parade'?" Furthermore, the discussion with overseas students helped her transform her views that different countries have different ways of celebrating their national day and all forms of celebration demonstrate patriotism. Her last question is a very clear sign that she has developed her ability to interact and mediate in intercultural communication. In summary, her critical cultural awareness appeared to be developed from a critical cultural reflection on her knowledge (the ceremony) to a reflection on her own beliefs and worldviews through comparisons between China's national day celebration and that of other countries.

Another example of critical cultural awareness development in this teaching activity was identified in an interview with HS1. She referred to her introduction of Chinese culture to an overseas student:

I think **some of the words I used to introduce Chinese culture was not appropriate**, such as "red history" and "red heart". When I told the Belgian girl in our group about "red history" in China, she was puzzled. I guess she can't fully understand what I mean. My teacher told

me before that names of colors have a different connotation in English and Chinese, but I forgot... I think I should search for it again [laugh]. Simply using “red” can’t fully express our emotion, so now I am thinking that I should use the words like “revolutionary history” and “patriotic heart”, and **add the explanation of these terms**. (I2)

HS1’s critical cultural awareness appeared to be demonstrated in her ability to identify the values in her own words and make an evaluative analysis of the words she used. Furthermore, her growth was reflected in her motivation to search for more information about word usage, which showed that she has the ability to interact and mediate in intercultural exchange.

Most students’ reflective journals about this activity echoed the findings from my observation and interviews. Among the 26 valid journals, a total number of 15 pieces of evidence were identified as instances of critical cultural awareness. Some representative examples are as follow:

Marcia’s last summary inspired me a lot. What shall we perceive on the different ways of celebrating national holidays? I remembered I said we should learn from different social behaviors. Thankfully, Marcia had reminded us to think (critically and deeply); otherwise, I would simply appreciate the ceremony on a superficial level. These years, we have called to promote Chinese culture, but **how much do we know about our own culture in fact?** We tell overseas classmates, “It is Chinese culture,” but what does this culture represent? Where does it come from? It is really embarrassing that we know little about our country to claim frankly and proudly that we love China. (TM2, G4-2)

One thing I learned this week was “no matter how long a international friend has been in China, **he should not be judged by Chinese standards**”. Expecting them to understand Chinese culture, yet not making an effort to understand their culture is not fair in a relationship. (TM2, G5-3)

The images of a culture on media may reflect the past and not the present. Through the news, we know that countries can have different celebrations, and they spread the news with different perspectives and public opinions. As an audience, **I think we should not simply accept everything without judgment**. (TM2, G7-1)

Evidently, the critical cultural awareness of these students was developed cognitively and behaviorally. Cognitively, they became aware of the cultural differences. G4-2 especially realized the importance of knowing more about Chinese culture, whereas G5-3 held the view that knowing other cultures is equally important. Moreover, G4-2 presented her strong feeling toward the common problem among young Chinese who know little about our own culture by putting two question marks at the end of her journal. Through this critical self-reflection, their reflection on the world also developed. G7-1 argued that we should not accept the information from mass media without self-judgment. Their critical thinking was also activated through my intervention. G4-2’s statement indicated that before my intervention, she could only explain the national

ceremony from the perspective of social behavior. However, after being compelled to explore the meaning of the ceremony itself, she was able to think profoundly and present her thoughts.

From the instances mentioned above, we could see that most home students developed their critical cultural awareness from real-interaction with overseas students in the teaching activities I have designed. This is a clear advantage of being in contact with cultural others.

4.2.4.2.2 Critical Reflection on Group Discussion on “What Kind of Asian are you”?

“What kind of Asian are you?” is a teaching activity developed within IEREST (Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers) for ICC training. This training first provides a clip which shows a fictional casual meeting between two Americans, a woman and a man, while jogging. The man’s assumptions about the woman and her Asian physical traits caused a conflict between them. This activity was used to raise the awareness on stereotypes and develop home students’ critical cultural awareness in this study.

My journal entry on November 19th, 2019 recorded my observation:

Students were criticizing themselves for the stereotypes they previously held. After the discussion, one of the home students said in her presentation, “I think I am the person in the video. In my mind, white people are from developed countries, whereas blacks are from Africa. The Swedish student (who is black) shared her experience with us. I felt so sorry about this. I never considered that my thoughts or actions are forms of discrimination or prejudice. But after watching this video and hearing her experience, I realized I made a mistake. **We should never judge others simply by their skin colour.**”

For this student, the video changed her original belief that “blacks are usually from Africa and white people are from developed countries.” Such stereotypical ideology was prevalent in home students’ reflective journals; they are used to judging people’s nationality through appearance. In addition, many students expressed their misuse of words, such as phrases like “Americans are like....” or “the British are...” These phrases may lead to over-generalization. During the group discussion, these students appeared to be more sensitive and critical of their manner of expressing. They carefully avoided using a word that over-generalizes and they realized generalizations may or may not be true of individuals.

With regard to students’ reflective journals on this activity, a total of 31 students critically reflected their problematic beliefs. Some were even able to identify where their beliefs came from:

I did not meet any of them in person, and **all my understanding of others’ culture came from movies.** That’s the reason why I said that the man in the video is British because he looks like Mr. Bean. After today’s class, I learned that “what you hear about may be false; what you see is true”. I will bear this in mind, and **do not make judgment subjectively.**
(TM4, G4-2)

This student realized the source of her stereotype, and this realization did lead to her change of attitude. In fact, she was not the only one who identified movies as one of the sources of stereotype. Approximately 56% (n=20) of the students mentioned movies as their main sources of information about different cultures, whereas some home students referred to “academic education” (n=16) and “news” (n=12) as two other major contributors.

When reflecting on how their stereotype was formed, many students reconsidered their ideological perspectives and values. They also showed their growth from having a shallow understanding of cultural events toward open and reasonable attitudes:

Never make judgment simply on the basis of your personal experience. Try to stand in a neutral way. (TM4, G6-3)

I am grateful to the teacher for telling me about stereotypes. **We can't just judge others by our own cultural standards.** (TM4, G2-2)

The after-class interviews showed more examples. The majority of students delved deeper into the influence of stereotypes and showed their development of critical cultural awareness. HS6, for example, described her group discussion:

We both realized that we have stereotypes of each other's culture. Though we believe that we do not have any prejudices or biases, the fact is that everyone does. It is inevitable because we take many cultural events for granted according to the knowledge we already know. The clip implied that some people from America did not treat people from other countries well. **What would happen then if a Chinese student goes there?** (I2)

HS6 first admitted that she had stereotypes about her overseas classmates. She was reluctant to admit that stereotypes have an influence on her lives. Her awareness of the negative effects of stereotypes was proved when she raised the question “what would happen then if a Chinese student goes there?”

HS2 shared two examples of stereotypes that were discussed by her group members. She wanted to indicate that making generalizations on the basis of stereotypes could be misleading. The first one is about female drivers:

The overseas student who was from America said that they think female drivers are not good drivers, which I think is a little surprising and unacceptable. I know this is even everyone's impression of a female driver. They are usually seem as reserved and easily influenced by emotions, which make them appear irrational and not calm. However, these are stereotypes. A lot of women are good drivers. They have a rational side and a sentimental side, and they can enjoy a successful career and take care of a family at the same time. **I try to share my view with her, and we both realized that our past experiences lead to such judgment.** (I2)

To me, a positive sign of development is her effort to solve this situation by discussing with her classmates and finally reaching an agreement that the perception that female drivers are not good drivers is a form of prejudice. In this process, her critical cultural awareness has been developed. HS2 was able to reflect on her own knowledge critically, and her reflection went deeper as she shared another example about her group:

The boy from Indonesia said that sometimes, Chinese people call him “laowai 老外 (the direct translation would be old foreigner)”, which makes him feel uncomfortable. I try to explain that “laowai” in Chinese doesn’t mean negatively, I used “laogong 老公 (husband)”, “laoban 老板 (boss)”, and “laojiu 老酒 (Chinese wine)” as examples to comfort him. Honestly, I realized that our words may unintentionally cause misunderstanding and even hurt someone’s emotion. **We should always be mindful of such inappropriate behaviors.** It’s a process of eliminating prejudice and bias. (I2)

The addressing term “laowai” is a controversial nickname. That is, whether it is derogative or not depends upon the context. To me, a good point here is HS2’s strong willingness to identify and interpret the meaning of “laowai” based on her understanding, though that understanding apparently needs deepening from the point of view of her developing critical cultural awareness.

In the interview about stereotypes, students also showed their change in attitude towards accent, and realized that their judgment is too subjective. For instance, HS5 gave a detailed narration of her understandings of the activities:

It is stupid to judge one’s profession, nationality, and character from one’s accent. For example, today’s judgment was wrong...Today’s class made me aware of the different types of English, and “standard” English is relative to a person’s knowledge and experiences...In our daily lives, we also judge a person’s hometown and character based on his Chinese accent. For example, Wenzhou people are always not good at speaking Mandarin. However, in our class, the Wenzhou student speaks well. This fact gave me a lesson, that my perception is only my stereotype. (I2)

This student realized that the judgment she and her classmates made in the class were “stupid” and “wrong”, which show her critical reflection on her pre-conceived knowledge. She went further by raising the idea that “standard is relative to a person’s knowledge and experience.” This statement indicated that she gained awareness that her own belief is problematic and had a strong willingness to establish common criteria of evaluation. Moreover, she recalled her real-life experience about the Chinese accent, and formed new attitudes. Interestingly, the class itself had become a place where students learned about cultural diversity even among “Chinese” students themselves, which again proves the importance of a multicultural context for ICC development.

4.2.4.3 Interim Summary

With regard to the critical cultural awareness dimension of ICC, the findings of the questionnaire survey, reflective journals, observations, and interviews demonstrated home students' critical cultural awareness development. On the one hand, the data demonstrated that these home students have developed their "ability to evaluate, critically and based on explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in their own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p.101). More evidently, the data also showed that critical cultural awareness was strengthened through students' reflection and introspection, which involves the comparative understanding of the differences between one's own culture and other cultures so as to identify key issues surrounding stereotypes, over-generalization and ethnocentrism. However, as the core aspect in ICC, more theory-informed and empirically effective intervention and strategies should be made to strengthen students' critical cultural awareness.

4.2.5 Influence of Values in Contact

As discussed in Section 2.4.2, understanding how values interact is crucial in a multicultural context, which influenced the interaction between home students and overseas students and should be integrated into Chinese students' ICC development. Sufficient instances were identified from quantitative and qualitative data, with specific features in this multicultural teaching and learning context. In the following section, I discuss these themes from two main aspects of Chinese values — the strong sense of national pride and the value of group harmony — as they stood out in the data. Both are regarded as worthy of detailed analysis to fully demonstrate the influence of Chinese cultural values to home students' ICC development.

4.2.5.1 Strong Sense of National Pride

Patriotism is defined as love for or devotion to one's country (Oxford Dictionary, 2004). It is a deep-seated sense of national pride that Chinese students are taught to possess. Home students' reflective journals and interviews revealed instances of their patriotism. These instances include being proud of China, sensitivity to "negative" views, and strong sense of image of China, which are discussed in the following three sections.

4.2.5.1.1 Being Proud of China

Among the many instances (n=36) of patriotism in home students' reflective journals, the most frequently mentioned theme was that they are proud of China, not only for its long and brilliant history, but also for its future development. Expressions like "I love my country", "I love the history of China", and "I am so proud of the progress China has made" have occurred many times in their journals and interviews. Moreover, the intercultural interaction with overseas students fostered their pride of being Chinese, as demonstrated by the following examples recognized from home students' reflective journals.

Seeing that **they can speak Chinese**, I feel that our country is making progress day by day, I am so proud of it. (TM2, G2-2)

My international friend likes President Xi too. When I heard about his opinion, I felt very proud. (TM3, G3-1)

These instances exemplify that G2-2 and G3-1's pride of China was further enhanced by their interaction with overseas students. These overseas students showed their ability to empathize. This ability enabled them to participate in Chinese students' experience vicariously, which facilitated the process of interlocution (Fantini, 2001). Furthermore, this successful intercultural communication, in turn, further inspires home students' patriotism. When they realized that their culture and language have been warmly acknowledged by overseas students, the strong sense of identity fostered their pride of being Chinese.

Interestingly, with such enhanced patriotism, some home students even have a strong motive to "behave better when with overseas students". As HS1 said, "we're proud of China, so we can't disgrace our motherland." All interviewees said that when they were together with overseas students, they were more concerned with the appropriateness of their words and behavior, because they were not only representing themselves but also other Chinese people. Take HS6 as an example:

Each time I would like to behave in a very proper way by **keeping a smile, speaking with a soft voice, and trying not to use non-verbal cues that may cause misunderstanding...**No sensitive topics too...**All I know is that I am not only representing myself but China as well.** I don't want to leave a bad impression on others. Just like how stereotypes and over-generalization work, I don't want to be the cause of stereotypes. (I3)

A strong responsibility of "representing the whole nation" was revealed among home students. Such responsibility originated from typical Chinese patriotism that is influenced by the idea of "family-and-state oneness" which was possibly inspired by the traditional idea of "heaven-and-human oneness" (Dong, 2012). Given that the relationship between man and heaven is an integral whole, the relationship between families and state, should also be an organic whole. The idea of "heaven-and-human oneness", as the highest ideal and the fundamental spirit, has been the life principle of scholar-officials in their thoughts, behaviors, and personality. Such a philosophy also influences ordinary people. The idea of "heaven-and-human oneness" has permeated in home students' interior design, choice of human life, way of life, religious beliefs, and literary and artistic interests. As a result, behaving better means creating a good image of China, which is thought to be a responsibility of home students when they believe that they represent the whole nation.

4.2.5.1.2 Sensitivity to ‘Negative’ Views

The second theme which is also related to patriotism is students’ keen sensitivity to ‘negative’ comments on Chinese culture. This sensitivity could arguably be seen as the result of ideological and political education in schools and in university. Multiple evidences were identified from students’ interviews, like what HS6 said:

The international student in our group...has some negative opinion on China. I feel very angry. If you don’t like China, then why do you come to China? I think **I have the responsibility to redress his wrong ideas**...This is his first time in China, so how does he know what he is talking about? (I3)

To HS6, overseas students’ ‘negative opinion’ made her feel “angry”, which aroused her patriotism. This emotion drove her to consider to “redress the wrong ideas” as her responsibility. However, what were the ‘negative’ views they often heard or experienced? HS2’s case may represent one of these ‘negative’ views Chinese students heard.

HS2 shared her experience:

Last week, overseas student commented that we Chinese chew with our mouths open and we make noise when eating. These habits are not polite in their minds...**Actually, I think she tried to use some worse words**... (I2)

In HS2’s case, chewing with mouth open is not polite in many overseas students’ mind which caused their ‘negative’ comments on it. In the interview, HS2 continued to extend her understanding of this topic by comparing the different cultural styles of hospitality and showed her approach to avoid unnecessary dysfunctions:

Some overseas students also commented on our “hospitality”. They think we always order too much...Honestly, we also experienced visiting their dormitory, and what they offered were sandwiches...and cold dishes...We are not used to it too...I know it is about cultural differences. However, **I still want to tell them the reason why we Chinese behaved that way**...Surely, **I will respect their hospitality too**...(I2)

Similar to the first case HS2 shared, differing “hospitality” is another ‘negative’ view she got from the real-time interaction. The problem that lies here is what they mean by ‘negative’ could be simply due to cultural difference. Take these two cases for example. People from the West tend to make negative comments on some cultural practices in China. As long as these comments are made based on intercultural differences instead of bias or arrogance, such ‘negativity’ is understandable and compromisable. Like HS2, she recognized cultural differences by identifying them, and applying her knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication, which enabled her to avoid misunderstanding in cultural practice.

In fact, HS6 and HS2 were not the only ones who take ‘correcting’ such ‘misunderstandings’ as their responsibility. For most home students, the love of China leads them to be a “fighter” for building the good image of China as well as a “broadcaster” to tell Chinese stories.

4.2.5.1.3 Strong Sense of Promoting Positive Image of China

Intimately related to students’ sensitivity to ‘negative’ views, as a result of recent patriotic and ideological education, many students developed a keen sense of protecting the image of China. The most frequently mentioned theme reflected from students’ interviews and reflective journals was their strong desire to introduce Chinese culture, which was also demonstrated by the finding from the questionnaire. In the AIC-CCS, question 25 is used to test their willingness to introduce Chinese culture, and the result is evident among all the questionnaire findings. Table 4.15 gives the descriptive analysis of students’ attitude scores before and after the research.

Table 4.15 Descriptive analysis of Attitude development before and after the research

Attitude Dimension		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev
Willingness to introduce Chinese culture	Before	37	3	5	4.11	0.66
	After	36	4	5	4.67	0.48

The above statistical analysis showed that home students’ willingness to introduce Chinese culture was strengthened after the research. Moreover, the score of 4.67 is the highest score in the post-research questionnaire, which could be seen as the rising patriotism of Chinese students propagated in schools and in society.

In the qualitative data, almost everyone (n=32) mentioned in their reflective journals their willingness to introduce Chinese culture. The following are representative examples:

I am proud to share our culture with international students. **I think it is my obligation to do that.** I have introduced Hua Mulan and many Chinese festivals to the international students in my class. (TM5, G3-3)

I told some stories of traditional Chinese virtues to overseas friends. **I think it is my responsibility.** (TM5, G7-4)

I am willing to understand the culture of the other country, and spread the culture of our country to them. **I think this is a meaningful thing,** and they are also interested in Chinese culture. (TM2, G1-5)

These responses show that home students viewed “introducing/spreading Chinese culture” as their “obligation” and “responsibility”. Such emotion originated from their strong patriotism, as HS6 explained in the interview.

President Xi put forward the requirements of building a community of a shared future for mankind, and promoting people-to-people exchanges between China and foreign countries... As an English major, we have the ability and the responsibility to tell Chinese stories on different occasions...If I can **tell Chinese stories and share Chinese wisdom** when I speak with people from other cultures, then **that is my value**. (I3)

In HS6's mind, enhancing Chinese cultural identity and cultural self-confidence is one of the significances of learning intercultural communication. In her words, the value of her real-time interaction is to "tell Chinese stories and share Chinese wisdom." HS6's point of view was shared among many of her Chinese classmates. They gave various instances which indicated that introducing Chinese culture has been rooted in their minds. However, some home students not only acknowledged their responsibility to "tell Chinese stories", but also critically reflected on the words they used. For example, HS2 said:

I do tell a lot of stories about my culture, but I'm not sure if I want to "spread" my own cultural values, because **I don't want the person I'm talking with to believe that my culture is better than theirs**. I think this is a misuse of words in translation. I will use the word "introduce" instead of "spread". (HS2)

By reflecting on word choice, HS2 shows her ICC development, that is, arguably, her ethical development from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1993); she realized that "I don't want the person I'm talking to believe that my culture is better than theirs". On the other hand, her ability to use her knowledge, skills, and attitude for mediation was developed when she decided to use the word "introduce" rather than "spread". In a nutshell, she stepped further from a 'pure' patriotic stance, and this example showed her process of becoming more intercultural.

4.2.5.2 Group Harmony

According to Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998, p.6), "the primary functions of communication in Chinese culture are to maintain existing relationships among individuals, to reinforce role and status differences, and preserve harmony within the group". Thus, harmony in interpersonal communication can be viewed as the ultimate goal of Chinese communication. This goal can be achieved by maintaining a good relationship and showing respect to others. This section discusses how the home students were guided by the value of group harmony and their way of pursuing it.

For most home students, maintaining a good relationship with their classmates, especially with overseas students, was the most important purpose of their intercultural interaction. HS3 described her experience in their group discussion:

His (overseas student) opinion is...weird...I don't want to offend him, but...to be honest, I don't agree with him. **Debating and questioning may disrupt group harmony**, and I was worried that it would influence our friendship, so **I kept silent and just listened**. (I3)

To HS3, her overseas classmate's opinion is not agreeable, but the aim of pursuing group harmony influenced her behavior. Hence, she decided to stay silent. This finding echoes Ting-Toomey's (1999) idea that the predominant mode of conflict avoidance attitude among Chinese is evasive and non-confrontational, which are influences of valuing ingroup harmony.

Valuing harmony was not only shown being maintained between students, but also between teachers and students. A typical case could be seen when HS1 explained:

Truthfully, we don't have a very positive attitude toward her (an overseas student) since the beginning. If you still remember, during the very first class, you were delivering your lecture. She interrupted you by expressing her understanding of the subject even though it was not her turn to speak! She behaved like a teacher. **We think it was very rude**, and she spoke too long. It was your time to speak, right? Unexpectedly, you were not angry, and you even encouraged us to behave like her! **We gradually realized different communication styles**, and I would like to say, Marcia, your teaching style is different from other Chinese teachers. (I3)

As far as I could recall, that particular overseas student did not behave in an aggressive or rude manner in that specific context, though she was clearly more outspoken and active in the classroom. Chinese students' polite and submissive classroom behavior is not new in academic research. Such behavior is attributed to their acceptance of social harmony (Durkin, 2004). In Chinese students' minds, respecting teachers has been nurtured in their family and in school education. For them, teachers are usually regarded as the most knowledgeable people in the classroom, and thus the most reliable sources of information (Chen, 2018). They emphasized the harmony between the teachers and themselves in school learning. In the above case, the overseas student apparently disrupted the harmonious relationship upheld in Chinese rules by keeping quiet in the classroom, thus causing Chinese students' negative impression toward her. Moreover, 'interrupting' a conversation or lecture is regarded as impolite by Chinese students, whereas 'interrupting' at an appropriate time is familiar to most overseas students. Thus, their behaviors ended in misunderstanding. This quote demonstrates that a teacher's behaviors and explanation could lead to increased knowledge of different communication styles. As a result, some of these home students gradually understood overseas students' interrupting communication styles and achieved successful interactions.

Apart from valuing harmonious relationships, valuing ingroup harmony also influenced home students' attitude and participation in group work. HS2 shared:

Chinese concept of harmony still has an impact. We like to use euphemisms... **A harmonious group relationship is very important** ... As a group, we have to reach an agreement. He is, compared with us, too aggressive...For us, if nobody supports you, then we will give up, or we will follow the rule of "the minority is subordinate to the majority". By

contrast, for him, although group opinion is important, individual opinion is important too. So in most instances, he insists and keep on expressing his ideas. (I3)

This example shows the great impact of individualism and collectivism on students' intercultural communication. According to Andersen and his colleagues (2003, p.77), "collectivistic cultures emphasize community, collaboration, shared interest, harmony, and maintaining face, whereas individualistic cultures emphasize personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, voicing one's own opinion, freedom and self-expression". Take HS2 as an example, she frequently used "we" in the interview and placed great value on group identity. For her, harmony took priority above nearly all other values and interdependence was greatly valued. Whereas, the overseas student in her group tended to stress his private thoughts and opinions.

Moreover, home students also described their reasons for pursuing group harmony with overseas students from other perspectives, such as "treating them friendly" and "considering their face dignity." As HS2 pointed out in the interview:

They are guests, so **we should be friendly and tolerant of them**. We Chinese are famous for our etiquette and hospitality, right? (I3)

Although home students did not mention "face dignity" (Hwang, 2004) directly and even some of them do think this term is out of date, as HS3 said, "this is not a word for our after 90's generation", but it still can be applied in their real practice. For example, HS1 described her experience:

The overseas student in our group, her pronunciation is ... very terrible...I mean her accent is strong. For many times, honestly, I don't understand what she was saying, **but I pretended to understand**. I don't want to hurt her, and I also think it is very rude to say "pardon" or ask her to explain it in another way. (I3)

In her mind, asking to repeat or explain something is rude behavior, which will hurt the overseas student. By pretending to understand, HS1 tried to save others' face and thus maintained a good relationship with her.

According to the Chinese communication philosophy of "harmony", most Chinese students showed their intention of holding off direct confrontation to maintain a good relationship with others. The concept of "harmony" undoubtedly plays a significant role among Chinese students and encourages us to reconsider how to define ICC in the Chinese context.

4.2.5.3 Interim Summary

The two major themes presented above highlight the influence of Chinese cultural values on the interaction between home and overseas students. First, strong patriotism influenced home students cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. Cognitively, Chinese students became more aware of

their deep love of China by realizing that a growing number of people in other countries are interested in Chinese culture. Their well-developed awareness of their own culture helps them rediscover the country they love. The affective influence was more obvious on HS6, who presented strong feelings toward the misinformation of her overseas classmates as well as her shame from knowing too little about her own culture. She considered it humiliating to be Chinese without knowing enough about Chinese culture. Behavioral influence includes two aspects, one is their sensitivity to 'negative' views and the other is their willingness to "tell Chinese stories". Obviously, the data helps paint a relatively holistic picture on how they were driven, first of all, by their strong sense of national pride to behave accordingly.

Secondly, valuing group harmony plays a key role in interpersonal interaction. In this study, students show their reluctance to break the peaceful relationship with others, which indicates that the young generation has also been greatly influenced by Confucianism concepts, such as face. According to Leung (2006), Confucianism is essentially a tradition of education in China from childhood to adulthood. Confucius taught that people should love each other and show respect and courtesy. Chinese students are used to forming a harmonious interpersonal relationship by avoiding conflict; for them, tolerance means harmony without conformity (Bergen et al., 2012). The instances analyzed in this section indicated that valuing group harmony influenced the interaction between home students and overseas students, thus, it is necessary for us to consider its role in developing Chinese students' ICC.

In summary, the data demonstrate that cultural values brought by both groups into communication are significant in intercultural interaction and deserve to be considered in more rigorous analysis when defining ICC. In addition, students in a multicultural class are exposed to a variety of cultural values from students from different cultural backgrounds. The data presented above suggest that students and teachers should appreciate cultural diversity and work together to bring values into relationship by constructing a multicultural context that embraces difference and similarities.

4.2.6 Lingua Franca

According to the research framework, this last sub-section discusses students' ICC development from a lingua franca perspective. Lingua franca is a language that is widely used over a large geographical area as a language of wider communication (Sebba, 1997). Nowadays, English has been recognized as the world's lingua franca and has become a truly global language (Nelson & Aarts, 1999; Seidlhofer, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). Ferner et al. (1995, p.354) deem that English is "corporate glue" that serves as "the binding element in multicultural teamwork", and it seems to have a "pervasive impact" in the multicultural context (Marschan et al., 1997). However, lingua franca in this study does not refer only to English but also Chinese as the latter is often used in the wider context for communication. Considering that this multicultural class is multilingual, where native English speakers and non-native English speakers study together, this section aims at

clarifying the role language plays between home students and overseas students in their real interaction within the multicultural class. The analysis reveals three themes as to how lingua franca influences intercultural communication.

4.2.6.1 English or Chinese as Lingua Franca?

It is taken for granted that everyone in this multicultural class can speak English relatively well and has a sound knowledge of English. English is considered the official language in this class. The interview data revealed that home students have a strong will to practice their English because they “do not have such kind of chances to have a face to face communication with foreigners” (I1, HS3). By contrast, overseas students who come to China intending to improve their Chinese want to practice their Chinese. As a result, very often, the language used for group discussion is not in line with the language requirement as enforced by the university and the teacher. Take HS2 for example. During the group discussion with overseas students, she expressed in an indirect way her worries about language choice:

We, Chinese student, naturally want to speak in English, and they, out of our expectation, they can understand Chinese, and they catch every chance to speak in Chinese. It is very funny, you know... **Finally, we Chinese students speak in English, and they speak in Chinese. We exchange our ideas in that way.** (I2)

For four of the interviewees (HS2, HS3, HS4, HS5), students, home or overseas, choose a lingua franca not for agreement but for personal interests. Unlike in the business setting, people usually choose one language most of them can speak best as the lingua franca. With regard to the multicultural learning context, learning their second language well drove students to choose that language as the lingua franca.

The reflective journals echo interview findings that Chinese or English can equally be chosen as lingua franca. As stated in G2-5's journal:

Sometimes I feel puzzled: **shall I speak in Chinese to help my overseas classmates to practice their Chinese?** But in that way, I can not practice my English. (TM4)

G6-3 also wrote that:

The class discussion was ok, because Marcia always walked around. Sometimes, she participated in our discussion, so we keep discussing in English. But outside the class, **English is not the lingua franca anymore.** (TM5)

These learner's reflections indicate that English did not serve as the lingua franca as the University expected. For after-class discussions, some home students even showed me their We-chat group chat in which overseas students sent all messages in Chinese, and home students responded in English. In general, choosing the lingua franca is controllable in in-class discussions

with the guidance of the teacher, but it is out of control in off-class discussions. Students find their way to solve this problem, like G4-2 wrote in her journal, “with the development of our friendship, we agreed that we will speak in English in class and in Chinese after class” (TM4).

The data above indicate that lingua franca in the multicultural context varies in accordance with requirements of a particular situation and/or needs of students. It can never be simply prescribed by the university or the teacher. Lingua franca by definition is a facilitator for interaction (Seidlhofer, 2011). In this particular context, the students would choose Chinese or English as the lingua franca according to their negotiation of differing learning needs and purposes of communication.

4.2.6.2 ‘Standard English’ or ‘Non-standard English’?

Most of the home students’ journals and interviews revealed changed language attitudes in general when they were exposed to this multicultural context. In some interviewees’ view, studying in the multicultural class aroused their interest in the discovery of the effectiveness of ‘non-standard English’, which is not the ‘standard English’ that they have learned. By ‘standard English’, students mean the English that Americans and British people speak, whereas ‘non-standard English’ is seen as the English used by speakers of other varieties of English or by non-native speakers. HS6, for example, told her story that undermined her assumption about the function of ‘standard English’.

I have discovered that some of my overseas classmates.... when... they were speaking, they made grammatical errors too. It surprised me... We do not follow grammar rule strictly, but we can understand each other. **Poor English still works for communication, right?** (I2)

As seen in this example, HS6 found that some overseas students’ English was not as good as she expected, which surprised her. As seen in this extract, the limited language ability of overseas students triggered home students’ reflection on the criterion of English usage. The question HS6 raised may suggest her confusion on the communicative effects of “poor English”. This realization seems to suggest a transition from unawareness to awareness of the effectiveness of ‘non-standard English’, that is, “poor English” in HS6’s words.

Many other home students expressed similar doubt about the use of ‘standard English’, drawing on their direct interaction with overseas students. For example, HS5 said:

When we discuss with overseas students, both of us cannot speak English fluently, which made us feel that we fall into the same group. I mean, we cannot speak standard English, but we have no language barrier when we communicate...So now, we don’t pay much attention to grammar, vocabulary, etc. **We are not native speakers; you can’t require us to speak the way British or American speakers do.** (I3)

This example demonstrated that HS5’s experience with overseas students had an impact on her

belief as to what kind of English was appropriate. She even made a strong claim that the pursuit of ‘standard English’ might not be a reasonable one (“you can’t require us to speak the way British or American speakers do”). Her confirmative tone on the effectiveness of ‘non-standard English’ showed her stance that ‘standard English’ is not the only choice for non-native speakers to speak, and communicative English works well in intercultural encounters. From this instance, it seems that home students, like HS5, became more aware of ‘Englishes’ and the importance of mutual intelligibility (Jenkins, 2015) between them. This point was further illustrated by HS3 who said:

This class remind me that after the BRI, we are more likely to communicate with people from Middle East European countries. **Their English is not the same as American or British English.** They speak with an accent and with the influence of their dialect. (I3)

This example shows students good awareness of English varieties in relation to its contexts. In reality, students do not really have many encounters with British or American speakers. The world context now, especially for Chinese young students, implies that intercultural encounters most likely take place with people from countries along BRI. New varieties of English, such as Malaysian English, Czech English, have emerged, and ‘non-standard English’ speakers outnumbered standard English speakers by three or four times (Jenkins, 2015). Thus, students’ ‘non-standard English’ awareness was raised, and they gradually realized the intelligibility of English.

Furthermore, the practice of ‘non-standard English’ helps develop home students’ oral English too. HS6, for example, gave an account of her observation of the international student in her group.

Originally, in my mind, **all foreigners speak English quite well.** But I found some overseas classmates’ English was very poor, which honestly **relieves** me. (I2)

“Foreigners all speak English well” is a common belief among home students. With the experience of communicating with overseas students, students like HS6 realized her original understanding of foreigners’ English level is not true. She used the word “relieve”, and explained further:

At the very beginning. I was worried that they would laugh at my poor language ability. But after a period of study, I have found out that **their English is just so so. We are Tweedledum and Tweedledee....**So I don’t worry about my English anymore. (I2)

HS6’s instance is pervasive in home students, that the feeling of like “tweedledum and tweedledee” relieves them so that they dare to speak in English. From this perspective, students’ confidence for speaking English is developed as a result of the multicultural class.

4.2.6.3 Raising Linguistic Awareness

A few home students in the current study believed that using English as lingua franca helps to

raise their intercultural linguistic awareness. This theme emerged in their reflective journals and interviews about their awareness of language function in ICC, their accommodation to different cultural context, their strong speaker responsibility in language production, and the discovery of difference in accent.

First, ICC involves an awareness of the role of language competence in intercultural encounters (Barrett et al., 2013). As shared in the above section, ‘non-standard English’ also helps achieve successful communication, which rebuilt their understanding of ICC components. Take HS4 as an example:

I thought their ICC should be better than us, because at least, they speak English better than us. But the fact is that in the real communication, **language does not convey all ideas. Nonverbal language helps too...**Respect is also helpful. (I3)

According to HS4, her awareness on her recognition of the role of English was developed. Through the interaction, she gradually realized that language does not equal to ICC. Many other elements should be taken into account.

Secondly, their accommodation to successful intercultural communication could be found in their reflection about their word choice. For instance, HS1’s description of her “overuse” of certain words in English reveals her purpose for making intercultural communication comfortable for overseas students.

Our group’s overseas student’s English is so poor. She always uses very simple words and sentences. For example, she uses the word “prove” all the time but not any other word. If we use “demonstrate”, she would be very puzzled for she would possibly not know this word. As a result, **I would like to use the word she knows when we communicate.** (I2)

HS1 showed awareness of choosing acceptable and understandable words for communicating with her intercultural communicator. Interestingly, her choice of the words was based on her assumption of the overseas student’s reaction, which was developed from her real interaction experience. Thus, HS1 realized that accommodation is a necessary means for successful intercultural communication, and her ability was developed from this on-site communicative practice.

Furthermore, the strong awareness in speaker responsibility (Yang, 2003) in language production could be well presented in their reflection toward daily experiences, like in G5-2’s journal entry about her doubt on a word uttered in her Chinese classmates’ presentation:

She used “Putonghua” and not “Mandarin” in her speech several times. Hearing that, I thought: **can all international students understand this?** (TM4)

The awareness of cultural variety could be found in their oral practice with overseas students too,

such as HS3's findings on cultural variations from a language perspective.

I found students from Spain, they pronounced the letter 'd' with a trembling sound...**Students from different countries have different accent**, it is very interesting...From the pronunciation, I do agree with what you have introduced in the lecture: "nothing distinguishes culture most than language". (I2)

HS3's case demonstrated that home students' theoretical knowledge about intercultural communication have been verified in their linguistic practice with overseas students.

4.2.6.4 Interim Summary

In this study, the data show evidently that the home students who had real interactions with overseas students developed intercultural communication strategies in practice in order to engage their interlocutors successfully. The three themes above provide evidence of the influence of the real experience of using English. Firstly, face-to-face communication in intercultural encounters require individuals to make full use of their plurilingual competence. Thus, the choice of lingua franca usually depended on communicative needs and the context and it could not be simply decided by teachers. Secondly, mutual understanding and comfort are keys to intercultural communication in the multicultural context, regardless of using 'standard English' or 'non-standard English'. Language insufficiency sometimes may create asymmetries or even frustration within the interaction. However, in this study, instances like frustration have not been identified. Instead, the situation actually helped create a kind of equal power relationship in which both home students and overseas students felt comfortable to communicate equally with each other. Thirdly, linguistic competence is not an indicator of ICC (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012), but crucial for developing intercultural awareness and in achieving comfortable and seamless communication.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter first discusses home students' previous interaction experiences with people from other countries, their understanding of the concept of ICC, and then reports findings with focus on students' ICC development from the perspectives of attitude, knowledge, skills, critical cultural awareness, Chinese cultural values and lingua franca in interactions. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, this chapter provides a holistic overview of students' ICC progressive change in their learning experience in the multicultural context.

It is evident that the pedagogical design of the multicultural class was effective in terms of enhancing home students' ICC development. Findings from home students' feedback regarding attitude, knowledge, skills, Chinese cultural values, critical cultural awareness, and lingua franca are also provide some potentially useful feedback for designing and constructing a more appropriate ICC model for teaching Chinese students.

Meanwhile, it is also noticeable to address some thorny issues that occurred in this research. For example, the different understanding of “punctuality” among students reminds us that ICC development is never a simple process. The ‘negative comments’ shared by home students also remind us how cultural differences cause misunderstanding, and thus, a “rational and explicit standpoint” (Bryam, 2009, p.324) is crucial for viewing such kind of phenomenon. We have to admit that this course may not solve all the problems that happened in the intercultural encounter, but we feel confident that it was a worthy attempt at providing some practical suggestions for noticing and solving such problems. The next chapter will be focused on highlighting the research findings in relation to the research purposes and identifying implications for ICC education.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I conclude the study with the following five sections. First, I summarize the main findings of this research to determine whether they have answered the research questions. Second, I present the contribution of this study to the existing knowledge and suggestions for reconceptualizing ICC in the Chinese educational context are proposed on the basis of the findings gathered from this action research. Third, I discuss the pedagogical implications with the aim to enhance ICC education. Fourth, I identify the limitations of this research. Finally, I offer suggestions as well as a conclusion with the exploration of the implications for further study.

5.1 Answers to the Research Questions

The main focus of this study was the exploration of how an interventional study designed for a multicultural class influences home students' ICC. Six research questions were formulated to this research purpose, and the findings of this study were expected to answer these questions.

Answer to Question 1: To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of interculturally appropriate attitudes?

The data from Section 4.2.1 demonstrated that home students' attitudes significantly improved after they participated in multicultural class learning. Noticeably, home students had strong willingness to interact with members from other cultures, discover cultural differences, and learn English and other cultures. Findings from students' reflective journals and interviews showed that their attitude development was remarkable, that is, the results reflected an attitude growth from "being nervous" to "being comfortable" to talk with overseas friends, from "not get used to" to "interested in" and to "willing to know and understand" cultural differences (such as hugging and kissing as a greeting), and from "interacting for English practice" to "interacting for friendship." These developments were encouraging because they revealed students' openness and curiosity for encountering different cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors, which were crucial for an intercultural speaker.

Comparatively, willingness to question one's own values did not develop as significantly as other intercultural attitudes, as little evidence was identified from this research. Becoming aware of one's own values plays a crucial role in successful intercultural communication. According to Byram (2021, p.45), "without questioning one's own and valuing other's experience, interpreting and relating them is likely to be value-laden and biased". The lack of this attitude would influence

students' knowledge, understanding and analysis of the cultural values of others, and any comparisons with their own culture. Thus, they would possibly have difficulty grasping a conscious control of biased understanding of different cultures.

Moreover, home students' attitude development was not a simple process. In this research, they frequently encountered "teachable moments or trigger events" (Osland, Bird, & Gundersen, 2007) for which they had no similar prior experience, that may have motivated them to see the world in different ways. When experiencing these events, home students progressed from relatively ethnocentric understandings to a more ethnorelative comprehension and appreciation. Such a growth echoes Bennett's (1986) stage model of intercultural sensitivity and provides instances for understanding different stages in students' progress. Take home students' attitude towards different cultural values as an example. Surface cultures values, such as food, festival, and language, are comparatively easy to be accepted, and some of these cultural values may even be internalized as home students' own, which can be reflected in the *integration* stage. While for unseen culture, which includes the concept of time, touching, and personal space, most of the home students were at the acceptance or adaptation stage with the ability to view these cultural values as one among many variable cultures of the world. But for these deep cultures, such as religion, decision-making, and privacy, most home students indicated they were at the defense or minimization stage because they realized these cultural values were estranged in their life. To conclude, my findings gave some evidence of a general attitude change towards a less ethnocentric mindset, though not in a universal manner. Some students appeared even willing to decentre, though some others were less so.

Answer to Question 2: To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of the knowledge?

In general, the data as presented in Section 4.2.2 demonstrate that home students' intercultural knowledge was developed, especially in the dimensions of "knowledge of other's culture" and "knowledge of intercultural interactions." By participating in this multicultural class, their knowledge of the culture of others was broadened from "knowledge about the USA and the UK" to "knowledge about more countries in the world" and from "only knows about food and festival" to "know more various facets of other culture", such as education, behavior, and religion. Moreover, they had the chance to recognize that their former understanding of some cultures have limitations, thus motivating their intercultural learning. Almost all the home students agreed that they gained a lot of knowledge from intercultural interactions, which was helpful for them to respond appropriately in real-life interactions. As a result, home students indicated the importance of both cultural knowledge and intercultural knowledge in developing their ICC.

Compared with their knowledge of others' culture and knowledge of intercultural interactions,

home students' knowledge of self-culture was less developed. The first two dimensions were more easily identified as learning outcomes when considering the multicultural context as a completely new cultural encounter for young students. However, the importance of self-culture should not be neglected. Knowledge of self-culture is crucial for an intercultural speaker when dealing with misunderstandings from an ethnorelative perspective (Bennett, 1993). By knowing better about one's own culture, a learner would be more willing to decenter if he/she is able to see similarities and differences and establish a relationship between his/her own and other systems. Though evidence from Section 4.2.2 shows that some students seemed to have a strong awareness of their lack of self-culture, this awareness apparently originated from their feeling of incompetence to 'tell Chinese stories well'. The latter appears more like a linguistic issue, but it might well be caused by their strong patriotism with little willingness to decenter. Hence, when the overseas students found it difficult to accept their stories, they felt it was due to their poor knowledge of self. Accordingly, it could be argued that more strategies and activities should be designed to cultivate home students' critical thinking on self-culture in relation to otherness in the improvement of the intercultural communication course.

Other prominent features of the findings of this study reflected that the multicultural context was helpful in knowledge development. As the world is becoming increasingly integrated, people must learn to live in a multicultural and multilingual country. People must "step outside of their own frame of reference and interact meaningfully with different cultural realities" (Bennett, 2009, p.122). A multicultural context with a pedagogical structure and educational objective for ICC was workable for home students in developing their intercultural knowledge. As students "lived into" the real multicultural world, the communication was not between Chinese and American or between Chinese and Spanish; it was among people from different nations. Hence, they learned more about what they did not know before and what they could not learn from textbooks through their real interactions with people from different cultures. From this concern, the multicultural class is helpful to broaden students' knowledge and to raise their awareness about the importance of multicultural knowledge.

Another point that deserves to be mentioned is that the learning experience in a multicultural class helped home students to realize that the majority of what they knew of other cultures was highly superficial. For example, they knew about Christmas, but they did not know in detail who celebrated this festival, how they celebrated it, and why they celebrate it. Only real-life interaction can help students to realize how little they know about other cultures. Thus, such interaction can motivate them to explore further. From this perspective, real interaction plays a key role in developing students' cultural knowledge.

Answer to Question 3: To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of skills?

Findings from Chapter Four (4.3.3) provide adequate evidence of home students' development in intercultural skills, especially their skills of acquiring new knowledge, skills of identifying misunderstandings, and skills of using nonverbal language. Evidently, these developments were primarily the result of real-time interactions in this multicultural context. The multicultural context was able to provide students with sufficient interaction opportunities, such as group work, classroom discussions, and after-class activities. These findings echoed Byram's (1997) suggestion that intercultural skills should be developed in "real-time communication and interaction" (p.98). Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of the multicultural context as a 'fieldwork' for providing authentic real-time interaction chances for developing students' skills.

In the 'fieldwork', students developed their own communicative strategies for smooth interactions, such as "keeping neutral," "mutual respect," and "do as Romans do" according to different intercultural encounters they experienced. These strategies originated from their cultural understanding based on their own experience in this multicultural context. Data also indicated that different students' intercultural skills development were different. Some are more tolerant and flexible when communicating with overseas students and learn to not judge and interpret their behaviors by their own cultural values, but develop empathy and see things from different points of view. This awareness of their different levels of skills calls for added attention in future education, that is, additional tasks on the mediating practice are necessary.

Regarding the ability to interpret and relate, the responses suggested there had been inadequate development of skills to avoid prejudice and violate otherness' privacy. According to Byram's (2021, p.65) illustration, this objective requires the ability to "notice how two people are misunderstanding each other because of their ethnocentrism, and is able to identify and explain the presuppositions in a statement in order to reduce the dysfunction they cause." Given that home students are greatly influenced by Chinese culture, such as group harmony and face dignity, they tend to stay with ingroup members. Hence, they rarely take initiative to relate to overseas students in classroom communication. In this regard, more fictional situations and critical incidents can be designed in teaching tasks to develop students' skills in relating and interpreting.

As for the skills of discovery and interaction, findings from this study show that there had been significant progress in terms of acquiring new knowledge and applying it in real-time interaction. On one hand, this multicultural context served as motivation for them to search for new cultural knowledge and maintain effective contact with other cultures. On the other hand, it provides real social practice for students to make their knowledge usable. As HS3 mentioned in the interview, "Knowing is one thing, doing is another. By practicing, I have the chance to make my intercultural knowledge to be intercultural skills"(I3). The multicultural class provided the home students with opportunities for real-life interaction, and students had to adopt their knowledge to solve the problems they met in the process. Real communication is not like answering questions in an exam

in which students are given time to think. In real-life scenarios, speakers are under time pressure. With such experience, home students in this study developed their ability to cope with different stages of adaptation, engagement with unfamiliar behaviors, and interaction with different cultural others. As a result, their intercultural skills were developed in this multicultural context.

Answer to Question 4: To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of critical cultural awareness?

The data gathered in this aspect of the study as presented in Section 4.2.4 provided instances of home students' development in critical cultural awareness. According to Byram (1997), critical cultural awareness is the most demanding and core dimension of ICC development. It is also the most difficult dimension to achieve because it is based on the combination of sufficient cultural knowledge, effective skills, and proper attitudes. Furthermore, critical cultural awareness could only be achieved by a skillfully designed curriculum, creative teaching, and appropriate time given for practicing skills and developing awareness (Qin, 2013). Findings from this study indicated the effectiveness of teaching design of this course as to develop students' critical cultural awareness.

To begin with, the development of critical cultural awareness reflects critical thinking skills and the improvement of other intercultural elements. Critical cultural awareness is closely related with and lies heavily on students' critical thinking ability (Sun, 2016). In this study, with the integration of critical thinking ability, a series of teaching activities were adopted to develop students' critical cultural awareness. Data revealed that this teaching design was feasible in general, that some home students' critical cultural awareness was developed from a critical cultural reflection on their own knowledge about otherness to a reflection on their own beliefs and worldviews through comparisons between cultural differences. They were gradually able to evaluate cultural phenomenon critically. And this study encouragingly presented significant evidence to show home students' development compared with their previous understanding about ICC, under which they had a passive attitude and an avoidance mentality.

Secondly, this study also demonstrated that home students have developed their "ability to evaluate, critically and based on explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in their own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p.101). With reflection and introspection, these home students realized that it is not right to believe one's own culture is the only "good" or "correct" one and judge other cultures with one's own cultural norms. For instance, some home students' reflection on their own beliefs through comparisons between China's national day celebration and that of other countries shows they realized the importance of not making judgments based on their own cultural standard. Furthermore, home students' ability to identify key issues surrounding stereotypes, over-generalization and ethnocentrism were developed too.

The multicultural class learning experience helped them to realize that the individual differences and the uniqueness of each culture is valued and this produces a richness of cultural variety. To be intercultural speakers, they should learn how to acknowledge the existence of their stereotypes and even negative feelings about otherness in the multicultural classes so as to minimize their effect on communication.

Despite home students' development in critical cultural awareness, a gap is still waiting to be filled in the future course design. That is how to develop students' ability to evaluate cultural others with clearly defined criteria. From this perspective, in future ICC courses, educators could possibly integrate more UN and UNESCO documents published and updated with a specific aim to develop intercultural communications, such as *UNESCO's programme of action: Culture of peace and nonviolence* (UNESCO, 2013), *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives* (UNESCO, 2015), and *Education for sustainable development goals: Learning objectives* (UNESCO, 2017), etc.

Answer to Question 5: To what extent do the key values the home students bring to the multicultural context influence their ICC development?

As discussed in Section 2.4.2, Chinese values influenced the interaction between home students and overseas students and should be set aside as an independent dimension and integrated into Chinese students' ICC development. Sufficient instances were identified from the questionnaire, reflective journals, interviews, and observation which indicated the crucial role Chinese values plays in the contact. First, almost all the home students showed their strong willingness to introduce Chinese culture both in the pre-questionnaire and post-research questionnaire. Such kind of attitude originated from their strong patriotism, which would sometimes influence their interaction with overseas students, as most of the Chinese students viewed "telling a Chinese story" as their obligation. It should be emphasized here is that "being patriotic" is one kind of pervasive emotion for people worldwide, but it may go to the extreme of ethnocentrism, rejecting otherness, and therefore an appropriate attitude is necessary. My data (see 4.3.5.1) show that some students did demonstrate increasing awareness of being patriotic without being ethnocentric, which was one of the pedagogical objectives emphasized in the course. Second, Chinese cultural values, such as "group harmony," influenced many home students a lot when they encountered cultural difference, as discussed in Section 4.2.5.2. However, maintenance of harmonious relationship would require good understanding of deeply rooted values such as beliefs in what a good learner/person is, being active or obedient in the classroom, differences between collectivism and individualism and so forth. Understanding the influence of Chinese cultural values in contact with otherness can help students to become successful intercultural speakers in the future, as they learn to interpret their responses and behaviors from a rational viewpoint when experiencing misunderstanding. Hence, it should be put into consideration in the design of an ICC development

model for the Chinese context.

Answer to Question 6: To what extent does the intervention make a difference in terms of enhancement of English competence?

As for the enhancement of English competence, whether this intervention helped to realize this objective is difficult to evaluate. Lack of native speakers in this multicultural context and differing lingua franca needs and practice seem to be barriers to English competence enhancement. However, some insights gained from this research deserve to be mentioned. First, studying in a multicultural context develops home students' confidence in speaking English. Speaking with someone who is a native English speaker usually brings pressure for home students, as native English speakers have their natural advantage in communication (Len, Fang, & Li, 2021). However, the multicultural context provides a chance for home students to experience communication with people from different cultures and with different accents in English. As their English is not seen as a native speaker standard, the home students in this study discovered more about language's communicative function without focusing solely on its grammar and pronunciation. Secondly, the multicultural context learning experience also strengthens home students' understandings about the varieties of English (Kachru, 2009). Home students gradually realized that linguistic competence is an inseparable part of ICC (Bryam, 2008), and it plays a crucial role in achieving comfortable and seamless communication. Therefore, to the language teachers, linguistic proficiency is a very important competence in the process of education for ICC. Equally significantly, as the data indicate, the university or the teacher cannot simply decide the choice of lingua franca in a multicultural and multilingual educational setting. As all the students in the multicultural context are plurilingual, the lingua franca is negotiated according to specific situations as it serves as a facilitator of interaction. It varies in accordance with the purpose of interaction and the preference and the needs of the students themselves.

Having answered the research questions through the analysis of the empirical data, the following section will discuss the extent to which this study could contribute to the existing literature.

5.2 Contributions of the Findings to the Existing Insights

This study highlighted the need to reconceptualise ICC in the Chinese education context from both the macro and micro levels. The multicultural class in this study reminded us of how different the learning context was when compared with 10 years or even 5 years ago. At the macro level, this setting demonstrated that young Chinese students were exposed, to a lesser or greater extent, to a multicultural context regardless of whether they are willing to be involved in it or not. This new context allows and pushes every student to make contact with people from different countries and thus every teacher to rethink of his/her teaching. It goes beyond the traditional

notion of tourists, businessmen, and diplomats being the only ones who need to learn about multicultural communication. Furthermore, the growing diversified and interconnected modern world requires global villagers to understand and resolve global issues together, such as the COVID-19, environmental pollution, and the gap between the rich and the poor. Considering that these issues have emerged in the new era, developing Chinese students' ICC and, to that end, reconceptualising ICC at the micro classroom level is necessary for the specific setting and timing.

The findings from this study also make it possible to make recommendations for the unique as well as general components of ICC from the real interactions of Chinese students with overseas students. Thus, the outcomes will make the ICC components more appropriate for the Chinese education context. For example, this study believes that ICC entails not only the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations between two or more cultures but also the ability to demonstrate "concern for global well-being beyond national boundaries, and on the basis of the understanding that global well-being also influences national and local well-being" (Lee, 2012). In other words, global cultural awareness, local cultural understanding, and the use of English and less-commonly-used languages as *lingua francas* shall all be taken into consideration in reconceptualising intercultural attitude, knowledge, and skills. The following recommendations made according to the findings of this study are intended to make the ICC development in home students more suitable for the Chinese educational context.

First, this study demonstrated the necessity of considering the context. It supports the call to revise learning outcomes to fit into specific multicultural educational contexts (Zhang, 2012). Every context is different but important in developing ICC. As for this study, the multicultural educational context serves as the role of 'fieldwork', for which Byram (2021, p.94) stated that "there is pedagogical structure and educational objectives determined by the teacher". Though this multicultural class was not a short-term visit nor a long-term period of residence, it provided similar chances for students to be immersed in real contact, thus playing a key role in developing students' ICC. The multicultural class in this study served as a living and working context with different communicative purposes for students. In living on the same campus, most home students pursued making friends or keeping harmonious relationships with overseas students, which was characteristic of relationship-oriented communication. For the working context, most of the home students focused on finishing tasks efficiently, which turned to be a task-oriented form of communication. One of the immediate aims of developing home students' ICC was therefore to facilitate them in the internationalized living and working context. An ICC course that takes into account all of the dimensions investigated in this study is thus essential.

Secondly, the components of ICC should include critical cultural awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, values in contact and the target language competence in the context. The intervention study was designed on the basis of these key components and indicated that these components were

helpful and practical. Findings from this action research also showed that the development of these six components developed in a spiraling process—they benefited from each other's development and kept being improved together after each cycle throughout the process. For example, the home students' increased knowledge was helpful to create a positive attitude. The findings revealed that the increased knowledge about a country motivated home students to interact more with people from that country and helped them to develop an open attitude to cultural differences. These developmental cycles would inform future cohorts in multicultural classes to work more efficiently in interactions.

As for the relationship among these components, this study agrees that knowledge is the base of developing ICC and an appropriate attitude is the pre-condition. Considering the multicultural context, both home and overseas students should learn specific knowledge, own and other cultural knowledge, and intercultural knowledge. Global knowledge should also be added to this dimension when considering the real world. Attitude is fundamental to understanding and appreciating other cultures, as well as the motivation to interact with members of other cultures. Findings from this research showed that students' personal experiences influence the degree of this development (openness, curiosity, questioning, and readiness). As for the skills dimension, verbal communication, non-verbal communication, and communicative strategy are all important. Verbal communication is comparatively easy to be improved, non-verbal communication can be gained, and communicative competence has to be practiced. Critical cultural awareness is the most vital component and can be developed by well-designed teaching, especially by self-reflection. Cultural values greatly influence people's interaction in the Chinese context, as the need to maintain balance and harmony in interpersonal relations is the most demanding aspect in personal interaction (Kim, 2002). This study supports this view with the evidence that effective intercultural interaction could only be derived from building relationships, as most home students considered making friends with overseas students as one of their motivations to interact with people from different cultures. Last but not least, the data collected from this study prove that real-time interaction contributed a lot in developing students' ICC.

Among all these components of ICC, this research agrees that critical cultural awareness is the core of ICC, and is the essential and ultimate goal for ICC education. According to Byram (1997, p.101), critical cultural awareness is an "ability to evaluate, critically and based on explicit criteria". In the explanation of "explicit criteria", Byram (2009, p.324) suggests that an intercultural speaker should have a "rational and explicit standpoint" from which to evaluate. This implies that an intercultural speaker should have a morality that is born in his/her practice to evaluate the different cultures including his/her own. My research indicates that ICC training could help to develop learners' criteria with regard to their own stereotype, ethnocentrism, and discrimination. On the other hand, adopting the Kantian tradition and ideological perspectives that refer to human rights and religious bases as suggested by Byram (2009) can be a challenging task

for ICC training. Because judging others could be very sensitive and even risky, as it usually goes beyond ones' own value system. From this perspective, political education merited attention in critical cultural awareness development.

Last but not least, the goal for ICC development in this research was to cultivate intercultural speakers, as discussed in Section 3.3.1. An intercultural speaker is aware of cultural similarities and differences, and is able to act as mediator between two or more cultures, two or more sets of beliefs, values and behavior (Byram, 2008, p.75). This definition echoes "Global Citizen Education," which highlights the essential functions of education related to the "formation of citizenship [in relation] with globalization," and prepares young people to "deal with the challenges of today's increasingly interconnected and independent world" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 15). Therefore, ICC development should be an approach adopted by all subject teachers to cultivate students as intercultural speakers. In the Chinese context, however, FLT is expected to play a key role in global citizenship education since English serves as a lingua franca in the globalizing world. Hence, ICC should be integrated into FLT, and viewed as an approach fundamental to global citizenship. The desired goal for ICC development is cultivating intercultural speakers, that is, the global citizens, who are not only engaged in their learning, but able to learn critically and reflectively from other cultures, relate to their own culture, and keep growing from such a reflective engagement process.

This section has outlined the theoretical implication of this study in terms of a reconceptualising definition of ICC. Next, I will illustrate the pedagogical implications in the Chinese educational context.

5.3 Pedagogical Implication

As stated earlier, little empirical research has explored home student challenges associated with interacting with fellow overseas students who bring diverse past experiences and cultural values to add more variables to the multicultural educational context. Thus, this study adds new knowledge to this field of research—via its focus on the home students' experience with the intervention in a multicultural class—and enables me to draw the following pedagogical implications.

5.3.1 Implications for Universities

Students' ICC can be enhanced through intercultural education and training. The field of education has taken a leadership role in developing students' ICC (Bennett, 2009). According to Sun (2016), ICC has been identified as an essential learning outcome for all fields of concentration and for all majors. The finding of this study highlights the challenge universities face to use the internationalization of higher education to foster intercultural speakers. Some approaches as listed below should be recommended.

First, developing ICC can be an objective of any university subject but needs some intervention and guidance to be successful. Hence, top-down policies should be made to guarantee implementation of ICC development in learners. Universities should take the initiative to identify teaching objectives, clarify teaching content, create teaching activities, evaluate the teaching effect, and, more importantly, promote the cooperation of all departments to foster students' ICC development. In the university where I conducted this research, for example, cooperation and communication is lacking between the international office that is responsible for overseas students' management and course lecturers who are responsible for teaching. Furthermore, there was no clear university policy to follow, both parties manage students in their own way. As a result, these overseas students participate in the local class without knowing the basic rules of classroom management. Consequently, this scenario leads to misunderstanding and sometimes even causes conflicts, as discussed in the case of being late for class.

Second, the university needs to promote the ethos of a globalizing world and raise students' awareness of future workplace demands by embedding the relevance of intercultural competencies in the context of professional practice. Moreover, new kinds of student clubs, such as Model United Nations and International Communication Association, could be created, considering the key role they play in students' after-class learning. These clubs can organize forums, such as "Global Challenges and Local Solutions" to help students to practice their ICC ability and raise their awareness of the globalizing world.

Third, all universities should maximize the benefits and opportunities created by internationalization of higher education to promote mixing overseas students with home students. Bird and Holmes (2005) argued that a university should focus on identifying the benefits of intercultural contact to promote communication. According to them, most students are not aware of the potential value of mixing with cultural others. Such idea proved valid in this study, as individuals may not acquire ICC, and they may not be able to obtain it through limited exposure to and encounters with people from other cultural affiliations, or if the contact takes place under unsuitable conditions. Hence, the university should popularize multicultural classes, develop theory-informed curricula, and organize appropriate intercultural events for both home and overseas students.

5.3.2 Implications for the Improvement of Teaching Design

Teachers and course designers have a responsibility to facilitate the development of students' ICC as an integral part of university study (De Wit, 1995; Otten, 2003). As presented in Chapter 3, this study was designed with a pedagogical model in mind for developing students' ICC, which guided all the teaching sessions. Through the application of this model in my research in the past couple of years, including the semester in which evaluative data were collected for the thesis, I present

the model as shown in Figure 5.1 in order to inform future endeavors:

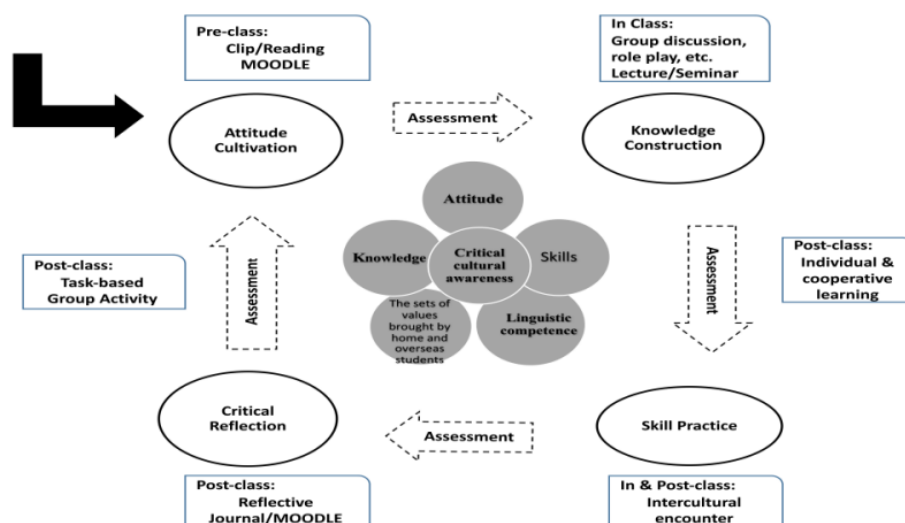


Figure 5.1 Teaching Practice Model for ICC Development

As seen in Figure 5.1, this ICC teaching practice model consists of three parts that respectively represent teaching content, procedures, and activities. The teaching content, which lies in the center of this model as well as serves as the teaching objectives, includes critical cultural awareness, the sets of values brought by home and overseas students, linguistic competence, skills, knowledge and attitude, with critical cultural awareness being the most crucial aspect. The second level consists of assessment-based teaching activities that include attitude development, knowledge construction, skills practice, and critical reflection. It is important to note that these assessments are formative and non-psychometric which run through the entire teaching process, and thus can motivate students' participation and help the teacher to examine his/her teaching practices. The third level is made up of teaching activities, which range from pre-class and in class to post-class. A detailed explanation follows.

The Attitude Cultivation stage is a pre-class activity. It depends on the MOODLE e-learning platform from which the teacher shares the prepared clips or reading materials related to the topics to motivate students' learning curiosity and develop their intercultural attitude. It is problem-oriented, including exercises on the recognition of cultural similarities and differences, negotiations of possible differences, and reflections on cultural comparison. These implications encourage students to find the answers to the questions listed by the teacher. Through this process, the teacher would have a basic understanding about students' learning ability and how much they have gained about the new knowledge.

The Knowledge Construction stage is very important in the teaching process. It is combined with

various teaching input to help students construct their own knowledge about self-culture, culture of others, and knowledge about intercultural interactions. It is divided into two steps: in-class learning and post-class learning. In-class learning is led by the teacher through lectures and seminars. Post-class learning has two parts to realize knowledge construction. First, the teacher gives students an assignment according to the teaching content. By searching for the related information individually or cooperatively from the Internet, students gain their own knowledge. Secondly, students are encouraged to participate in Internet cooperative learning, that is, the teacher delivered learning resources for students to learn further. Resources like *Chinese University MOOC*, *FiF*, and *Future-learn* are popular online teaching platforms that are carefully selected according to teaching content and students' learning ability.

The Skills Practice stage is the stage in which students realize “learning by doing” and check how much they have learned about the knowledge. In this stage, students are encouraged to work with their overseas classmates thus to provide the intercultural encounter for both home and overseas students to practice their intercultural skills. Their interaction does not involve free talking but is instead directed with the purpose of accomplishing the teachers' assignment. These assignments are delivered after each teaching session according to the teaching content with the aim of students experiencing and discovering cultural differences.

The Critical Reflection stage provides opportunities for both students and the teacher to rethink their learning and teaching process, respectively, and move to the new circle of the teaching stage. In this stage, students are asked to write in their reflective journal with the guidance of the teacher and share their journals on MOODLE.

To ensure the students' attendance and to motivate their learning enthusiasm, a formative assessment is adopted across the whole process. According to Black et al. (2002), formative assessment serves the purpose of promoting students' learning, but does not serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking. Because formative assessment provides information to be used as feedback both for teachers and students, it helps the former to adapt the teaching work to meet the latter's learning needs. Therefore, the nature of formative assessment enables the teacher to get a picture of the students' learning situation, thus allowing the teacher to adjust the teaching content and methods accordingly in developing students' ICC.

5.3.3 Implications for the Improvement of the Teaching Content

The findings of this study suggested implications for the improvement of the course from at least two aspects. First, from the perspective of the teaching materials, the study recommends three important areas: the incorporation of knowledge on self-culture and its articulation, the expansion of other culture, and the comprehension of deep cultural knowledge. The first one suggested that sufficient knowledge on Chinese culture should be incorporated into English teaching content that

can effectively arouse students' self-cultural awareness while motivating their self-reflection on similar cultural aspects. The second one indicated that the encounters with other culture needs to transcend the British and American culture commonly discussed in EFL textbooks to include cultures in other regions, such as Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Hence, the culture of others should be expanded, or the teacher should at least stimulate students' curiosity in the diversity of other cultures so as to search for relevant information themselves. The third aspect suggested that the teaching material should include deep cultural knowledge. The data collected by this study revealed that most of the home students were aware of superficial culture, such as food and festivals. However, deep culture including beliefs and values beneath the surface remains largely unexplored. With the inclusion of the appropriate level of deep cultural knowledge, students can perform better in real-life interactions and further develop their ICC.

The second implication in the course involves recommendations on instructional techniques. Findings indicated that group projects were of great support for developing students' ICC in the multicultural class. Students searched for information, interpreted and analyzed a cultural problem, and then made a final decision through group discussions. Evidently, home students' real-life interaction with overseas students in this multicultural class, both in and after the class, promoted all the aspects of their ICC development. Findings also revealed that self-reflection and introspection contributed greatly to the students' ICC development, especially for critical cultural awareness development. Hence, it is crucial for teachers to initiate appropriate thought-provoking questions and well-designed critical reflection for students in the teaching process to facilitate students' ICC.

5.4 Limitation of the Study

This action research project has its limitations. First, the limitation of the time constraint was apparent. These home students studied with overseas students in this multicultural class for only one semester in a class that lasted 90 minutes a week. The chances of real-time interaction were therefore limited, even though I had designed a series of group tasks for the students to finish after class. With regard to effects, a longer course would likely foster students' ICC development more substantively.

Limitations of my research were also obvious in the data collection, as they were gathered from one class at one college at a Tier-2 university at one particular time. Thus, the data could not represent the entire Chinese university student population. In addition, the representativeness of the case is at its best limited to Tier-2 universities only.

Within the confine of this thesis, I did not provide the perspectives of overseas students regarding their ICC development in my research design. Given more time and space in a further study, presentation of the experience and views of the overseas students could possibly help to enrich the

understanding of the home students' ICC development.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Study

The completion of this study presented the answers to the research question listed at the beginning of my research. However, the culmination also prompted additional questions yet to be answered and more research to be done.

As discussed in the previous section, the data of this study rely heavily on Chinese students' learning experience in this multicultural class without presenting enough evidence about how these overseas students reacted to and interpreted their Chinese classmates' communication and interaction behaviors. As crucial participants in the context, the voice of overseas students should be another valuable dimension for further studies, even with a focus on home students' ICC development. This kind of correlation study may benefit validity for future studies and help to draw a more holistic view of home students' ICC development.

Secondly, having developed a model of ICC training in the multicultural context, the effectiveness of this intervention could be further tested and discussed in similar classes to improve its effectiveness and increase its generalisability. And it could be experimented in a less multicultural class too. As introduced in Chapter 4, there was a parallel class in my action research with which I only made a comparison by using the AIC-CCS measurements to demonstrate the effectiveness of my intervention. How can this program be implemented to students without a multicultural environment, or with limited direct contact with overseas students? Despite the growing numbers of international students, this is still the reality for most university students in China. With the help of the internet, to some extent, the 'multicultural context' could be achieved by providing students with an online collaborative environment and creating a virtual intercultural communication situation as realistic as possible. Furthermore, critical incidents based on the uses of documented practical situations, realistic scenarios or real-life problems (Sorrels, 2012) could also be a choice for solving this problem. To conclude, approaches to enable students to develop their ICC in a less multicultural class is worth merited attention in the future study.

5.6 Conclusion

This thesis provides a practical perspective on developing students' ICC in the Chinese education context. It gives evidence that a well-designed curriculum facilitates home students' ICC development in a multicultural class. Despite some limitations, the intercultural training model recommended in this research is believed to be, to a lesser or greater degree, replicable in and applicable to other similar universities in China.

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Appendix 1

Pre-Questionnaire for Local Students

(English Version)

Thank you for your precious time. Your responses are very valuable to this investigation. It won't take you more than 10 minutes to complete this form. Please feel free to use as much space as necessary.

Gender _____ Age _____

1. What aspects of foreign cultures are you familiar with, such as music, art, food, manners, rituals, ect.?

Please give some examples.

2. Do you have any interaction experience with people from other cultures? Yes _____ No _____

When? _____

Who with? _____

How often? _____

3. Do you find any difficulties when you interact with people from other cultures? Yes _____ No _____

If so what types of difficulties?

4. Give an example of a situation in which you experienced a misunderstanding when you interacted with people from other cultures.

-Misunderstanding:

Did you solve this problem? If yes, how?

5. Do you know the term intercultural communicative competence?

What does the term mean to you?

Appendix 2

Assessment of Intercultural Competence of Chinese College

Students

(AIC-CCS)

(English Version)

Directions:

Please take 20 minute to complete the following assessment. This assessment will be given at the beginning of the program and again at the end. The purpose of this assessment is to generate information about the effects of the program and its activities.

Your responses on this assessment will not affect how you are evaluated in this program. The instructor will not examine the results of this assessment until after the end of the program and your final grades have been submitted. And also, your name will be removed from the assessment and a pseudonym will be used instead in all analysis and reporting. These data may be used as part of research study on the effect of this program.

If you have any concerns about this assessment, please feel free to contact me. You can at any time choose to not complete the assessment.

Demographic information

A. Age:

B. Have you passed the following exams? (Tick the following if you have passed)

TEM 4 ☐

CET 4 ☐

CET 6 ☐

Please answer all the following questions about yourself using a scale of 1-5. There are 40 items.

5=describes me extremely well

4=describes me well

3=describes me some of the time

2=seldom describes me

1=never describes me

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. I know the history of China. | (1 2 3 4 5) |
| 2. I know the geography culture of China. | (1 2 3 4 5) |
| 3. I know the politics of China. | (1 2 3 4 5) |
| 4. I know Chinese cultural customs. | (1 2 3 4 5) |
| 5. I know Chinese values. | (1 2 3 4 5) |
| 6. I know the social etiquettes of China. | (1 2 3 4 5) |
| 7. I know the religious culture of China. | (1 2 3 4 5) |

8. I know the cultural taboos of China. (1 2 3 4 5)
9. I know the history of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
10. I know the geography culture of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
11. I know the politics of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
12. I know cultural customs of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
13. I know other countries' values. (1 2 3 4 5)
14. I know the social etiquettes of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
15. I know the religious culture of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
16. I know the cultural taboos of other countries. (1 2 3 4 5)
17. I know the reasons of cultural differences. (1 2 3 4 5)
18. I know skills for successful intercultural communication. (1 2 3 4 5)
19. I am willing to interact with people from different culture. (1 2 3 4 5)
20. I am willing to discover cultural difference. (1 2 3 4 5)
21. I am willing to know different cultural values. (1 2 3 4 5)
22. I am willing to know different eating habits. (1 2 3 4 5)
23. I am willing to know cultural taboos of other cultures. (1 2 3 4 5)
24. I am willing to learn English and other cultures. (1 2 3 4 5)
25. I am willing to introduce Chinese culture to foreigners. (1 2 3 4 5)
26. I have the ability to identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in interaction and explaining them in terms of cultural systems present. (1 2 3 4 5)
27. I have the ability to communicating with otherness using body language or other nonverbal cues when language barriers arise. (1 2 3 4 5)
28. I have the ability to Communicating with people from different cultures by speaking in English. (1 2 3 4 5)
29. I try to avoid prejudice when communicating with people from different cultures. (1 2 3 4 5)
30. I try to avoid mentioning privacy issues when communicating with people from different cultures. (1 2 3 4 5)
31. I try to overcome conflicts when communicating with people from different cultures. (1 2 3 4 5)
32. I try to improve communication in English by using diverse kinds of routes and procedures. (1 2 3 4 5)
33. I try to acquiring new knowledge about cultures and cultural practices from diverse sources and strategies. (1 2 3 4 5)
34. I try to apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication

- and interaction. (1 2 3 4 5)
35. I realize that generalizations are only accurate for groups and may or may not be true of individuals. (1 2 3 4 5)
36. I realize that cultural differences and similarities may arise when communicating with otherness. (1 2 3 4 5)
37. I realize differences in cultural identity when communicating with otherness. (1 2 3 4 5)
38. I realize that cultural differences influence our life and work. (1 2 3 4 5)
39. I realize that language differences influence our life and work. (1 2 3 4 5)
40. I realize that I should judge cultural situations from my own perspective and that of others. (1 2 3 4 5)

Appendix 3

Student Interview Guide and Part of Transcript

Student Interview Guide

Date: **Place:** **Interviewee:**

Pre-interview activities:

- *Some small talk and some drink to establish rapport.
- *Explain the nature of the interview and sign the consent form.
- *Get the interviewee's permission to record the conversation.

Interview (the foci of interview):

- * In the interviewee's perception, what kind of changes take place in the critical cultural awareness, language competence, attitudes, knowledge, and skills of themselves in the multicultural classroom learning experience?
- *What are the interviewee's learning experience in the multicultural classroom? If there is any impressive part of this course?

Finishing interview

- *Thank the interviewee
- *Store the recording in time.

Note:

- *This is semi-structured interview.

Part of the Interview Transcript of HS2

Interview: I, the researcher

Interviewee: HS2 (H in short), a home student in this multicultural class

Some irrelevant information is omitted and replaced by “.....”

.....

I:Would you please share with me something that impressed you most about this course for this semester?

H: There should be a lot to be mentioned. I like this course very much. I think it is because this is the first time for me to have a chance to study together with overseas students which made this course different from others.

I: Could you explain what you mean by “different from others” please?

H: I mean that there are overseas students. You see, because of them, we have to speak in English. I like the class because it is a very good chance for me to improve my English. If I want to make friends with my international classmates, I have to speak and practice more. We are English majors, but most of the time for class group discussions we get used to talking in Chinese. While for this course, for considering these overseas students, we speak in English most of the time.

I: Does this mean your oral English has been practised?

H: Yes, not only my oral English, I would like to say, but also my listening ability. It is very interesting that these overseas students come from different countries and I have realized that they also have their own accents. I get used to different pronunciations. One more thing is that most of my classmates are getting more and more confident to speak in English because even foreigners have an accent too. [laughing] I mean, what we pursued before is standard English, but now, after attending this class, I think communication and understanding are more important than pronunciation.

I: Does that mean you become more confident when communicating with foreigners?

H: Yes, to some extent, I think I am more confident than before. I have to say that before attending this class I do not dare to talk with foreigners. I don't know any foreigners before. The only one I know is my foreign teacher. But, you know, it is not the same, I mean, the relationship between teacher and student is not the same as the relationship between overseas students and us. We are equal. Furthermore, it is because of you, that the assignment you gave forced us to do it together with the overseas student in our group. So we have to speak in English. To tell you truth, at the very beginning, we were worried, we did not dare to say. But you pushed us. And that kind of experience is not bad. [Laughing] At the very beginning, the communication between us is fully

dependent on my body language, I mean I don't know a lot of words, what I can do is that I look for new words on my mobile phone or by drawing pictures, I tried various kinds of ways to express what I would like to say.

I: Does that mean you realized more about the importance of nonverbal language?

H: Yes, before attending this course what I understood about communication is using language, but now I get to know it is not only by verbal language, but nonverbal language plays its role, and most of the time it plays a key role in the process of communication.

I: That's interesting, can you give me some examples?

H: For example, gesture. I have noticed that overseas students, their gesture is not the same as ours. We Chinese, when counting numbers, you know, our style. They (overseas students) are so lovely, they count numbers by counting their fingers. Uh...what I want to express is that our gesture represents different meanings, so sometimes they cannot fully understand what our gesture wants to express, and it's the same for us.

I: OK, I get it. So talking about this course, can I ask you that have you gained any new knowledge about intercultural communication?

H: That's a lot. For each lecture, you introduced us a lot, I think I have learned a lot about ICC.

I: Can you give me some examples?

H: Yes, for sure. For example, the stereotype. The clip about the "stereotype" ...I have to say it impressed me the most. I think I am the person in the video. In my mind, white people are from developed countries, whereas blacks are from Africa. OS3 (a Swedish student who is black) shared her experience with us. I felt so sorry about this. I never considered that my thoughts or actions are forms of discrimination or prejudice. But after watching this video and after hearing about OS3's experience, and putting myself in others' shoes, I realized I made a mistake. We should never judge others simply by their out-appearance.

I: Yes, that means we cannot take everything for granted when we communicate with people from different countries. From your case, I would like to say that there is a change in your attitude, right?

H: Yes, I was a little bit afraid about the Blacks...but now... thanks to OS3 and OS7, I would like to say they are very kind, lovely. When we did group work together, they helped us a lot. Now, I would like to say we are the same, I mean no matter whether you are black or yellow, as human beings we are the same. I would like to say movies influenced me a lot, I mean all my understanding about the Blacks are from movies, you know, the Blacks are always big-sized, not very kindly, but the fact is not like that.

I: Yes, by communication we get to understand more about others. By the way, did you learn

something new knowledge from this multicultural class? For example, did you learn something from the Swedish student in your group?

H: Yes, for sure. It is really interesting. For example, they told me that the most welcomed colours by Swedish girls were black, white and grey. Chinese girls like us do not like such colours...uh...Moreover, they celebrate Christmas one day before the other countries, which is very interesting. It means that December 24th is their Christmas while 23th is their Christmas eve... I get to realize that not every foreigner celebrates Christmas... One more example, the meatballs of Sweden, it is the same as IKEA sold, that's interesting. Uh, what is more, OS3 also showed us their traditional clothes which are very beautiful.

I: Sounds interesting. It seems that you learned a lot about their culture, how about other aspects, such as history? Politics?

H: Uh, my group members may know something, as for me, I am not that interested in politics so I did not ask questions about it. But, you've talked about the education system in class, and at that time, the overseas student in our group also introduced a lot about their way of education, for example, the marking system. They graded students under a five-level mark system, while for our university, we adopt a hundred-mark system, that's the reason why they feel confused when getting the score here in China.

I: I am interested in this five-level mark system, could you please explain it?

H: I cannot express it in a very detailed way, as far as I remember, it goes like "fail, pass, good, extremely good", which is completely different from us. No matter my classmates who were exchanged to overseas universities also feel puzzled when they received their report cards.

I: In fact, it is the same as us, right? You can get the meaning from this word they used.

H: Yes, what made me feel impressive is the different way we used to mark which also reflect the cultural difference.

I: I do agree. By the way, you've mentioned cultural differences, could you please share with me some examples of the cultural differences you have experienced in this class?

H: There are a lot that could be mentioned. Take greeting as an example, I have noticed that the student who is from France prefer using a kiss to greet each other. A very interesting thing is that when we get familiar with them, we greet them in the same way too. They told us this is a popular way of greeting good friends.

I: Haha, do you mean your attitude has been changed from "hard to understand" to "willing to accept"?

H: It doesn't mean "accept", I want to express that I get to know that kind of culture, and I can understand as well as "do as Romans do". Mutual respect is very important, right?

I: That's amazing. Can I ask you why you do not view this greeting in the same way at the very beginning?

H: ... To be honest, we Chinese do not get used to such behaviour, especially in public place...

I: So did you ever consider telling them your feeling that you do not want to do it?

H: Every country has its own culture. Respect the differences, and always remember that no one is wrong. An objective attitude is necessary when encountering cultural shock or misunderstanding; that is what we always do when communicating with our overseas classmates. For example, last week, the topic we discussed was abortion. Both of us had completely different opinions. We were surprised when OS1 told us that it is illegal in her country, and she felt surprised too by our attitude. We discussed together, and we told each other our respective histories and cultural background. Finally, we understood. However, it doesn't mean that she should agree with us, nor should we agree with her. Instead, we choose to respect others' choices and keep a harmonious relationship. I think successful intercultural communication is when all speakers feel comfortable.

I: I am very happy to hear about that, and I agree with you that successful communication is when all speakers feel comfortable.

H: As the Chinese saying goes, "if you want to be his friend, then you should first understand him." I mean mutual understanding is very important for true friendship. Surely, there will be the difference, even with people from the same cultural background, no matter to say people from different countries. But we can seek common points while reserving differences, right?

.....

Appendix 4

Data Analysis Stages

*I adopted the approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke ,2006) to analyze the interview data. To be specific, the analysis went through the six stages procedure as follows.

Stages	Description of the process
Familiarizing stage	Immersing myself with data, transcribing the data, reading/listening repeatedly the data, writing ideas alongside the transcripts.
Generating stage	Generating initial codes, coding these recurring themes as potential themes(data-driven), seeking answers corresponding to research questions (theory-driven), collating data relevant to each code.
Searching stage	Looking for themes, collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
Reviewing stage	Reviewing these themes across the entire data set
Analysing stage	Defining and naming the specific themes
Reporting stage	Selecting the vivid and compelling examples, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature,

Appendix 5

Instances of initial analysis of H's transcription

Interviewee's own words	Key words	Potential themes	Sub-category	Category	Note
I like the class because it is a very good chance for me to improve my English.	‘like’ ‘good chance’ ‘improve my English’	Practice English	Willingness to practice English	Attitude	
I want to make friends with my international classmates, I have to speak and practice more.	‘have to’ ‘speak and practice more’	Practice English			
It is very interesting that these overseas students come from different countries and I have realized that they also have their own accents. I get used to different pronunciations.	‘interesting’ ‘different accents’ ‘get used to’	Willing to know	Willingness to know cultural difference		Attitude change
What made me feel impressive is the different way we used to mark which also reflect the cultural difference.	‘impressive’	Willing to know			
It is really interesting. For example, they told me that the most welcomed colours by Swedish girls were black, white and grey. Chinese girls like us do not like such colours...uh...	‘interesting’ ‘colours’	Willing to know			
I think I am more confident than before. I have	‘more confident’ ‘talk with foreigners’	communicate	Willingness to interact		Attitude change

to say that before attending this class I do not dare to talk with foreigners.					
To tell you truth, at the very beginning, we were worried, we did not dare to say. But you pushed us. And that kind of experience is not bad.	‘say’ ‘not bad’	communicate			Attitude change
I was a little bit afraid about the Blacks...but now... thanks to OS3 and OS7, I would like to say they are very kind, lovely. When we did group work together, they helped us a lot. Now, I would like to say we are the same, I mean no matter whether you are black or yellow, as human beings we the same.	‘we are the same’ ‘Blacks’	engage with otherness in a relationship of equality			Attitude change
As the Chinese saying goes, “if you want to be his friend, then you should first understand him.”	‘friendship’ ‘understanding’	engage with otherness in a relationship of equality			Factors lead to change
It is really interesting. For example, they told me that the most welcomed colours by Swedish girls were black, white and grey. Chinese girls like us do not like such colours...uh...	‘colours’	colours	Knowledge about others	Knowledge	
...overseas students come from different countries and I have realized that they also have their own accents.	‘different accents’	accent			

Moreover, they celebrate Christmas one day before the other countries, which is very interesting. It means that December 24 th is their Christmas while 23 th is their Christmas eve... I get to realize that not every foreigner celebrates Christmas...	‘Christmas’ ‘not every foreigner celebrates Christmas’	Festival			*Good example
One more example, the meatballs of Sweden, it is the same as IKEA sold, that’s interesting.	‘meatballs of Sweaden’	Food			
Uh, what is more, OS3 also showed us their traditional clothes which are very beautiful.	‘traditional clothes’	Clothes			
I have noticed that overseas students, their gesture is not the same as ours. We Chinese, when counting numbers, you know, our style. They (overseas students) are so lovely, they count numbers by counting their fingers.	‘not the same’ ‘counting numbers’ ‘different meanings’	Behavior			
Take greeting as an example, I have noticed that the student who is from France prefer using a kiss to greet each other. They told us this is a popular way of greeting good friends.	‘greeting’	Behavior			
For example, the marking system. They graded students under a five-level mark system, while for our university, we adopt a hundred-mark	‘marking system’	Education			

system, that's the reason why they feel confused when getting the score here in China.					
My group members may know something, as for me, I am not that interested in politics so I didn't ask questions about it.	‘not interested’ ‘politics’	Reason of the absence of ‘politics’			
For each lecture, you introduced us a lot, I think I have learned a lot about ICC.	‘ICC’	ICC knowledge	Knowledge about ICC		From lecture
The clip about the “stereotype” ...I have to say it impressed me the most. I think I am the person in the video...OS3 (a Swedish student who is black) shared her experience with us. I felt so sorry about this. I never considered that my thoughts or actions are forms of discrimination or prejudice... I realized I made a mistake. We should never judge others simply by their out-appearance.	‘stereotype’	ICC knowledge			From OS *Good example
I mean mutual understanding is very important for true friendship. Surely, there will be the difference, even with people from the same cultural background, no matter to say people from different countries. But we can seek common points while reserving differences,	‘mutual understanding’	Mutual respect	Identifying areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in interaction and explaining them of cultural systems present	Skill	Interaction strategies

right?					
A very interesting thing is that when we get familiar with them, we greet them in the same way too. It doesn't mean "accept", I want to express that I get to know that kind of culture, and I can understand as well as "do as Romans do". Mutual respect is very important, right?	'greet the same way' 'do as Romans do'	Mutual respect			
For example, last week, the topic we discussed was abortion. Both of us had completely different opinions. We were surprised when OS1 told us that it is illegal in her country, and she felt surprised too by our attitude. We discussed together, and we told each other our respective histories and cultural background. Finally, we understood. However, it doesn't mean that she should agree with us, nor should we agree with her. Instead, we choose to respect others' choices and keep a harmonious relationship. I think successful intercultural communication is when all speakers feel comfortable.	'abortion' 'surprised' 'respect' 'harmonious relationship' 'comfortable'	Mutual respect			*Good example
At the very beginning, the communication	'fully dependent'	Non-verbal language	Communicating with		

between us is fully dependent on my body language, I mean I don't know a lot of words, what I can do is that I look for new words on my mobile phone or by drawing pictures, I tried varies kinds of ways to express what I would like to say.	'drawing pictures' 'varies kinds of way to express'		otherness using body language or other nonverbal cues when language barriers arise		
Before attending this course what I understood about communication is using language, but now I get to know it is not only by verbal language, but nonverbal language plays its role, and most of the time it plays a key role in the process of communication.	'nonverbal language' 'plays a key role'				
...what I want to express is that our gesture represents different meanings, so sometimes they cannot fully understand what our gesture wants to express, and it's the same for us.	'gesture' 'different meaning'				
Every country has its own culture. Respect the differences, and always remember that no one is wrong. An objective attitude is necessary when encountering cultural shock or misunderstanding; that is what we always do when communicating with our overseas	'no one is wrong' 'objective attitude'	equality	Realizing cultural differences influence our life and work when communicating with otherness	Critical cultural awareness	*Good example

classmates.					
What I want to express is that our gesture represents different meanings, so sometimes they cannot fully understand what our gesture wants to express, and it's the same for us.	'different gesture' 'different meaning' 'cannot understand'	Cultural difference influence communication			
No matter my classmates who were exchanged to overseas universities also feel puzzled when they receive their report cards.	'feel puzzled'	Cultural difference influence communication			
I would like to say movies influenced me a lot, I mean all my understanding about the Blacks are from movies.	'movies'	Sources of beliefs	Identify where their beliefs came from		
You know, the Blacks are always big-sized, not very kindly, but the fact is not like that.	'not like that'	Over-generalization	Realizing generalization may not be true of individuals		
I get to realize that not every foreigner celebrates Christmas.	'not every foreigner'				
I felt so sorry about this. I never considered that my thoughts or actions are forms of discrimination or prejudice.	'sorry' 'never consider'	Self-reflection	Judging cultural situations from one's own and that of others		
Instead, we choose to respect others' choices and keep a harmonious relationship. I think successful intercultural communication is when all speakers feel comfortable.	'harmonious relationship'	Harmony	Group harmony	Chinese culture values	

Because of them ,we have to speak in English	‘have to’	Practice in English			
We are English majors, but most of the time for class group discussions we get used to talking in Chinese. While for this course, for considering these overseas students, we speak in English most of the time.	‘speak in English’ ‘most of the time’	Practice in English	More chances for English practicing		
Yes, not only my oral English, I would like to say, but also my listening ability.	‘oral English’ ‘listening ability’	English competence			
One more thing is that most of my classmates are getting more and more confident to speak in English because even foreigners have an accent too.	‘more and more’ ‘confident to speak’	English competence	Developed language competence	English as lingua franca	
I mean, what we pursued before is standard English, but now, after attending this class, I think communication and understanding are more important than pronunciation.	‘communication and understanding are more important’	Intelligibility	Intelligibility of ‘Englishes’		*Good example
There should be a lot to be mentioned (impressed about the multicultural class).	‘a lot’	Appreciation of multicultural class	Willingness to participate to multicultural class		
I like this course very much. I think it is because this is the first time for me to have a chance to study together with overseas students which made this course different from others.	‘like’ ‘first time’ ‘study together with overseas students’	Appreciation of multicultural class	Willingness to participate to multicultural class	Multicultural class	

The assignment you gave forced us to do it together with the overseas student in our group.	‘forced’ ‘do it together’	Real-life interaction	Context for developing ICC		
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Appendix 6

Sample of Home Students' Reflective Journals

(G1-1)

TM1

I think this course is a process for us English major students to expand our eye sights. We can learn some cultural phenomena through this course. We, students, live at home and **seldom have chances to communicate with foreigners** unless doing jobs about the interpretation or something like this. But in this course, we have international students as our classmates, so we will have more chances to get in touch with information about them and their culture. **I am a little bit shy when communicating with my overseas classmates. However, I appreciate this opportunity, so I will try my best.**

TM2

Today we studied many interesting phenomena. Our teacher shared her trip to Japan and told us some notifications about rubbish classification. Besides, we have realized some countries' cultures. Except for this, we have studied the **"Iceberg of Culture"** which impressed me most. Culture doesn't simply mean what is allowed to do or what is not allowed to do, it affects many factors, like economic, political or social. We have to study hard to deeply learn this course, to broaden our minds and thinking. By the way, **OS4 once told me that clothes in Sweden do not have many colours, and I wondered why. It was interesting and I wanted to know more, so I searched on the Internet. Maybe, using colour is taboo.**

TM3

I used to think it is hard to communicate with foreigners, but after a few weeks, I changed my mind. Well-preparing for the assignment, our group sat together to talk well with international students. **I tried to express myself loudly.** Although I made grammatical mistakes, they didn't influence our communication. I think that collaborating with international students is delightful, and I hope we can have many classes like this. During this period, I think the Spanish girl is pretty generous and cute. She has many genuine ideas and I think it is so cool. My group have OS4 as our group member and we chat sometimes. We communicate our thoughts together. And I recommend a Chinese TV series to her the day before yesterday! I am so excited. And she is interested in that as well.

TM4

I have to say we did a great job last lecture. We did the assignment as teamwork and did our parts carefully and enthusiastically. I would like to say **we have never experienced that kind of teamwork before**, usually, we like to finish our homework by ourselves. What is more, for the case Marcia shared, actually most of us don't have such kind of experience in the story, but the international students. I did the part with her. It shocked me that she grasped the point immediately while I didn't, and she was nice to wait for me until I finished reading the story so that we can have a discussion. In my opinion, most the international friends are kind. But in the story, it seemed people from Norway didn't treat her well. **What would happen if a Chinese student go to such a kind country?**

TM5

In this activity of watching movies with overseas students, I think the most interesting part is communicating with them. We all come from different countries, speak different languages and experience different living habits. **Many ideas are different from each other, but we can still be friends.** When we cannot understand the language, we **use exaggerated body movements** to express it. **I found that the most important thing in interpersonal communication is sincerity.**

TM6

I would like to say that the most interesting part is explaining “what is 人中 ” for OS4. Because we don’t know how to translate 人中 either, and we don’t know why when you feel uncomfortable, you can pinch the place then you will feel better. I feel a little bit sad that I am not that familiar with my own culture. We know this activity but we do not know the reason behind it. But what I learned today is that when I don’t know how to explain one thing exactly, I can use my body language to help, just like what I did for “人中”. Secondly, maybe the different meaning between like and love. We are confused when we see the video, and the boy says: “I like them, but I only love you.” And OS7 explained to us that like is different from love also. But in Chinese “like” seems like the way to express love. What’s more, I learned how to get along with my overseas classmates. Thinking twice before doing or saying something and respecting different perspectives are good practices I have learned from this course. I gradually adapted to this multicultural classroom; **I adjusted my learning style, social skills, and even my mindset according to different communication scenarios.**

Appendix 7

Instances of Attitude written in students' reflective journals

(full list of the sub-category of 'willingness to communicate')

Sub-category	Evidence
<p>Willingness to communicate</p> <p>N=38</p>	<p>I think it is a great chance to communicate with foreigners in the class. (TM1, G3-1)</p> <p>I am a little bit shy when communicating with my overseas classmates. However, I appreciate this opportunity, so I will try my best. (TM1,G1-1)</p> <p>I am always willing to make friends with international friends.(TM1,G3-4)</p> <p>I am willing to be a good friend of foreigners. (TM1,G3-7)</p> <p>I am an active girl and willing to meet different friends, to experience different cultures. (TM1, G2-2)</p> <p>I am willing to communicate with foreigners. It is an enjoyable experience with foreigners to have a face to face talk. (TM1,G3-4)</p> <p>This is really the first time I've been in a group with an international student and talking face-to-face. Hope to have more communication with her in the future. (TM1,G6-3)</p> <p>During the class, I met a very lovely foreigner from Ethiopia. She was a little bit shy, but she got well with us and joined our discussion very quickly. She listened carefully to our ideas and also gave us her witty ideas. Although we come from different countries, we become friends soon. I am looking forward to the next class. (TM1,G6-4)</p> <p>I am willing to seek and use opportunities to interact with others in an equal relationship. Because in this process, it can enhance my spoken language level, at the same time, I can also learn more foreign cultures and knowledge, I think this is a very interesting thing.” (TM1 , G1-5)</p> <p>During our communication, I will respect their views and be willing to share our culture when we experience the foreign culture. (TM1, G1-6)</p> <p>I am willing to establish equal relations with foreigners and become friends. (TM1,G3-5)</p> <p>I am willing to seek or use opportunities to interact with others in an equal relationship. Because I want to improve my oral English ability through communication with them, and learn some western culture different from my own culture through them. (TM1,G4-3)</p> <p>I am very interested in telling foreign students about the origin of Chinese festivals and some fairy tales, such as "年 nian", and then I am also interested in listening to them explain their own festivals or traditions. (TM2, G3-3)</p>

	<p>I am willing to seek opportunities to engage with others in a equal relationship. And actually the relationship of equality and respect has been built by me and my foreign friends. (TM2, G1-2)</p> <p>Communicating with foreigners is exactly what I want to do, and I want to have more interactive experiences.(TM2,G3-3)</p> <p>I'm willing to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality, distinct from seeking out the exotic or to profit from others. We get along well with the foreign students in our group, discussing, cooperating and learning together. (TM2, G2-3)</p> <p>I am willing to seek each opportunity to interact with foreign students. Because I want to improve my English and learn more about western cultures. And also it is very interesting to communicate with them.(TM2,G3-2)</p> <p>I am interested in cross-cultural communication.(TM2,G7-1)</p> <p>I got to know many foreign students from different countries in this class. In the communication again and again, we will be more integrated and familiar with each other.(TM2,G7-3)</p> <p>I am passionate about socializing with any classmates, including foreign friends.(TM2,G4-1)</p> <p>I'm willing to talk with foreigners about cultural difference. In this process, it will overturn the previous impression on them, I think it's interesting. Also, as an English major, I always seek the opportunities to contact with foreigners.(TM2,G4-2)</p> <p>"I find it is interesting to discuss with international students... and each time after communication, I will have a further understanding of the ideas of international student."(TM2,G5-2)</p> <p>I'm not that kind of a social person, but I try my best to build a friendly relationship with the international student, and I would like to say I enjoy this communication process.(TM2,G3-6)</p> <p>I cherish the opportunities with foreigners and get along with them in a equal and friendly manner. (TM2,G7-2)</p> <p>"I used to think it is hard to communicate with foreigners, but after a few weeks, I changed my mind. Well-preparing for the assignment, our group sit together to talk well with international students. I think that collaborating with international students is delightful, and I hope we can have many classes like this". (TM3,G1-1)</p> <p>I think I should talk more with them, so it can help us to have a more good relationship with my foreign friends. (TM3,G1-5)</p> <p>Daily communication is not as difficult as daily learning. We don't pay much attention on the way you speak or even your poor language. It absolutely okay to communicate in your own way, maybe a gesture or a single word, which people can understand as well. (TM4,G4-3)</p> <p>I have to say we did a great job last lecture. We did the assignment as teamwork and did our parts carefully and enthusiastically. (TM4, G1-1)</p> <p>In this activity of watching movies with overseas students, I think the</p>
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	<p>most interesting part is communicating with them. (TM5, G1-1)</p> <p>I seize the opportunities and actively participate in activities to communicate with my foreign classmates. (TM5,G7-2)</p> <p>When I have intercultural communication class and see foreign students, I think it is quite normal. I do not think there is something strange. I am very glad to talk with Andrea and I think we become good friends. It is an equal relationship and I am happy to seek out opportunities to engage with her. (TM5, G2-2)</p> <p>I am getting more interested in intercultural communication, like Marcia said, I hope these foreign classmates can be my friends for life.(TM5,G2-3)</p> <p>“I feel more and more interested in communicating with foreign students. We share our opinions and experience with each other.”(TM6,G1-7)</p> <p>“If I am familiar with foreign classmates, I think I will communicate with them in a more common way. For example, there is a Swedish student in our group, and we will meet after class, and the content of our chat is very relaxed and happy.” (TM6 , G1-6)</p> <p>I like to communicate with foreigners more often, and practice my ability to interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges. What’s more, I can spread Chinese culture to more foreigners.(TM6,G3-4)</p> <p>I am eager to communicate with different foreigners. I want to communicate with them sincerely and become true friends.(TM6,G7-1)</p> <p>I enjoyed the discussion with my foreign classmates very much.(TM6,G2-6)</p> <p>I hope to have more opportunities to communicate with her in the future.(TM6,G7-3)</p>
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Appendix 8

Sample of Classroom Teaching Materials

*This is one of the teaching sections I have designed for developing students' awareness of "stereotypes".

Week 9 Obstacles to Effective Intercultural Communication

The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Teaching Objectives

This section enables you to

- * reflect on each person's uniqueness but also similarities, and on the fact that differences is not necessarily negative and that sameness is not necessarily positive either.
- * understand how different types of identities (gender, age, racial, ethnic, national, geographical, historical, linguistic, etc.) impact on communication with others.
- * become aware of the ways in which people construct their own and other's multiple identities depending on experiences, encounters, and contexts.
- * cultivate sensitivity to stereotype, prejudice and ethnocentrism

Key Concepts

Stereotyping is a complex form of categorization that mentally organizes your experiences and guides your behavior toward a particular group of people. It is a cognitive structure containing the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human social groups. Stereotypes allow simplistic and fantastic claims to be made about a group's manifold memberships, claims which are all the more ambiguous and gross the higher the societal level to which the collective label is applied (Li & Mo, 2009) .

Hetero-stereotypes are stereotypes of the out-group ("they are...")

Auto-stereotypes are stereotypes of the in-group ("we are...")

Attributed/projected auto-stereotypes refer to the how the members of one group think members of a different group see themselves ("they think they are...". For example, if you are Italian, you may believe that the Germans think of themselves as efficient)

Attributed/projected hetero-stereotypes, on the contrary, refer to how members of one group believe they are seen by members of a different group ("they think we are...". For example, if you are Italian, you may believe that the Germans think of Italians as inefficient)

Overview and Description of Activities

Before the class	Warm-up Video-watching	Ask the students watch a video and answer questions.	15
In the class	Activity 1 Group discussion (What kind of person are you?)	Introduce yourself to your group members, and take notes for what kind of information your group members have mentioned as part of identity.	15'
	Activity 2 Video-watching & Group discussion (What kind of Asian are you)	Watch a video, the first time play the video without sound and the title, asking the students, to guess what has happened; the second time play the video with sound and the title, simulate discussion and introduce the theoretical concept	45'
	Activity 3 Group discussion & Exercises (Breaking the Stereotype)	First ask the students to discuss stereotypes in the cartoon; second discover their own stereotypes	30'
After class	Activity 4 Communication Simulation	Interview overseas students in campus or in the city on the topic of “what do you usually think about Chinese?”	60'
	Activity 5 Reflective Journal	Online-writing	45'
	Activity 6 Self-assessment	Evaluate what you have learned	5'
	Activity 7 Further Reading	Reading & Reflecting	15'

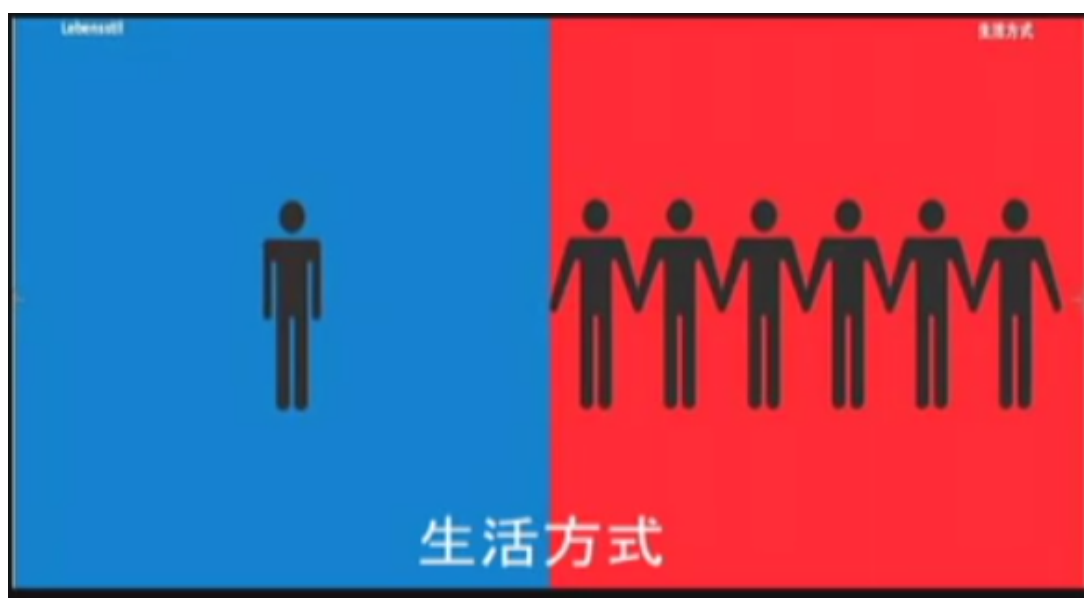
Warm-up

Do you agree?



Liu Yang, a Chinese-born German artist, made some brilliant illustrations to show the cultural differences between the East (pictures on the right) and the West (pictures on the left).

Watch a clip from Youku and answer the following questions:



1. Which ones do you agree with and which ones do you disagree with?
2. Discuss with your group members and give critical comments.

Reading & Discussion

Activity 1

What kind of person are you?

Identity affects, even shapes your behavior, your decision about the choice of your job, your relationship with others and more importantly, who you are. Share with your classmates what kind of identity you think you are (eg. racial identity, ethnic identity, gender identity, national identity, regional identity, organizational identity, personal identity, cyber and fantasy identity, etc.,). Critically evaluate your identity, and discuss it with your group members based on the definition of “cultural identity” which have been introduced in Chapter 4 .

Activity 2

What kind of Asian are you?



Watch a video twice, the first time, play the video without title and sound, and discuss with your group members the following questions. Then play the video again, this time with sound and title. Discuss with your group members again to confirm about your guessing.



Questions to discuss:

- *Where are the two people?
- *How old are they?
- *Where do they come from?
- *Are they friends?
- *The man starts the conversation. What might he possibly be talking about?
- *How does the woman react to his questions?
- *Do you think she is reacting to the subject the man introduces or to the way of expressing it?
- *How does the man react to her reaction?
- *Who has the last word?
- *In your opinion, do they both feel satisfied or disappointed?

Source: IEREST. (2015). *Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers*. Koper:Annales University Press.

Words bank

kimchi ['kɪmtʃɪ] n 韩国泡菜 **weird** [wɪəd] adj 奇怪的; 不寻常的

Fish chips: a dish of fish that has been fried in batter served with chips/fries, and usually bought in the place where it has been cooked and eaten at home, etc., especially in Britain

San Diego: a city in southern California, US, which is a port, an industrial centre, and a base for the US navy.

County Orange: Orange County is a county in the U.S. state of California. The county is famous for its tourism as the home of attractions like Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, and several beaches along its more than 40 miles (64 km) of coastline. It is also known for its political conservatism.

Native American: someone who belongs to one of the races that lived in North America before Europeans arrived.

Double, double, toil and trouble: songs in the film Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.

Top of the morning to you, Sir: same as "good morning".

Hello Guv: one way to greet each other.

Activity 3

Breaking stereotypes

Step 1 Discuss stereotypes in the cartoon



Source: Feng. (2017). Developing Intercultural Competence in EFL Teaching.

A conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image of people which can cause damage in communication. Can you find the stereotypes in the Cartoon?

It has described:

The perfect European should behave be:

A stereotype about	British	is that	
	Belgian		
	Italian		
	French		
	German		
	Spanish		
	...		

Bonus question: In what ways do you think these stereotypes are accurate, partly true, or exaggerated? Why?

Step 2: Discover your own stereotypes

Answer the following questions, then compare your answers with your classmates, and see whether you hold the similar stereotypes towards people from other cultures.

1. What is the image of Japanese in your mind?

When talking about Japanese, I think _____

2. What is the image of American in your mind?

When talking about American, I think _____

3. What is the image of Arabian in your mind?

When talking about American, I think _____

Cultural Exploration

Activity 4

Simulation Communication

After the class, go and interview overseas students in campus or in the city, ask them “what do you usually think about Chinese?”

Out-appearance	
behaviors	
values	

Critical Cultural Thinking

Activity 5

Reflective Journal Writing



Think about your interview and decide how much you agree with them, write your reflection journal on confirmation or refute a stereotype otherness may have about the Chinese. Share it with us from the *Moodle Blog*.

Activity 6

Self-assessment

This is a self-assessment grid to evaluate what you have learned throughout these activities. What do you think you have learned to do? Tick the boxes, and think about it further.

...without any stereotypes, and I can put myself in a very objective way.				
...not based on my assumption that all members of that group share those characteristics.				
...not tend to simplify or generalize people form an out-group on the basis of easily of easily identifiable characteristics.				

Activity 7

Further Reading

A Visitor to The Star

by Chris Rose

Anna Winter pulled on her Gucci sunglasses and sprayed herself with the extra-strength mosquito repellent she had bought in the airport. That was the biggest problem about her work, she thought. Mosquitoes and things like that. Bad hotels, and bad food. How could she be a front-line, award-winning, adventurous journalist if she had to stay in bad hotels and eat bad food? Anna Winter thought her job was very difficult, and she told everybody about this.

As she landed in Lagos airport, she worried about the hotel where she was staying, and how she would be able to eat for the week she was staying in Nigeria. Perhaps that would make a good article, she thought. Lots of local colour.

Joseph Adoga collected a printed copy of the article he was working and put it in his bag as he left the small office of the Star. The Star was a local paper in Lagos. It came out every evening

and had a mixture of stories – politics, current affairs, local news, human interest stories and sport. It was only a small newspaper, but Joseph enjoyed his job. He liked finding things out, and informing people about what was going on in the city, in Nigeria as a whole, in Africa generally, and in all the world. When he heard that the famous international journalist Anna Winter was coming to Lagos to do a story, he was interested, and was even more pleased when her agency got in touch with Joseph. “You should be able to help her.” the agency said, and Joseph hoped he could help her.

Instead of driving out to the usual part of the city where he lived, tonight Joseph drove into one of the rich areas of the city. He stopped outside one of the big hotels and went in to meet Anna Winter.

Anna Winter was disappointed by the hotel. It was one of a big international chain, so she expected more. The air-conditioning in her room wasn’t working properly, and there were mosquitoes inside. She hoped that the local journalist she was going to meet would be able to help her.

“Let’s go to somewhere really characteristic to eat.” said Anna to Joseph when they met in the hotel foyer. “I want a really typical little place... the kind of place where I’m sure you go to eat...somewhere full of local colour...”

Joseph thought hard about a place where they could go and eat. Eventually he thought of somewhere and took Anna in his car to a restaurant he knew where they served traditional Nigerian food. Joseph really liked the place, but Anna wasn’t happy.

“Hmmm... it’s very clean.” she said. “Very clean and very quiet...”

“What did you expect?” asked Joseph.

“Well, erm, something more African.” said Anna.

“How do you mean?” asked Joseph.

“More noise, more colour... lots and lots of people...”

“Well” said Joseph, “Lagos is quite a noisy and a colourful city, and there are a lot of people who live here... but we like to eat good food in good surroundings... like anyone else!”

Anna looked disappointed. “But I’m not getting a real feel of Africa here.” she said.

“Anna,” Joseph tried to explain. “Africa is a continent. There are 54 countries in Africa, and 900 million people. Nobody even really knows how many languages are spoken in Africa... hundreds!”

Joseph wanted to explain to Anna that it was impossible to talk about “Africa” as if it was just one place, but Anna wasn’t listening. Joseph changed the subject of the conversation.

“So, what are you going to write about Nigeria?” he asked her.

“I’m not sure yet” said Anna. “I want to look around and get a feel for the place first. Something about guns and crime, perhaps, and I need some pictures of starving people...starving people with guns if possible...”

Joseph thought for a minute. “Well, like any big city, there is crime in Lagos...sure. But I’m

not sure how interesting that is. You won't find many starving people here though.." He pointed to the plates of food on their table. "Here we eat pretty well!"

"Tell me what things you write about in your paper." said Anna.

"All sorts of things" said Joseph. "It's only a small paper, so I have to write lots of the stories. Sometimes there are crime stories, yes. I can show you those if you like..."

"That could be interesting... I think I can use my influence to change things..."

"I've got a good idea" said Joseph. "Why don't you write an article about everyday life here in Lagos... you know, so many articles about Africa are just about famine or war or corruption...but that's not the reality of many of our lives."

Anna look confused. Joseph continued.

"Why don't you write about some ordinary scenes, a restaurant like this, happy children at school..."

"People don't want to hear that" said Anna. "It doesn't sell. I need big sunsets over the Serengeti, and I need to contrast with the darkness of Africa... I've already got my title, yes, 'Darkness at noon'. I'm going to call the article..."

Joseph sighed and wondered why people always talked about "darkness" in Africa. Joseph had been to London in December – now that was darkness! It was dark at three o'clock in the afternoon. Nigeria was the brightest, lightest place he'd ever visited. Anna ignored him and continued.

"And I need to contrast that with the nobility of the people..."

"I see," said Joseph, "but be clear... there are some noble people here, but there are also some very bad ones. We are not noble just because we are African. Why not write about some of our Nigerian writers and intellectuals...there are many – Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri, Wole Soyinka... they have some fascinating things to say..."

Joseph could see that Anna wasn't interested. Anna thought she was the only intellectual and writer who mattered.

A few days later Anna was on the plane back to London. "I have to file some copy... what can I write...?" She took out her laptop and began to type...

"As soon as I got off the plane I was in love with Africa. Like a noble man, disappearing into the huge sunset, Africa is impossible to know, but it will always haunt you..." Yes, this is good thought Anna to herself... "Joseph Adoga is one such man, a face of Africa, a noble journalist, fighting for the cause of free speech in the Dark Continent...and without our help, he is in trouble..."

At the same time as Anna was typing, Joseph was sitting down to read the latest edition of The Star. He began to read his own article in it. "European journalists are strange people..." it began.

Source: <https://www.ximalaya.com/waiyu/29096652/211358583>