



EFL Student-Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Intercultural Communication Competence in High School English Language Teaching: A Case in a University in Vietnam

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Abstract

This paper was on intercultural communication competence in English language teaching from Can Tho EFL student-teachers (practitioners) in high school practice in Can Tho City. The study investigated senior EFL student teachers' perceptions and practices of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), a case in a School of Foreign Language (SFL) in Can Tho University (CTU), the biggest university in Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Forty-five seniors practicing teaching called student-teachers were invited to participate into the study which used a questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The result showed that EFL student-teachers had fairly good perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence. In addition, the result also indicated that their willingness to practice ICC in language teaching was recognized actively through their teaching performances.

Keywords: *Intercultural communication competence (ICC), Culture, Culture teaching, Student teachers' perception, Practices*

1. Introduction

In global context, people from many fields such as business, education, are concerned with face-to-face contacts. In the current situation, people have to make an effort in every aspect to succeed in life. Among them, communication skills play an important role. The technological breakthrough of social media makes it is easy to contact with many people all over the world. In addition, modern means of transport enable people to transfer a nation to another without difficulty. However, lack of knowledge of culture and custom leads to unsuccessfulness in communication, especially in different countries. The integration of intercultural communication in English language teaching is probably a solution to this shortcoming.

Bryam and Risger (1999) consider the role of language teacher "professional mediator languages and cultures". Language and culture interweave with each other. If language is separated from culture, it loses its significance and vice versa (Brown 1994). As consequence, it is vital for language teachers to support students to acquire intercultural communicative competence (Lázár et al., 2007; Liton & Qaid, 2016; Newton, 2014; Neff & Rucynski, 2013). From the above reasons, it is considered for intercultural communicative competence to be important in language teaching.

In the Vietnamese context, intercultural content is less attached to be important than others. Tran and Duong (2015) stated that teaching culture, and teaching English language skills has not been interactively introduced. ICC has been implied to play a less predominant role in Vietnamese English language teaching curriculum (Ho, 2011; Ho, 2014). Vo (2017) investigated English lecturers' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in English language teaching in six Vietnamese southern universities. Nearly all of the participants agree with developing ICC through developing their understandings of other cultures via learning or using English language (94%) but there was still a gap between lecturers' perspectives and practices in ICC teaching. They encounter certain hindering factors relating to time allowance, lecturers' cultural knowledge, and English speaking environment. Ho's study (2011) investigated the presence and status of cultural content in teaching English and the effect of intercultural language learning on learners' EFL learning. The results showed that most respondents



“sometimes” and “rarely” relate to so-called ICC activities in English classroom. This partially leads to the fact that Vietnamese students may master English in terms of its grammar and linguistics (Nguyen, 2013), but concentrate less on intercultural communication.

From a global and local context, the study aimed to investigate student-teachers’ perception of intercultural communication competence and how they practiced in English language teaching. The findings from this study contributed to student-teachers’ success in teaching ICC in context of language teaching.

1.1 Literature reviews

The term “*culture*” is very difficult to define. There is no unanimity about the definition of culture. It has myriads of interpretations. In 1952, 164 definitions of this term were provided by two anthropologists, Alfred Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn and Moran (2001) state that it is “dynamic construction between and among people lying at the crossroads of a number of fields of study and academic disciplines (anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, communication theory, intercultural communication, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, ethnic studies, history and semiotics” (pp. 4-5). Culture means personality, how people express themselves (including expression of emotion or feelings), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organized, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function”. With Shi-xu (2006, p. 316), culture is oftentimes perceived as a group’s “way of making meaning through symbolic means”.

On the one hand, Tylor (1871) claims that “Culture in its wide ethnographic sense is the complex universe that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, law, and customs, as well as other capabilities and abilities acquired by people and members of society” (p. 26). From this point of view, culture is the set of clarifications and codes that are taken for granted but that strongly influence actions and beliefs. These clarifications and codes are spread and learned or acquired widely in community. According to the view of the Greeks and Romans, culture is an expression of care, attention, and worship, as is documented in phrases like cultural animi, as Cicero's name for philosophy, or culturadolorum as an expression for the Christian faith. Culture now became an independent sphere of decisively “intellectual” comparisons of human behavior in different times and regions (Luhmann, 1995b). A culture is the total socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. In addition, Harris (1975) asserts that “culture consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society.” From the above-mentioned definitions, culture is a complicated term to define. There is no consent view from scholars. As a result, in this study, culture can be understood as “a system of values, beliefs, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and another, and it is transmitted from generation to generation through learning” (Bates & Plog, 1990, cites in Jiang, 2010).

1.2 The relationship between language and culture

Language is a part of culture. Language is a social phenomenon and a cultural phenomenon. Language is an integral part of culture, language cannot exist without culture, language system is a subsystem of the cultural system, that is to say, culture is not equal to language, and culture is more than language. Culture system, however, are unlikely to exist independently in language system, as the language system itself is one of the elements of a culture system, and other elements of culture system must be by the language to express. Because part of the language and culture as a cultural media language has the duality, determine the indivisibility of language and culture (Liang, 2014). In addition, language is the transmitter of culture. Language is a kind of media or communication tools, as the established symbol system, language is the carrier of culture can carry all kinds of information. Language as a cultural phenomenon, it has a very abundant cultural connotation. The fundamental constituent of language, vocabulary also exists as the mainstay of a language system, so the cultural differences in vocabulary level was the most prominent and most widely used. The same words in different cultures will produce different associative meaning. For



example, “red” in Chinese culture means cheerful and actively. But in English-speaking communities, it has the meaning of angry or furious. Language is produced during the long time of labor, daily life and cultural creation. It is the product of culture and also media forms and links up cultural components (Deng & Liu, 1989). According to McKay (2003), culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. In Linguistic aspect, it affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language. In a pedagogical aspect, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of language materials and cultural basis of the teaching methodology are made an examination of deciding upon the language materials. For instance, while some textbooks provide examples from the target culture, some others use source culture materials. In conclusion, language is inherent in culture. It is the foundation of culture, and culture could not exist without language.

1.3 Culture teaching in second language and foreign language education

Culture has been a center of discussion by second and foreign language educators and researchers. Over the last few decades, a profound understanding of the relationship between language and culture has loomed, which is believed to be both interactive and mutual dependence (Bush, 2007). Many countries, such as Canada, Australia, the United States of America, and some European countries, have a diverse cultural community that impulses the need for intercultural understanding and communication. To promote mutual respect and understanding in the multicultural society, some countries have required L2 educators and curriculum developers to convey tolerance and understanding through language teaching (Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). Teaching intercultural competence is highly valued in this respect. Researchers foster that L2 teaching pedagogy expands the traditional communicative approach to include the acquisition of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999). According to Bada (2000: 101), “the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.” Training intercultural communication competence will not only meet the demand for success of L2 acquisition, but also promote and support the socialization of a multicultural society and the globalizing world.

1.4 Intercultural communication competence

Based on Byram’s (1997) ICC model is based on earlier models of intercultural competence and effectiveness in learner-centered, communicative language teaching. Byram breaks down the ICC framework into four clusters, or saviors: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. These saviors are also main parts of the classification of ICC adopted by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). In CEFR, these objectives are so-called “savoir” (declarative knowledge), “savoir faire” (skills and know-how), “savoir être” (existential competence), and “savoir apprendre” (ability to learn).

The first savoir is *Knowledge*. This factor refers to knowledge about the learners’ own culture as well as the target culture. Objectives listed under this factor show that intercultural speakers are expected to have knowledge of past and present relationships between their own country and the target language country; to know how to interact with native speakers and institutions that facilitate intercultural exchanges, such as embassies and consulates; to understand the sources of misunderstandings between speakers of their own language and native speakers of the target culture; and to have awareness of events, myths, cultural products, and their significance for their own culture as well as the target culture. In addition, intercultural speakers are expected to have knowledge of what Byram (1997, p. 59) described as “geographical space,” which refers to the ability to distinguish between regional identities, dialects and landmarks that are meaningful to native speakers; and they are expected to gain the knowledge of the “processes of institutions and socialization” (p. 60), which include education, religious values, and other institutions that form the native speakers’ national identity. Other objectives listed under this factor include knowledge of what Byram defined “national distinctions,” which is needed to distinguish among social classes, ethnicities, professions, religions, etc.; knowledge of the institutions that have an impact on daily life in both their



country and the target country, such as institutions of health, recreation, finance, and information. Finally, knowledge of the processes of social interaction is in both their country and the target country, such as formal versus informal language, nonverbal interactions, and taboos.

Secondly, for *Skills of interpreting and relating*, Byram (1997) listed under this factor refer to the ability to interpret an event or a document from another culture and relate it to events and documents from one's own culture. In particular, the intercultural speakers should be able to: identify ethnogenic perspectives in a document; define and explain behaviors or expressions that cause misunderstandings; and mediate between conflicting interpretations of a phenomenon by explaining sources of misunderstanding and finding common ground.

For skills of discovery and interaction: these skills refer to the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and its practices. Objectives listed under this factor consist of the intercultural speaker's ability to: infer essential information to understand the value of particular documents or events for native speakers and adopt such awareness to other situations; identify big references within and across cultures; identify the similarity and difference of processes of interaction, verbal and nonverbal, and their appropriateness in certain situations; use a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to interact with native speakers of the target language; identify present and past relationships between their country and the target country; and finally use their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to intercede between speakers of their language and of the target language.

As for attitude: this factor relates to developing openness, curiosity, and willingness to hold one's disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own. Four major objectives are: willingness to seek opportunities to engage with native speakers of the target language in a relationship of equality, interest to learn about different perspectives and interpretations in one's culture as well as the target culture, readiness to experience different stages of adaptation to another culture, and ability to engage in conversations that adhere to the conventions and expectations of the target language speakers.

In terms of critical cultural awareness or political education: this last factor of ICC gets involved in the ability to evaluate a critical manner and use clearly stated criteria with the perspectives, practices, and products of one's own and other cultures and countries posed. Three objectives are listed under this factor, indicating that intercultural speakers have ability to: use questioning techniques to identify explicit and implicit values in documents and events relevant to their culture and the target culture; analyze and evaluate documents and events that refer to explicit viewpoints and criteria; and interact and mediate in intercultural conversations with a degree of acceptance.

1.5 Research questions

The paper answered the two questions: (1) what are the EFL student teachers' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence in English language teaching in high school practice? And (2) what practices of ICC do EFL student teachers apply in classroom?

2. Objectives

The research focuses on exploring student teachers' perception of intercultural communication competence and whether perceptions were practiced in their language teaching in high school settings.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research design

The study was a descriptive study. In this study, quantitative data were collected through questionnaires to answer the first research question, i.e., to find out EFL student teachers' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in English language teaching in high school practice and how the EFL student practiced ICC in English language teaching.



3.2 Participants

The context of the study was at a School of Foreign Language of Can Tho University in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam during the year of 2017-2018. All forty five senior students in English education department, so-called “*student teachers*” were selected for the survey. Their major was English education. They finished a two-month period of probation in high schools within Can Tho City. In this study, all participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire. Based on the background information of participants, there were 35 females (77.8 %) and 10 males (22.2 %). Among forty five student- teachers, 29 students did not attend a workshop or seminars on culture and intercultural communication, making up 64.4%. Other 16 students attended workshops or seminars on culture and intercultural communication, accounting for 35.6 %.

3.3 Research Instrument

In this study, a questionnaire was the main instrument to answer two research questions. Questionnaire was described in detail in following sections.

3.4 Questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed in both Vietnamese and English version so that participants could understand easily. It was based on the theoretical framework. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section was designed to collect personal information of participants. In this section, participants were asked to provide information on gender, name, email address and participation of workshops or seminars on culture or intercultural communication competence. All personal information was kept confidential.

In the second section, student teachers’ perceptions of ICC were investigated. These questions were designed with five points scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). There were two clusters of questions. In the first cluster, 17 questions were designed to investigate the participants’ perception of intercultural communication competence. In the second cluster, 6 questions were designed to investigate participants’ perceptions of Intercultural communication competence in language teaching.

In the third section, student-teachers’ practices of ICC in language teaching would be investigated. There were two clusters of questions. These questions were designed with five-point scales (never, seldom, sometimes, frequently, always) to check the frequency of participants’ practice. In the first cluster, 20 questions were designed to investigate the frequency of cultural topics that are applied in language teaching. In the second cluster, 19 questions were designed to investigate the frequency of activities that are applied in language teaching in language teaching.

3.5 Piloting the questionnaire

After designing the questionnaire with the assistance and correction of the supervisor, the researchers piloted the questionnaire with 45 student teachers who were juniors. The researchers asked for student teachers’ permission to conduct the survey. Afterwards, the questionnaire was sent to them by two forms: one via email by using Google form and the others via handouts. After the researchers had got the responses from the participants, the data were run on SPSS version 20 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to test the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient of the piloted questionnaire was relatively high ($\alpha = .913$). During the piloting step, the participants were provided with some suggestions on the questionnaire. The directions for each part of the questionnaire were listed to make sure that the respondents could understand clearly.

3.6 Administering the questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to forty-five participants in two weeks after the piloting phase. Thirty questionnaires were sent to participants via email by using Google Form and fifteen ones were



delivered directly to participants by handouts. All participants completed the questionnaire and sent it back to the researchers.

3.7 Analysis of the questionnaire

Quantitative data were subjected to SPSS program version 20. The participants' responses for the questionnaires were coded into numbers. Firstly, the Scale Test was run to check the reliability of the questionnaire. Next, descriptive Statistic Test was then calculated to observe the mean scores, the maximum, the minimum and standard deviations of the whole group. Finally, the One Sample T- Test was conducted to evaluate whether mean scores of EFL student teachers' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence in English language teaching were statistically different from a test value.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Student-teachers' perceptions of intercultural communication competence teaching

This section presented the results of the analysis of the data regarding student teachers' perceptions of intercultural communication competence. The result showed that the questionnaire used in the current study was reliable as follows.

Table1 The overall student teachers' perceptions of intercultural communication competence

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Student teachers' perceptions of intercultural communication competence.	45	2.55	4.32	3.56	.341

From Table 1, it could be clearly seen that the total mean score of the participants' perceptions of reflections ($M = 3.56$) fell between the scale 3 (an average mean) and 4 (the high mean) in the five-point scale for the participants' perceptions. Then, one sample t-Test was run to check whether the participants' level of perceptions of intercultural communication competence ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .341$) was statistically different from the test value of 4.0, a high mean. The result has shown that there is a significant difference between the sample mean ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .341$) and the test value 4.0 ($t = -8.538$, $df = 44$, $p = .000$). The result has revealed that the investigated teachers' perceptions of intercultural communication competence are just above average.

4.2 Perceptions of the importance of intercultural communication competence teaching

The results about the importance of teaching ICC were presented in Table 2 as follows.

Table 2 Student teachers' perceptions of importance of Intercultural communication competence (ICC) in communication

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Student teachers' perceptions of importance of Intercultural communication competence (ICC) in communication	45	1.76	4.47	3.4536	.548

As presented in Table 2, it could be clearly seen that the participants had positive perceptions of the importance of Intercultural communication competence with $M = 3.45$, $SD = .548$, which was just above average.

4.3 Perceptions of the importance of intercultural communication competence teaching

The results below showed how the student-teachers perceived the importance of ICC in their English teaching practice.

**Table 3** Student teachers' perceptions of importance of intercultural communication competence (ICC) in language teaching

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Student teachers' perceptions of importance of Intercultural communication competence (ICC) in language teaching	45	3.00	4.83	3.67	.364

As presented in Table 3, it can be clearly seen that the participants had positive perceptions of the aspects investigated, with student teachers' perceptions of importance of intercultural communication competence in English teaching ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .364$). The sample mean ($M=3.67$, $SD= .364$) was significantly different from test value 4.0 ($t= -5.925$, $df=44$, $p= .000$). The result suggested that the surveyed student -teachers' perceptions of importance of intercultural communication competence teaching are just above average.

Table 4 The frequency of cultural topics in language teaching

No.	Topics	Never (%)	Seldom (%)	Sometimes (%)	Frequently (%)	Always (%)
1	Ways of socializing	0	0	15.6	66.7	17.8
2	Relations	0	4.4	22.2	53.3	20
3	Customs	0	2.2	28.9	46.7	22.2
4	Home life	0	6.7	17.8	48.9	26.7
5	Cultural diversity	0	0	28.9	35.6	35.6
6	Economic reform	17.8	48.9	26.7	6.7	0
7	Education systems	4.4	6.7	22.2	48.9	17.8
8	History	8.9	17.8	42.2	26.7	4.4
9	Literature	11.1	6.7	37.8	40	4.4
10	Movies	2.2	8.9	13.3	40	35.6
11	Music	2.2	4.4	15.6	40	37.8
12	Sport	2.2	17.8	24.4	31.1	24.4
13	Recreation	2.2	2.2	17.8	35.6	42.2
14	Technology	4.4	13.3	35.6	37.8	8.9
15	Nature	2.2	8.9	24.4	37.8	26.7
16	People's values	0	1.1	22.2	44.4	22.2
17	People's beliefs	2.2	8.9	31.1	35.6	22.2
18	Political systems	20	24.4	42.2	8.9	4.4
19	Religious belief	6.7	28.9	28.9	28.9	6.7
20	Cultural taboos	0	13.3	20	44.4	22.2

From Table 4, in general, most of the participants applied the topics related to ICC in English teaching from the English textbooks issued by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. Specifically, all of the participants implemented the topic "ways of socializing" in language teaching. 66.7% of these participants stated that they frequently applied this topic in teaching. Other four topics were also frequently applied in language teaching reported by participants including relations (53.3%), home life (48.9%), education system (48.9%), customs (46.7%). The least frequently addressed topic was economic reform, made up 6.7 %. Six topics are always mentioned includes recreation (42.2%), music (37.8%), Cultural Diversity & Movies (35.6%), home life & nature (26.7 %).

Table 5 The frequency of activities in classroom



Activities teachers ask their students to do	Never (%)	Seldom (%)	Sometimes (%)	Frequently (%)	Always (%)
1. Touch upon English cultures & cultures of other countries	4.4	13.3	24.4	42.2	15.6
2. Debate a controversial cultural topic	6.7	11.1	40	33.3	8.9
3. Listen to the TV show and discuss the question	6.7	4.4	35.6	44.4	8.9
4. Compare Vietnamese and English cultures	0	2.2	22.2	60	15.6
5. Discuss how their own values and beliefs influence the way they perceive other cultures	6.7	20	28.9	37.8	6.7
6. Explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Vietnamese and English speaking people and explain the causes	6.7	13.3	31.1	33.3	15.6
7. Explore connotations and implications implied in documents/events from English cultures	13.3	17.8	37.8	26.7	4.4
8. Explore different perspectives of Vietnamese and English speaking people may have on a particular event/phenomena	2.2	17.8	31.1	48.9	0
9. Find an Authentic cultural topic	2.2	13.3	13.3	62.2	8.9
10. Participate role- play situations in which people from English speaking countries communicate	2.2	15.6	24.4	37.8	20
11. Write a short essay about typical characteristics of people from different cultures	6.7	22.2	26.7	37.8	6.7
12. Discuss in pairs or small groups about a cultural topic.	2.2	0	20	55.6	22.2
13. Question their own values, beliefs, and perspectives which are perceived differently by people from other cultures	2.2	6.7	35.6	33.3	22.2
14. Know about that cultural topic.	0	6.7	13.3	60	20
15. Listen a conversation on cultural topic, list information, work in group to check and answer the questions	4.4	4.4	35.6	44.4	11.1
16. To read a text or passage on cultural topic and complete information in a table	6.7	13.3	17.8	53.3	8.9
17. Read a text or passage on cultural topic and answer the questions	4.4	13.3	20	46.7	15.6
18. Use their cultural knowledge to write a popular forms in English speaking cultures (wedding invitation, invitation card, greeting card, greeting car, Christmas cards...)	8.9	13.3	24.4	40	13.3
19. Discuss about particular cultural topics or events, go to the blackboard and write down their view	6.7	20	33.3	33.3	6.7



As presented in Table 5, in general, most of the teachers knew how to apply the activities related to intercultural communication competence in English teaching. Specifically, 95.6 % of the participants applied teaching both English cultures and cultures of other countries. However, their frequency level of applying both English cultures and cultures of other countries was different. Particularly, 42.2% of these participants stated that they frequently implemented teaching both English cultures and cultures of other countries.

The data indicated that there were three activities that the participants most frequently asked high school students to perform activity 9 *"I asked students to find an Authentic cultural topic"*, making up 62.2%. For activity 4 *"I ask edstudents to compare Vietnamese and English cultures regarding a particular topic"* and in activity 14 *"I suggested what they should know about that cultural topic"* making up 60%. In the activity 2 *"I asked student to debate a controversial cultural topic"* had the highest percentage of participants who sometimes use it in classroom.

In terms of two of the most always practiced activities, in activity 12 *"I divided students into pairs or small groups to discuss a cultural topic"* and in activity 13 *"I encouraged students to questions their own values, beliefs, and perspectives which are perceived differently by people from other cultures"*, making up 22.2 %.

The results above from the questionnaire data showed that the investigated participants had a good perception of intercultural communication competence teaching. Besides, the result also indicated that most of the student-teachers applied the topics and the activities related to ICC in teaching through their teaching practice in high school settings.

4.4 Discussion

The result of current study showed that the EFL student teachers' perception of intercultural communication competence in this study was above average. Cultural topics and activities were frequently used in the classroom by participants. This corresponded to Nguyen' (2013) study concerning with the intercultural awareness of 53 TESOL learners and explore how they reflected in English language teaching. On the other hand, findings from Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin and Laslioglu's study in 2009 with 503 EFL teachers, the result revealed that teachers were aware of the role of culture in language teaching, but they did not often integrate culture in their teaching to promote ICC among their students. In comparison of Tran and Dang' (2014) study, there was a similarity that teachers' perceptions and attitudes was above average. On the contrary, in Tran and Dang study (2914), there was a mismatch between teachers' attitudes and actual teaching practices.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore EFL student-teachers' perceptions and practices of intercultural communication competence in English language teaching by a questionnaire and by examining their practice of applying the topics and the activities related to ICC in English teaching at their teaching practice. That was shown through their responses to the questionnaire items. Consequently, their perceptions and their practices are revealed. The study was conducted with forty five senior students in English Education Department, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University. Data were collected by means of 62 questions from the questionnaire of Likert-five-point scale items.

The results of the study tried to answer the following conclusions.

Research question 1: What are the EFL student teachers' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence in English language teaching in high school practice?

The study investigated student teachers' perceptions of intercultural communication competence teaching were fairly good ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .341$). Particularly, the student-teachers had a fairly good perception towards the importance of intercultural communication competence teaching ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .548$). In terms of student-teachers' perception of intercultural communication competence teaching, the



most important was practiced by participants “*to know levels of formality in language and behavior (different situations that require being formal or informal in verbal or written communications)*”. Indeed, this was an important factor in communication. Formality expressed the level of seriousness in communication. It also sustained the standard of respect in a communication. Formality helped communicators determine the choice of vocabulary in particular situations. Another finding from participants was “*understanding the Cultural norms of English speaking cultures*”.

In addition, the research studied that student-teachers had a fairly good perception towards the importance of intercultural communication competence in English language teaching ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .364$). Many of the participants claimed that “*In language classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the language*”. Some participants also stated that “*Providing variety of cultural information heightens students’ motivation toward learning language*”. This reinforces the perception of the importance of culture in language teaching.

Research question 2: What practices of ICC do EFL student teachers apply in classroom?

From the analysis of the data, many of the student teachers applied the topics and the activities related to ICC in English language teaching. In related to the frequency of cultural topics in language teaching, many of the participants focused on “ways of socializing” in English language teaching. The other four topics were also frequently applied in language teaching reported by participants including *relations, home life, education system, and customs in the English textbooks*. Six topics always mentioned included *recreation, music, cultural diversity, movies, home life and nature*.

5.2 Implications

From the study, the authors posed their own experiences from the study findings to the educator’s perspectives, the curriculum should be designed to be suitable for the student’s culture. Besides, providing the cultural knowledge from other countries for students, Vietnamese culture should be preserved and improved. The choice of cultural content of the lessons should be based on what teachers and learners feel most comfortable with.

From the teacher’s aspect, in classroom, teachers should prepare many cultural activities for students. These activities are the reality of cultures from all over the world. Moreover, it should be suitable to learners’ culture. Teachers can bring some authentic materials such as video clips, music, films, pictures, etc. Teachers should provide opportunities for the students to interpret and analyze the different materials, which is regarded as an important skill for intercultural competence. Instructors should make students aware that culture not only helps students communicate better, but also builds relationships across these cultural differences. Teachers should develop students’ general knowledge about cultural topics in the English subject because it will contribute to the cognitive development and general knowledge level of the students. Teachers should boost students’ intercultural competence. It is important for teachers to achieve insight and knowledge about other cultures as well as our own will help communication with people from different cultural backgrounds.

The practice of culture had explicit connections to the students’ prior knowledge, and the teachers represent the content by using clear and accurate explanations. In addition, the teaching of culture offers limited or no opportunities for reading or writing, but many opportunities to speak. In addition, the classroom discourse is focused on building students’ ideas most of the time. Teachers can use the students’ own cultural background more actively in the teaching. Insight and awareness about their own culture are considered as important as knowledge about other cultures.

In the classroom, teachers should prepare many cultural activities for students. These activities are the reality of cultures from all over the world. Moreover, it should be suitable for learners’ culture. Teachers should provide opportunities for the students to interpret and analyze the different materials, which is regarded an important skill for intercultural competence.



Teachers should make students aware that culture not only helps communicate better, but also builds relationships across these cultural differences. Teachers should develop the students' general knowledge about cultural topics in the English subject because it will contribute to the cognitive development and general knowledge level of the students.

Teachers should assist students' intercultural competence. Gaining insight and knowledge about other cultures as well as our own will help communication with people from different cultural backgrounds.

5.3 Limitations

This current study was conducted in only one university from student-teachers' English teaching practice in some high schools in Can Tho City, in the Mekong Delta. In addition, the lack of qualitative data, observation and the small number of participants and quantitative data from the questionnaire did not give the full picture of issue for the researchers in the study.

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7. References

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