Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching in China: Practice and Challenges

by Haocheng Zhao

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

under the supervision of Jingqing Yang

University of Technology Sydney
School of International Studies and Education

February 2024

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Haocheng Zhao, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of International Studies and Education at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Signature:

Date: 06/02/2024

ABSTRACT

In today's world, people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are more and more closely connected with each other. In this context, globalization has shrunk the world and brought a wider range of cultures closer than ever before. This phenomenon has caught great attention and interest in academic circles and led to various proposals concerning the "competence" required for successful intercultural communication. This means that what learners of foreign languages need is more than just grammar and vocabulary of the target language and other basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also need to be "interculturally competent" to achieve the ultimate goal in their foreign language learning. Although scholars have studied intercultural competence in foreign language teaching (FLT) for decades, most intercultural competence teaching and assessment has not produced the desired outcomes, especially in developing countries such as China, where there is an urgent and huge demand for foreign language and foreign affairs talents that are interculturally competent. In this context, it is of great importance that the courses of foreign languages in Chinese universities and colleges can successfully cultivate the intercultural communication ability in their students. The aim of the current study is twofold. First, it will explore the FLT policies, curriculums, syllabuses, textbooks and pedagogies in Chinese tertiary education to map out the history and current status of intercultural competence teaching and assessment and identify major problems and challenges. Secondly, based on the identified problems and challenges, the research is intended to propose suggestions for policy, pedagogical and especially assessment improvement.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction:

Chinese Foreign Language Teaching

1.1 A brief history of foreign language teaching in tertiary education in China

It has been 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. During this period, China's higher education system has experienced flourishing development. The seventy years of higher education development in the PRC could be divided into three periods: (1) 1949-1966 or the "17 years", the period of the recovery and development of higher education upon establishment of the PRC; (2) 1966-1978 or the period of "Cultural Revolution," and (3) 1978-2019, the period of the "Reform and Opening Up" (Wang & Sun, 2019).

In the early days after the founding of the PRC, the Chinese people's educational level and average literacy level were quite low. During the period of the Republic of China, for a long time, due to the influence of the education system and the years-long social turbulence, the popularization of education could not be realized. By the time the PRC was founded in 1949, more than 400 million out of China's population of 550 million were illiterate, or 80% of the population. At that time, illiterate people were those who knew fewer than 500 Chinese characters. Therefore, The Chinese Communist Party launched a large-scale anti-illiteracy campaign within ten years of raising to power. The main activity of the anti-illiteracy campaign was helping people learn more Chinese characters.

At the end of 1951, literacy classes were opened across the country. At the same time, unified literacy standards and rules and regulations for literacy examinations were stipulated. However, the Ministry of Education issued the "Decision on the Adjustment of the Departments of Education, English, Physical Education and Political Science in Higher Teacher Training Schools (《关于高等师范学校教育、英语、体育、政治等系科的调整设置的决定》)," (hereinafter "the Decision") the first policy guideline about the foreign language teaching for the tertiary education in China, on July 20, 1953 (Zhang, 2012). According to Zhang (2012, p. 244), it was stated in the Decision that "As the availability of English courses in secondary schools began to diminish, a decision was made to limit the provision of these courses to a select few secondary schools. Consequently, the logical step was to significantly scale back the number of English departments in higher teacher training institutions. This led to the resolution that only the English Department at East China Normal University would continue operating, with its specific mandate being to prepare English teachers for secondary schools across the nation. All other English departments in similar institutions were scheduled for closure." At the time, there were eight teacher training colleges with English departments, seven of which were discontinued after the Decision was issued (Zhang, 2012).

In October 1964, the Ministry of Education promulgated the "Outline of the Seven Year Plan for Foreign Language Education (《外语教育七年规划纲要》)"[1] (hereinafter "the Outline"), which determined English would be the first foreign language in school

---

[1] Instructions of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council on the seven-year Plan for Foreign Language Education (中共中央、国务院.关于外语教育七年规划两个文件的批示.(1964-10-20)(2007-06-13)).http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/gnsz/szyw/200706/13/t20070613_11731293.shtml accessed 18 March 2019.

education. It was also pointed out in the Outline that the quantity and quality of students trained by foreign language colleges could not meet the needs of China's socialist construction and foreign affairs. The basis of foreign language education was incompatible with the country's needs, presenting sharp challenges. The issuance of the Outline reversed the stagnant state of English majors in the seven years following the founding of the PRC, and also criticized the status quo of foreign language majors, especially English (major) education, in the eight years since 1956 as it could not meet the needs of national development.

According to statistics, more than 6 million illiterate farmers and residents became literate in 1957, marking the climax of anti-illiteracy education under the CCP regime. Around the same time, the college entrance examination was officially established in 1955, when colleges and universities began to recruit students, and the development of China's higher education began to recover. However, in the 1960s, people experienced a decade-long "Cultural Revolution" that greatly hindered China's educational development. China's higher education was divided into two stages during the Cultural Revolution. The first stage was from May 1966 to June 1970, when China's education suffered a great loss because the so-called "class suspension and revolution" was carried out, and all colleges and universities in China stopped enrollment. In the early stage of the "cultural revolution," 160 colleges and universities were abolished. On June 13, 1966, the People's Daily published the "Notice of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Reforming the Measures for Enrollment and Examination of Colleges and Universities (《中共中央、国务院关于改革高等学校招生考试办法的通知》)," which held that the enrollment and examination system of colleges and universities was "not conducive to absorbing more revolutionary young workers, peasants and soldiers into colleges and universities." It proposed to "completely revolutionize" the examination system. On the same day, the People's Daily published an editorial, "Thoroughly Do a Good Job in the Cultural Revolution and Thoroughly Reform the

Education System (《全面搞好文化大革命，全面改革教育体制》),” proposing to reform the current enrollment and examination system as “a breakthrough to destroy the bourgeois educational line” completely and “thoroughly revolutionize the old education system.” All universities in China stopped enrollment for as long as six years.

The second stage was from June 1970 to October 1976, when the Gang of Four[2] was crushed. On June 27, 1970, the CPC Central Committee approved the Request for Instructions by Peking University and Tsinghua University on Enrollment (Pilot). Chinese colleges and universities then began to resume enrollments, but only for “workers, peasant and soldier college students.” An admission system combining recommendation by the masses [3], leadership approval and school review was implemented. At this stage, China’s education, as a whole, began to recover gradually; colleges and universities resumed enrollment, and basic education also witnessed development. Throughout this second period, education was generally maintained and basically restored to the level before the “Cultural Revolution.” In fact, during the “Cultural Revolution,” due to the retrogression in the development of higher education, more than one million people lost the opportunity for professional training, resulting in a severe shortage of talents in all posts. Therefore, from August 4 to 8, 1977, Deng Xiaoping, China’s then supreme leader, chaired a symposium on science education and, together with other participants, reflected and criticized the system of “voluntary registration, grass-roots recommendation, leader approval and school review.” Deng Xiaoping also immediately reinstated the college entrance examination that year.

---

[2] The Gang of Four refers to an extremist group within the Chinese Communist Party that rose to prominence in the spring of 1976. This faction became a notable political influence during that period but was subsequently subdued within the same year. The quartet comprising Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan, and Jiang Qing faced trial and received prison sentences for their activities.

[3] In Chinese political culture, “the masses” usually refers to the populace. In this specific context, it refers to the ordinary people who had worked with the student they recommended.

In General, since the "Reform and Opening Up"[4] in 1978, higher education in China has expanded rapidly. As of 2017, there were 2631 tertiary colleges and universities in China, with 37.79 million students. The 45% gross enrolment rate has exceeded the average of the world's middle- and high-income countries (Sun, 2019). In October 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Education promulgated a directive titled "Opinions on Accelerating the Building of High-level Undergraduate Education and Comprehensively Improving Talent Training Capacity(《关于加快高水平本科教育建设全面提高人才培养能力的意见》)," also known as the "Opinions". These guidelines articulate the imperative for higher education institutions to fundamentally enhance the caliber of talent development. Per the "Opinions," higher education institutions are mandated to fully comprehend and embrace the crucial aspect of significantly enhancing the quality of talent development. Undergraduate education should be prioritized as the central element of talent training, serving as the foundational aspect of educational and teaching endeavors, and as a leading force in the educational evolution of the New Era. There is a call to invigorate undergraduate education, establish an advanced system for cultivating top-level talent, and aim for fresh progress in the realm of higher education. In short, revitalizing undergraduate education and comprehensively improving the ability to cultivate talents will be an important goal for China's higher education in the near future (Sun, 2019).

As an important part of China's higher education, foreign language education is closely related to the country's social and economic development. This is because foreign language education has always been deemed vital to the country's future as it trains a workforce that could bridge China and the world. China's reform has also created a high demand for well-trained foreign language speakers to serve the state's diplomatic "popularization," vigorous cultural diplomacy development, and boost foreign

---

[4] The "Reform and Opening Up" is a significant economic reform policy that was initiated in China in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The goal was to transform the Chinese economy from a centrally planned system, typical of a socialist framework, into a more market-oriented system.

investment and trade development. Meanwhile, strengthening diplomacy theory and practice in college students majoring in foreign languages and cultivating a large number of highly qualified talents working in the field of foreign language has also become an important task facing universities and colleges in China (Lao, 2012). For this reason, the improvement of foreign language education has been considered, at the national level, as an indispensable part of developing China's higher education and even the country's social progress.

It is widely acknowledged that the "Reform and Opening Up" policy launched in 1978 is a great revolution of epoch-making significance in Chinese history as it has significantly contributed to China's rapid economic growth over the past few decades, transforming the country into one of the world's largest economies. This is because the policy of opening up encouraged foreign trade and investment and made China start integrating itself into the global economic system, join the World Trade Organization (WTO), and begin participating more actively in global commerce. More importantly, it has injected enormous vitality and vigor into foreign language education in China, ushering in a new period of development (Qun, 1990). During the past 40 years of the "Reform and Opening Up," China has gone through a development process from self-isolation to openness, from a planned economy to a market economy, from partial opening to opening across the board, and then to deepening the "Reform and Opening Up" and approaching the center of the world stage. The economic take-off and social changes have put forward new requirements for cultivating foreign language talents.

Since 1978, China has opened wider to the outside world, and it urgently needed to learn and use advanced foreign technology, culture and ideas. In the process of the "Reform and Opening Up," China's foreign language education is still constantly adapting to the needs of opening up, such as foreign trade, foreign affairs, diplomacy,

international finance, international business, international exchanges and other fields. In order to cater to the overall situation of "bringing-in," the National Symposium on Foreign Language Education (全国外语教育学术研讨会) was held in Beijing from August to September 1978 to make planning and guidance for the development of foreign language education under the new circumstances of the "Reform and Opening Up" (Zhang, 2019). The meeting discussed policies and measures to strengthen foreign language education, enhance the level of foreign language education and cultivate foreign language talents in all aspects for early realization of the Four Modernizations (四个现代化）(the modernization of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology) (Fu, 1986). The key signal released at this conference was that when the country is opening its doors, embarking on the "four modernizations" journey and establishing the opening-up policy of "bringing-in," all kinds of foreign language talents were urgently needed to develop all walks of life. Foreign language education was regarded as an important historical task and a "political task" (Xu, 1978).

On April 22, 1978, the National Education Work Conference (《全国教育工作会议》) was held in order to find out how to strengthen foreign language education and train foreign language talents in all aspects for the early realization of the "Four Modernizations (四个现代化)." The "Opinions on Strengthening Foreign Language Education (《加强外语教育的几点意见》)" put forward at this meeting was later approved by the State Council and issued nationwide on March 29, 1979 (Wang, 2018). This document fully reflected the spirit and requirements of the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (第十一届三中全会）[5]. Meanwhile, the foreign language education policies stipulated by the document were also clear and compelling and have been widely welcomed and

---

[5] The Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was a significant turning point in modern Chinese history. The meeting took place from December 18-22, 1978, and it marked the beginning of the "Reform and Opening Up" policy, which led China down the path of economic reform and market liberalization.

implemented by the foreign language community. According to Wang (2018), the document puts forward the following requirements for higher education: 1) Strengthen foreign language teaching in primary and secondary schools (omitted); 2) Pay great attention to public foreign language courses in colleges and universities; 3) Provide professional foreign language education; 4) Optimize the diversity of languages; 5) Train foreign language teachers; 6) Select and publish mainstream foreign language teaching materials; 7) Conduct research on foreign language education. Through this document, the Ministry of Education required colleges and universities to vigorously run public foreign language education and various forms of amateur foreign language education, and train scientific and technological talents with both professional skills and foreign language proficiency. Also, colleges and universities were required to fully tap their potential and offer various foreign language training courses for science and technology personnel, university science and engineering teachers and overseas students. Furthermore, the document also suggested building a number of key foreign language colleges into a base for high-level foreign language translators, professional foreign language teachers and literature research professionals. In order to cultivate senior translators, research talents and backbone teachers of specialized foreign languages in higher education, the colleges and universities were also required by the document to gradually expand the enrollment of graduate students, actively carry out scientific research, and strive to make the schools into teaching centers and scientific research centers. Through the document, the Ministry of Education also required colleges and universities to have a strategic vision and long-term planning in the arrangement of language varieties, the training and cultivation of foreign language teachers to be vigorously pursued, and to strengthen research on foreign language pedagogy and language science (Wang, 2018).

At the same time, in April 1979, the State Education Commission of the PRC also issued the "Four-Year Teaching Plan for English Majors in Foreign Language Colleges (Trial

Draft) (《外语学院英语专业四年制教学计划（试行草案）》)", "Four-Year Teaching Plan for English Language and Literature Majors in Comprehensive Universities (Trial Draft) (《综合大学英国语言文学专业四年制教学计划（试行草案）》)" and "Four-Year Teaching Plan for English Majors in Higher Teacher Training Colleges (Trial Draft) (《高等师范院校英语专业四年制教学计划（试行草案）》)" (Guo, 2019). According to Dai (2008, p. 62), the objectives of English major training in these three types of institutions are stipulated as follows: foreign language colleges train English translators and teachers and other English workers with all-round moral, intellectual and physical abilities; comprehensive universities train researchers and teachers of English and American language and literature and other English workers with all-round moral, intellectual and physical abilities; and higher teacher training colleges train English teachers with all-round moral, intellectual and physical abilities. The above three teaching plans show that the classification of colleges and universities and their training objectives are inherited from history. This is "the first relatively complete and realistic unified teaching plan for English majors after the founding of the People's Republic of China" (Dai, 2008, p. 63).

In the early years of reform (from the late 1970s to the late 1980s), foreign language education planning witnessed great progress in curriculum, teaching materials and faculty development. Higher education and primary foreign language education have been gradually established and improved, and foreign language education planning has been restored across the board. However, in that period, foreign language courses were mainly offered to normal, comprehensive and specialized foreign language universities with a small annual intake. As a result, the number of graduates every year was small and far from meeting the demand of the human resources market (Zhang, 2019). Moreover, the number of types of courses approved by the Ministry of Education to be offered in universities was also limited. According to the information released by the Ministry of Education in 1990, during this period, there were only seven types of

foreign language majors, namely, normal foreign language (in the field of teachers' education), foreign language (offered by comprehensive universities for general purposes), foreign language and literature, foreign language and culture, foreign languages for technologies, foreign language for foreign trade, foreign language for tourism. The number of graduates from all these courses across English, Japanese, Russian, French, German and another 15 languages was slightly more than 3300 per year (Qun, 1990).

In the 30 years since China's reform commenced, the pattern of foreign language education gradually changed. In 1980, the Ministry of Education issued the first university English Syllabus since the "Reform and Opening-up." "English Syllabus (Trial for Undergraduate in Science and Technology in Higher Education) (英语教学大纲 （高等学校理工科本科试用）》)," which played an important role in the rapid restoration and development of university English teaching in the early stage of the "Reform and Opening Up" (Wang, 2018). In the mid-1980s, after nearly ten years of the "Reform and Opening Up," China's economic development started to gain momentum, and all walks of life have seen steady development. However, there have been some structural and institutional problems in developing the national economy, and reform in the field of education has also been carried out. In 1985, the CPC Central Committee issued the "Decision of the CPC Central Committee on the Reform of Education System (《中共中央关于教育体制改革的决定》)" (Shen and Bao, 2018). According to Shen and Bao (2018), the fundamental purpose of this reform is to improve the national quality and produce more and better talents. In order to achieve the goal of reforming the education system and meet the domestic demand for foreign language education talents in national economic and social development, the national foreign language education plan actively conforms to the needs of the development of an export-oriented economy. It vigorously promotes the reform of college English teaching, the College English test system and improves college students' foreign

language skills. This was all done based on establishing rules and regulations and improving the foreign language curriculum and teaching setting of schools at all levels.

In October 1986, the National Symposium on Reforming Foreign Language Education in Secondary Schools, organized by the State Education Commission, was held in Dalian, and the conference issued the "Opinions on Reforming and Strengthening Foreign Language Teaching in Secondary Schools (《关于改革和加强中学外语教学的几点意见》)" (Wang, 2018). As Wang (2018) indicated, the three national conferences on foreign languages not only raised the status of foreign language subjects in education, but more importantly, clarified the direction and measures for reforming foreign language subjects and promoted the process of developing foreign language education.

At the same time, there was a "craze for foreign languages" in China, which was, in fact, a "craze for English" and remained strong for about 20 years after the 1980s (Bai, 2008). This phenomenon not only created social conditions for the reform of teaching and learning foreign languages at that time but also indicated the change to the traditional concept of foreign language talents training.

At the start of the new century, after more than 20 years of great efforts, China has gradually formed a foreign language education system from primary school through high school to university, and then to foreign languages for special purposes. The development trend of basic foreign language education and higher foreign language education goes hand in hand, which has effectively enabled China to actively draw on the fine experiences from around the world and introduce the world's advanced science,

technology and culture. It has played an important role in significantly improving the comprehensive national strength (Shen & Bao, 2018).

In 1999, "College English Syllabus (Revised) (for undergraduate of higher education) (《大学英语教学大纲修订本（高等学校本科用）》) was published. The College English Syllabus Revised (1999) combines the former two syllabuses of science and technology, arts and science into one, and sets the teaching target for undergraduate courses of all kinds of colleges and universities nationwide, putting forward the ideas of "classifying requirements and teaching according to students' abilities" and "four years of English study without any discontinuity." For the first time, the College English Test (CET-4)[6] was set as the basic requirement to be met by students of all kinds of colleges and universities in China. According to Wang (2018), since the first CET-4 in 1987 and the first College English Test 6 (CET-6)[7] in 1989, the scale of the exams has been increasing, from just over 100,000 participants in 1987 to 11 million in 2004, making them the largest single subject exams in the world.

In addition, China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2003, hosting the Olympic Games in 2008, and the World Expo in 2010 are closely related to the policy changes associated with foreign language talent training and the concepts of foreign language teaching and learning. Although China boasts vast natural resources, when distributed across its large population, the per capita natural resources are not abundant. Under such resource constraints, China needs to participate in the global economic system to ensure long-term strategic safety for the nation (Wu, 2003).

---

[6] CET-4 is an intermediate English proficiency test. It aims to examine whether a student has reached the corresponding English level in the "College English Curriculum Requirements". It tests students on listening, reading, and writing skills.
[7] CET-6 is an advanced proficiency test. It's designed for students who have passed the CET-4 and have continued to study English. It covers similar areas to the CET-4 but is more challenging. The CET-6 is more focused on the ability to use English in academic or professional settings.

Additionally, enhancing national innovative capabilities is crucial for gaining a sufficient market share globally. Therefore, actions such as joining the WTO become an inevitable choice for the country's survival. Comprehensive quality education and innovation-oriented teaching are essential for expanding the nation's survival scope (Wu, 2003).

On the one hand, it led to the deepening of reform, accelerated economic development and reform of foreign language education, which has played a role in overhauling the traditional concept of tertiary education in foreign language teaching (FLT). In the first decade of the new century, with the gradual expansion of China's opening-up pattern, foreign language education planning is facing the impact of the external world brought about by economic globalization and education internationalization. How foreign language education promotes language exchange and cultural exchange between China and foreign countries and serves China's economic construction and strategic development needs under the background of globalization poses a new round of challenges for foreign language education development planning. On the other hand, with the steady progress of China's compulsory education and the increasing maturity of basic education, China's higher education began to transform from an elite model to a popular pattern, and the scale of foreign language education in colleges and universities expanded drastically. The leapfrog development of China's higher education, in turn, puts forward requirements for change and innovation in foreign language education (Shen and Bao, 2018).

By 2009, over 80% of colleges and universities offered English majors. The number of students studying English in colleges and universities reached more than 1 million (Wang, 2017). At this stage, the State Council and the Ministry of Education successively promulgated a series of education planning measures, namely a "top-down

institutional reform led by the Ministry of Education" (Wang, 2006). In 2003, the Ministry of Education officially launched the "Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project in Colleges and Universities (高校教学质量与教学改革项目)." Since then, the quality of foreign language education in colleges and universities has also received increasing attention.

At first, in order to promote the reform of university English teaching, continuously improve the level of university English teaching, and cultivate students' comprehensive abilities in English application, the Ministry of Education organized relevant experts to formulate the "Teaching Requirements for University English Courses (for Trial Implementation) (《大学英语课程教学要求（试行）》)"[8] and carried out the pilot work of university English teaching reform. According to the new 'Teaching Requirements for College English Courses (Trial)', colleges and universities must use the English teaching software approved by the ministry. The emphasis is on enhancing students' independent learning skills. By leveraging modern educational technology, institutions should create a personalized English teaching approach. The goal is to enhance students' overall proficiency in English, with a particular focus on listening and speaking skills. This approach also helps institutions gather experience, paving the way for a comprehensive reform in university English teaching. In order to promote the reform of university English teaching, in early 2004, the Ministry of Education issued the "Notice on Implementing the Pilot Work of College English Teaching Reform (No. 21 [2004] of the document of the Department of Higher Education) (《关于实施大学英语教学改革试点工作的通知》（教高司函〔2004〕21 号))"[9], approving 180 colleges

---

[8] College English Course Teaching Requirements (Trial), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, 2004 Ministry of Education. Notice on the Issuance of Teaching Requirements for College English Courses (for Trial Implementation). 2004-01-30.), http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A08/tongzhi/201001/t20100129_124828.html, accessed 7 July 2019.

[9] General Office of the Ministry of Education. Notice on Printing and Distributing the Reform Plan of National College English Test CET-4 and CET-6 (for Trial Implementation) (《全国大学英语四、六级考试改革方案(试行)》的通知). http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/200503/t20050307_110833.html, accessed 7 July 2019.

and universities to establish pilot college English teaching reform. After that, the universities have actively explored and practiced reforming the teaching mode, improving the teaching conditions and enhancing college students' comprehensive ability in English application, and have made promising achievements. In order to further deepen the university English teaching reform and give full play to the role of demonstration and expansion, the central government decided to select some colleges and universities to set up demonstration points for the university English teaching reform project, and the Ministry has invested certain construction funds.

At the same time, with the continuous reform of university English teaching, as an important part of university English teaching reform, the reform of College English Test 4 (CET-4) and College English Test 6 (CET-6) was officially launched in March 2004. Due to various reasons, the role of CET-4 and CET-6 had been overemphasized before. Some schools have associated CET-4 and CET-6 with graduation certificates and degree certificates, and some employers have taken the CET-4 and CET-6 certificates as the necessary criteria for recruiting graduates. As a result, many schools blindly pursue the passing rate and carry out exam-oriented teaching. A few students cheat in the exam, and some people take the risk of violating the law and discipline. To this end, the Ministry of Education launched the reform project of College English Test CET-4 and CET-6, which was officially announced to the public in 2005. In 2005, The National College English Examination Committee (全国大学英语四、六级考试委员会) and the College English Examination Reform Project Team (大学英语四、六级考试改革项目组) completed the development of the "National College English Examination Reform Plan for CET-4 and CET-6 (Trial) (《全国大学英语四、六级考试改革方案(试行)》)" after nearly a year's effort based on thorough research and consultation with various parties. It is hoped that all schools will make arrangements according to the overall plan of the reform of CET 4 and CET 6, effectively strengthen teaching

management, achieve a smooth transition between the old and new exams, and actively promote the reform of University English teaching.

To effectively carry out the reform of university English instruction and align with the talent training demands of the nation and society in the new era, the Ministry of Education convened a panel of experts. This team was tasked with revising and enhancing the "Teaching Requirements for University English Courses (for Trial Implementation)" in accordance with the aims of the university English teaching reform and the practical experiences garnered from its implementation. In 2007, the General Office of the Ministry of Education released the "Teaching Requirements for University English Course (《大学英语课程教学要求》)" which serves as the foundation for all higher education institutions to organize the teaching of English for non-English major undergraduates. The requirements for teaching English at university level were divided into three levels, i.e., general requirements, relatively high requirements and higher requirements, which are the standards that all non-English major undergraduates in higher education institutions in China should choose to achieve after their English learning and practice at university level. The Teaching Requirements for University English Courses was a programmatic document guiding the teaching of English at university level, which was of great significance, further deepening the reform of university English teaching in China and providing a prior exploratory experience for the reform of other languages.

These measures reflect the new requirements of foreign language talent training and foreign language teaching models in colleges and universities under the new situation in the new century and highlight the problems and deficiencies in the development of foreign language education during that period. Based on foreign language teaching

reform at all levels, the strategic reform of foreign language education is imperative in the new situation.

In May 2006, the Ministry of Education gave its official nod for the creation of undergraduate programs in "Translation" across colleges and universities. Since that year, institutions like Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Fudan University, and Hebei Normal University began admitting students to these newly established translation programs, marking the inception of the first "translation major" sanctioned by the Ministry of Education. The following year, in 2007, during the 23rd session of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (国务院学位委员会第 23 次 会议), the establishment of the Master's Degree in Translation and Interpreting (MTI) was deliberated and given the green light, setting the stage for both Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Translation and Interpreting.

In May 2007, the Ministry announced that a select group of 15 universities, including prestigious names such as Peking University, Beijing University of International Studies, Shanghai University of International Studies, and Guangdong University of International Studies, would be the first to pilot the MTI programs. This strategic move was primarily aimed at supporting China's "Reform and Opening Up" policy and its socialist modernization drive. By promoting international exchanges and focusing on the cultivation of highly skilled, application-oriented senior translation professionals, it was also resolved to introduce a specialized Master of Translation degree within China's higher education framework. As a result, the Ministry of Education released the "Notice on the Issuance of the Program for the Establishment of Professional Degree of Master of Translation (关于下达《翻译硕士专业学位设置方案》的通知)"[10].

---

[10] Ministry of Education. Notice on the Issuance of the Program for the Establishment of Professional Degree of Master of Translation （关于下达《翻译硕士专业学位设置方案》的通知）.

Post-2010 marked a new phase in China's approach to foreign language education, transitioning towards an "export-oriented" strategic shift as noted by Shen and Bao (2018). In that year, the State Council of the People's Republic of China released the "Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要》)," which emphasized the need to expand the enrollment of international students, to implement foundational programs for studying in China, to increase the variety of courses and majors offered in foreign languages at higher education institutions, and to enhance the overall quality of educational programs for international students. The Plan called for higher education to align with the economic and social globalization of the country, aiming to develop a wealth of international talent endowed with a global perspective, familiarity with international norms, and the capability to engage in global affairs and competition.

According to Shen and Bao (2018), the "Outline of the National Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)" identifies the improvement of quality, efficiency, and fairness as the fundamental objectives of educational reform and development, emphasizing the strategic need for cultivating diverse foreign language competencies. At the basic education level, reforms of the foreign language component of the college entrance examination, the foreign language proficiency testing system, and the fostering of core academic competencies have been singled out as the "three major battles" to be engaged in for effective implementation and follow-through. In the realm of higher education, strategic planning for foreign language education prioritizes enhancing the quality and substance of instruction, catering to national strategic demands, and bolstering the training of foreign language professionals across various disciplines (Shen and Bao, 2018).

---

http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A22/moe_833/200703/t20070330_82704.html, Accessed 17 July 2019.

On December 10, 2012, the Ministry of Education and the National Language Commission issued a notice on the issuance of the "Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Reform and Development Plan for Language and Characters (2012-2020) (《国家中长期语言文字事业改革和发展规划纲要 （2012-2020 年）》)"[11]. The Outline underscores the need to bolster oversight of language and writing use across educational institutions, media outlets, public services, and in the creation of teaching resources like books, notably dictionaries, films, TV dramas, and other cultural and tech products. This includes a heightened focus on managing foreign language use and pushing for standardization between foreign language and Chinese translations. Moreover, crafting pivotal language strategies tailored for global concerns and emergencies is essential. It's equally crucial to set up a national repository of multilingual experts that echoes the nation's strategic visions. An emphasized call is made for the development of a structured strategy for foreign language education and its application, which includes a robust mechanism for recruiting and retaining specialized linguistic talents for emergencies, coupled with the provision of linguistic emergency services as needed. Prompt support in terms of language and writing should be offered to national departments dealing with China's geographical and celestial domains. There is a pronounced need to harness the capabilities of language associations, cultivate a team of multilingual volunteers, and offer societal linguistic aid. The structural framework of the Language Commission, its various committees, and inter-departmental collaborations should be robust and dynamic. Lastly, nurturing and supporting linguistic academic circles is vital, enabling them to lead or engage in diverse roles, from academic pursuits to rights protection and professional self-governance.

---

[11] The Ministry of Education and the National Language Commission issued a notice on the issuance of the Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Reform and Development Plan for Language and Characters (2012-2020). http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A18/s3127/s7072/201212/t20121210_146511.html, Accessed 20 November 2020.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education proposed to develop national standards for the quality of undergraduate talent training in higher education institutions to regulate school teaching and talent training, and instructed the Steering Committee on Teaching of Various Majors in Higher Education Institutions to take the lead in setting national standards for undergraduate teaching quality. In accordance with the requirement of the Ministry of Education, the new Steering Committee on College Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education started developing the Guide to College English Teaching (《大学英语教学指南》)[12] immediately after its establishment. Compared with the Teaching Requirements for University English Courses (《大学英语课程教学要求》), the Guide to Teaching English at University has added a preface to emphasize the importance of English from the level of national strategic needs. It stipulates that through learning and using English, the student should be able to directly understand latest scientific and technological progress, managerial expertise and theories, learn and understand the world's fine culture and civilization. The Outline concurrently aims to amplify the nation's linguistic capacity, propagate Chinese culture, foster wide-ranging engagement with global citizens, and augment the country's cultural influence and soft power. On a practical level, the Teaching Guide delineates the specific objectives of university-level English instruction, focusing on nurturing students' practical English usage skills. It prioritizes the enhancement of students' awareness of cross-cultural communication and their communicative competencies, along with fostering their self-directed learning skills and overall intellectual enrichment. The overarching goal is to equip students with the ability to utilize English effectively in their academic pursuits, everyday life, social engagements, and future professional endeavors, thereby facilitating personal growth and addressing the demands of society and the nation.

---

[12] Guide to Teaching English at University (《大学英语教学指南》), https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1681148886265387788&wfr=spider&for=pc, Accessed 19 November 2020.

After that, the "Key Points of the Work of the Ministry of Education in 2015 (《教育部 2015 年工作要点》)"[13] also suggested that there should be a continued effort to broaden the internationalization of education. This includes hastening the development of foreign language skills in less commonly taught languages and within international organizations, as well as enhancing the establishment of national and regional research bases. Additionally, it advocates for expanding cooperative and exchange activities with international bodies like UNESCO. Meanwhile, in 2015, the Ministry of Education put forward the guiding idea of strengthening the training of talents in non-common languages. In 2017 the "Reply of Ministry of Education to Recommendation No. 2229 of the Fourth Session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) (《教育部关于十二届全国人大四次会议第 2229 号建议的答复》)"[14] pointed out that the Ministry of Education would further strengthen the training of talents in non-common languages, especially those related to the "Belt and Road Initiative" [15]. The Ministry of Education then would further strengthen the cultivation of non-common language talents, especially those related to the "Belt and Road Initiative," and accelerate the cultivation of a group of applied and composite non-common language talents with international vision and knowledge of international rules. These talents would participate in international affairs and international competition to provide strong intellectual support for implementing the national opening-up strategy, especially the Belt and Road initiative.

---

[13] Ministry of Education. Notice of the Ministry of Education on Printing and Distributing the Key Points of the Ministry of Education in 2015. January 31, 2015
http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A02/s7049/201502/t20150212_189347.html, Accessed 8 July 2019.
[14] 教育部.教育部关于十二届全国人大四次会议第 2229 号建议的答复（摘要）.2017-01-16.
"Reply of the Ministry of Education to Recommendation No. 2229 of the Fourth Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress", 2017-01-16.
http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/xxgk_jyta/jyta_gaojiaosi/201701/t20170116_294935.html Accessed 20 July 2019.

[15] Launched by the Chinese government in 2013, the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), also known as the "One Belt, One Road" strategy, is a significant global development campaign. It seeks to foster infrastructure development and promote investment across approximately 70 countries and international organizations spanning Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Indeed, these reforms have significantly expanded foreign language education in China. From the perspective of foreign language course development, the number of foreign languages taught in colleges and universities across China has increased steadily from 41 to 98 in 2018. The number of major units of various languages is also growing rapidly. Taking English as an example, the English major has expanded to include English, Business English and Translation majors. As of 2018, the professional development of seven major common languages, namely, English, Japanese, Russian, German, French, Spanish and Arabic, has also been remarkable. Currently, in China, 1376 universities offer undergraduate English language courses. Among them, 737 offer English majors, with an annual enrolment of about 200,000; 367 offer Business English majors, with an annual enrolment of 35,000; and 500 tertiary vocational colleges offer Business English majors, with an annual enrolment of about 65,000; and 272 offer undergraduate translation majors, with an annual enrolment of about 10,000. There are 506 universities with undergraduate Japanese majors, 160 universities with undergraduate Russian majors, 117 universities with undergraduate German majors, 160 universities with undergraduate French majors, 91 universities with undergraduate Spanish majors, and 46 universities with undergraduate Arabic majors (Zhang, 2019), among others.

In reality, forty years of rapid economic development in China have generated new requirements for foreign language education, which has required adaptation to the market and meeting employers' demands in foreign trade, foreign affairs, diplomacy, international finance, international business, international exchange and other fields.

1.2 Globalization and the importance of intercultural competence development in

FLT in China

As globalization advances, Chinese citizens are encountering a broader spectrum of cultures and increasingly engaging in communication with diverse individuals and entities around the globe. Parker (2005) characterizes globalization as an escalating process of global interconnectedness, cohesion, and unification in all facets of human life. This rise in global connectivity and human interaction is propelled by economic and political changes, the intricacies of the business landscape, advancements in information technology, and the emergence of new international entities (Thomas, 2008).

At the same time, Fantini (2009) observes that people engage with each other both directly and indirectly. Direct intercultural encounters happen through avenues such as studying abroad, migration, and overseas travel, while indirect interactions are enabled by technological advancements, including but not limited to, emails, text messages, phone calls, and the internet (Fantini, 2009). Consequently, intercultural communication is becoming the norm in the everyday interactions of many individuals. This shift has garnered considerable attention and sparked interest in scholarly communities, leading to various discussions regarding the "competencies" necessary for effective intercultural communication.

Moreover, people and societies globally are always in a state of change and constantly producing new social dynamics as an ongoing process with which we must deal. Such situations present both new opportunities and new challenges. In order to meet these challenges, people need to learn more about other cultures, know how to get along with them, build relationships with others from different cultures, and solve the problems across cultures that inevitably arise. This implies that people need to learn how to

communicate with others across cultures by thinking, feeling and behaving in new ways. In short, cultural boundaries are shifting, and for this reason, the pace of social transformation is accelerating. Consequently, cultural diversity and intercultural contact have become a fact of modern life; hence, "intercultural competence" has become a required response (UNESCO, 2009).

Since the late 20th century, the Chinese government has made significant progress in promoting market-oriented reforms in various sectors, including education (Wu, 2003). However, the close link between education and ideology, coupled with a one-sided understanding of this connection, has led to inconsistencies in educational policies. To face the challenges posed by globalization in the knowledge economy era, China must undertake comprehensive educational policy innovations based on updated concepts. Otherwise, it risks missing the unique opportunities provided by "educational globalization," potentially placing it at a disadvantage in global competition (Wu, 2003).

In addition, China's "Belt and Road Initiative" launched in 2013 has provided more economic globalization and cultural diversification opportunities for Chinese and people worldwide. Indeed, the initiative aims to build open and inclusive economic cooperation with countries along the route, promote common prosperity and development of the region, and advance the construction of a political, economic and cultural multi-dimensional community with a shared interest, future and responsibility (Li, Liu & Lv, 2015).

However, according to Wu (2003), international experience indicates that, for a prolonged period, developing countries that open up to integrate into the global

economic system witness a more significant outflow of high-level, well-educated talents than inflow. This leads to a severe shortage of human resources, including high-quality foreign language professionals with intercultural competence, as evidenced by China's experience. Consequently, the successful cultivation of intercultural competence among foreign language students has become a significant challenge and responsibility for China's higher education system.

In reality, cooperation among countries covers a wide range of fields, including education, scientific research, cultural exchange, transportation, energy, communication, trade, tourism, finance and ecology. As all international cooperation entails communication, Chinese enterprises at home and overseas urgently need a workforce with strong language skills and high sensitivity to cultural differences. One of the most important capacities that foreign language talent is expected to possess is intercultural awareness. Under the "Belt and Road Initiative" umbrella, Chinese society has further objective requirements for foreign language talents and their foreign language ability. The most important thing is developing competence in intercultural awareness and practical communication (Li, Liu, & Lv, 2015).

Li (2010) pointed out that "foreign language is the vanguard for a country to go global. Language precedes the country". In recent years, China's Ministry of Education has been attaching great importance to cultivating high-level foreign language talents, non-English foreign language talents and regional and national talents, and building national foreign language capacity. In addition, other important foreign language strategic issues have also attracted much attention. Catering to China's "Belt and Road Initiative," China's training for the minority foreign language talents is also accelerating. The enthusiasm of China's foreign language educators to meet the national strategic needs is soaring, and the political awareness, problem awareness, discipline awareness and

research awareness in actively building the national foreign language ability are increasing, which also provides a sound guarantee for the transformation and development of foreign language education planning (Shen & Bao, 2018).

In the realm of global foreign language education, experts have long acknowledged that the primary objective should evolve from aspiring to native-like fluency to developing competencies that facilitate communication among individuals from varied cultural backgrounds (Sharifian, 2013). For instance, in English language teaching, English's global proliferation as an international language in the globalization era means it is not just widely used, but its role as an international lingua franca also promotes its growth as a language rich in cultural diversity (Honna, 2001).

To comprehend the essence of quality international language education, one must first understand what characterizes an international language. Smith (1976) pioneered this concept by defining an international language as one that "is utilized by individuals from diverse nations for mutual communication" (p.38). Smith's key premises about the interplay between an international language and culture include: learners need not adopt the cultural standards of the language's native speakers; ownership of an international language is 'denationalized'; and the educational aim is to empower learners to convey their own ideas and culture to others. Therefore, English instructors and students today must be cognizant of how this global language interacts with various cultures to excel in English pedagogy.

In essence, language educators must recognize that excellence in foreign language instruction is critical for achieving students' ultimate objective in language studies: to

master effective communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Achieving such communication necessitates what language teaching often terms "intercultural (communicative) competence" (Byram, 1997), a skill set essential for navigating the complex tapestry of global interactions.

1.3 The Structure and Progression of the Thesis

The closing section of this introduction provides an outline detailing the content and focus of each subsequent chapter to guide the reader through the structure and progression of this thesis.

In this chapter, the researcher begins with a concise history of foreign language instruction in Chinese tertiary institutions. As previously noted, it has been seven decades since the inception of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The most significant growth in China's higher education occurred in the latter 35 years, starting from 1978, which marks the period of economic reform and openness. Early post-1949 China faced challenges in education; the societal upheavals during the Republic era and the existing educational system hindered widespread educational accessibility. However, post-1978 reforms ushered in a new era, revolutionizing China's trajectory. This period also emphasized the crucial role of foreign language education, often viewed as a significant "political task" (Xu, 1978), leading to the rejuvenation of Foreign Language Education (FLE).

At the same time, Chapter 1 further delves into the significance of developing intercultural competence in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) in the age of globalization. Given the global shifts in politics, economy, IT advancements, and the

emergence of global powers, the Chinese populace increasingly interacts with diverse cultures worldwide. The introduction of China's "Belt and Road" initiative in 2013, also aimed at fostering open economic collaborations, further underscores this. The initiative's global vision and emphasis on intercultural collaborations necessitate interculturally skilled FLT graduates, leading to a surge in university foreign language programs. For effective communication, it is imperative that both language educators and students are culturally conscious during the learning process. This accentuates the requirement for integrating intercultural competence into foreign language curriculums. In closing, the researcher acknowledges that despite continued efforts by Chinese scholars and educators to promote intercultural competence within FLT, results remain mixed, which signals an immediate need to address the key challenges in teaching and evaluating intercultural competence in China's FLT arena.

In the upcoming chapter, the researcher will discuss the interplay between Culture, Language, and Communication to enhance understanding of the study's objective. Subsequently, in Chapter 3, a review of the literature will be presented. Initially, past research on conceptualizing and assessing intercultural competence will be examined. Notably, Byram's conceptualization of intercultural competence, considered by many scholars to be the most pertinent, will be highlighted. The model's recognition stems from its comprehensive nature and international validation. The chapter will then encompass a literature review on intercultural competence in FLT, specifically focusing on its development in China. The researcher intends to discuss how, despite various studies, effectively integrating intercultural competence into FLT in China remains an elusive challenge. Emphasis will also be placed on previous Chinese research, which largely explored challenges in teaching intercultural competence without sufficient analysis of the government's national policies, guidelines, and syllabuses. The chapter will conclude by outlining the research aims and questions as well.

In Chapter 4, the research methodologies will be detailed. The study will utilize qualitative research techniques for data gathering and analysis. The researcher will identify the various policy-making communities, with a tentative list comprising national policymakers, tertiary educational institutions, teaching staff, and students. As research progresses, further categorization might be introduced. The study's participants and major sample from the sample university (X International Studies University (XISU)) will be described, along with an explanation of the two primary data categories: documentary data and interviews.

Subsequently, Chapter 5 will trace the evolution of China's foreign language education policies since 1978, emphasizing the most recent tertiary English education standards. In Chapter 6, against this backdrop, the localized curriculum and syllabuses from XISU will be analyzed, focusing on the university's alignment with national guidelines. Chapter 7 will then unveil findings from teacher and student interviews, gauging their understanding of intercultural competence. This chapter will also analyze and discuss FLT policies, guidelines, and curricula set by China's education authorities by seeking answers to research questions regarding the definition, history, and objectives of intercultural competence. Additionally, using these findings, questions related to understanding, implementation, and evaluation of intercultural competence will be tackled. The final chapter will offer recommendations addressing the identified policy, pedagogy, and assessment challenges.

Chapter Two:

Culture, language, and Communication

Unquestionably, culture influences communication, and communication inherits culture.

2.1 What is Culture

The concept of "culture" is often used, but its meaning is frequently unclear. The word "culture" has been given many definitions. Its meaning varies along with the context and users. In the book *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions*, Kroeber and Kluckhonn (1952) spent more than 400 pages discussing the essence and significance of the concept of culture and listed more than 150 different definitions of culture from descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural and derivative categories (Chen, 2009, p. 24). So far, there is no unified and universally recognized definition of the concept "culture." In China, when academics trace the origin of the word "culture" in Chinese, it is generally believed that the discussion of "observing astronomy to observe change of time; observing humanities to know the world" in *Zhouyi Ze* is the earliest explanation of culture (Wen Hua in Chinese), although the two characters were not put together to be the equivalent of culture at that time. The word "culture" in Chinese (Wen Hua 文化) was first seen in *Shuoyuan Zhiwu,* written by Liu Xiang in the Western Han Dynasty: "A sage governs the world, first by virtue and then by force. The people were not satisfied with the use of force. If we do not rule the country by virtue and culture, sooner or later we will be fought back by force." The culture here is understood as "educate" (Wei, 2000, p. 1), while the meaning of the

concept of "culture" in the West is much broader than that in ancient China, and the word "culture" appeared much later in the West than it did in China (Pan, 2015).

Wei (2000, p. 2) points out that the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor was among the first to articulate a definition of "culture." He conceived culture or civilization, broadly defined within a national context, as encompassing knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a person as a member of society. Edward Sapir, another foundational figure in linguistics, characterized culture as a "socially inherited collection of practices and beliefs that shapes the fabric of our lives," suggesting that culture encompasses all facets of a community's shared existence.

Additionally, Hofstede (1994, p. 5) described culture as "the collective mental programming that differentiates one group or category of people from another." Murphy, Hildebrandt, and Thomas (1997) consider culture to represent the behavioral norms typical of a group, thereby defining culture as the totality of a society's way of life. In a similar vein, Herbig (1998) identified culture as a sum of life ways, including the expected behaviors, beliefs, values, language, and daily practices of society members, governed by both explicit and implicit rules that shape the interpretation of experiences.

Adler (1997) referenced Kroeber & Kluckhohn's (1952, p. 181) conceptualization of culture as that

> *"culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of*

traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action."

<div align="right">

Adler (1997, p. 14)

</div>

Additionally, culture is described as deriving from experience, variably organized and learned or even innovated by individuals within a population. This includes imagery or codes and their meanings, which are passed down from previous generations, contemporaries, or developed by the individuals themselves (T. Schwartz 1992; as cited in Avruch, 1998, p. 17).In another sense, culture also "consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves" (T. Schwartz 1992; cited in Avruch, 1998, p. 17).

Varner and Beamer believe that culture is the answer to the following questions repeatedly raised by people:

- *Who are we? Where are we from? What is the meaning of our life?*
- *How can we organize ourselves to live in harmony?*
- *How can we understand our spiritual world?*
- *What is the best way of life?*

<div align="right">

(2005, p. 7)

</div>

Subsequently, scholars like Spencer-Oatey (2008; 2012) have synthesized insights from their predecessors, framing culture as

"a somewhat ambiguous collection of fundamental assumptions and values, approaches to life, beliefs, policies, procedures, and behavioral norms that are shared among a group of individuals. These cultural elements influence (though do not dictate) the behavior of each group member, as well as their understanding of the 'meaning' behind the behaviors of others"

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 3)

Based on those general concepts of *culture*, Spencer-Oatey (2012) identified some key characteristics of culture:

1. Culture is manifested at different layers of depth;

2. Culture affects behavior and interpretations of behavior;

3. Culture can be differentiated from both universal human nature and unique individual personality;

4. Culture influences biological processes;

5. Culture is associated with social groups;

6. Culture is both an individual construct and a social construct;

7. Culture is always both socially and psychologically distributed in a group, and so the delineation of a culture's features will always be fuzzy;

8. Culture has both universal (etic) and distinctive (emic) elements;

9. Culture is learned from the people you interact with as you are socialized;

10. Culture is subject to gradual change;

11. The various parts of a culture are all, to some degree, interrelated;

12. *Culture is a descriptive, not an evaluative concept.*

(Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 3-15)

According to Triandis (1994), culture is a multi-faceted phenomenon that is too often used as a label that gets mixed up with many different categories such as language, history, religion, social class, race and nationality. In that case, various ways of understanding culture have been presented and discussed which pave the way for a discussion of how culture can be understood in relation to intercultural communication and foreign language teaching (FLT).

2.2 Culture and Language

In reality, culture and language are closely intertwined (Lochtman & Kappel, 2009). At first, language has absorbed countless "cultural accumulation" in its development process and is also an organic part of culture (Pan, 2016). According to Pan (2016, p. 58), the reflection of language on culture includes, among other things, the living environment, historical accumulation, values, religious culture, and national psychology. As the famous German linguist Humboldt wrote, "The difference between languages is not the difference in pronunciation and characters, but rather the difference in world view." For foreign language majors, learning a language is learning and understanding a culture. If a nation's culture is not understood, then the nation's language cannot be mastered because language is influenced or even restricted by culture and that culture cannot exist independent from culture. At the same time, the close relationship between language and culture is reflected in the influence of language

on thinking. According to Sapir-Whort's linguistic determinism, language determines thinking, beliefs and attitudes. Different nationalities with different languages have entirely different ways of thinking. Sapir Whort's hypothesis holds that language not only reflects the form of culture but also partially or wholly determines people's view of the world. Although this hypothesis has been widely criticized in academic circles, language and thinking have a close relationship. People use language to understand and analyze the world. There is an interplay between language and worldview. These are generally recognized views in academic circles (Pan, 2016).

In addition, language boasts rich cultural connotations. It has symbolic meaning, metaphor, emotion, style meaning and so on. At the same time, language also has extended meaning. Language itself includes an attitude. Different cultures are reflected in many aspects, which affect people's lives, and culture refers to the total pattern of beliefs, customs, institutions, objects and techniques that characterize the life of a human community. Each nation is armed with its own spirit and concept. Taking color words for instance, color, as a part of a culture, is a common phenomenon. However, in most cases, for some colors, different nations endow them with different cultural meaning and arouse different associations; for example, "yellow movie" in Chinese is the same as "blue movie" in English; and the Chinese "the sleepless night" means "white night" in English. However, the cultural difference embedded in color words is just one aspect of cultural difference between the West and the East. Take the difference between Chinese culture and some Western cultures as an example; many factors influence intercultural communication that cause barriers or failures, such as different living conditions, historical backgrounds, religions and cultural traditions.

Different Living Conditions

The appearance of idioms is closely related to people's work and life. Many Western countries, including Britain and Australia, are island countries; therefore, many English idioms or metaphors include the word "water." However, Chinese people live in the Asian continent, and most cannot lead their lives without land. To compare the difference between these two cultures, we can take the example of describing "wasteful." In English, people say somebody "spends money like water" instead of "scatter one's gold around as though it were dust" in Chinese. There are many other idiomatic expressions related to boat and water in English, such as "to keep one's head above water" and "all at sea." Another example is the "east wind," where the figurative meanings differ between Chinese and Western cultures. For Chinese people, the "east wind" symbolizes "spring" and "warmth," so in Chinese we have "East wind indicates the coming of spring," so we all like "east wind." Instead, people from Western countries favor a "west wind" as a "west wind" accompanies the coming of Spring. The British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote a famous poem, "Ode to the West Wind," and also praised the spring in poetry (Ollier, 1820).

Different Historical Background

Historical contexts can significantly impact the nuances of intercultural communication. As Wang (2000) notes, "Reflected meaning can surface in words with layered conceptual meanings, where our reaction to one meaning is informed by another" and "This phenomenon underscores the distinct perspectives that English and Chinese speakers might hold regarding the same concept" (p. 75). China has traditionally been a nation rooted in agriculture, with farming practices deeply ingrained in its cultural ethos. Historically, Chinese farmers relied on oxen for their strength and docility, making them invaluable assets in agricultural labor. Over time, oxen became emblematic of strength and diligence in Chinese culture, and the term "ox" evolved to commend someone who embodies great strength or exceptional abilities. Conversely,

in ancient Britain, the emphasis was on pastoral farming, positioning horses as central to Western culture. The horse came to symbolize hard work; hence, expressions like "works like a horse" or "as strong as a horse" are used in English to describe someone with great endurance or work ethic.

Different Religion

Language also reflects the different religions in China and Western countries like Australia. Many people in the West believe in Christianity, and the Christian culture has become a source of the English language. So quite a lot of English phrases and idioms abound with words like "God" and "devil," such as "oh my God," "thank God" and "God helps those who help themselves." While in China, people still hold the native and primitive folklore that the world was created by Pangu (the first living being and the creator of all in some versions of Chinese mythology), its genesis mythology was also influenced by Buddhism which came from India. Buddhist terminology has been in wide use in daily communication in China. For example, some older Chinese people always say, "She is just Bosatsu!" which means "She is always warm-hearted" in English. Here, obvious differences between religious cultures in China and Western countries are easily found. The meaning of numbers also differs a lot in different religions. Odd numbers stand for luck; if Western people want to express a higher degree of something, they will add one after the even number; for example, "one hundred and one thanks" means "thanks a lot," and having "one thousand and one things to do" is having many things to do.

Different Cultural Tradition

As different cultural traditions exist between Western and Eastern countries, misunderstanding a word with the same basic meaning often occurs. When a different addresser utters the same word in a different situation, or the word appears in a different context, the connotative meaning may be different. A usual and common word in daily life can be transferred to any aspect such as the military or chemistry, which can form a semantic radiation range (Zhou, 1993). Similarly, one of the most typical differences in attitude between people from China and English speaking countries is the "dog." In Chinese culture, the "dog" represents many negative things, such as "dirty" and "filthy." However, in English-speaking countries, the "dog" is typically considered loyal and "mans' best friend." Therefore, in English, idioms like "top dog" and "lucky dog" convey positive connotations. Furthermore, the word "dragon," for example, exists in Western and Eastern spiritual contexts; this word in Chinese culture has no negative meaning. In the past, in China, "dragon" represented a person like an emperor and could symbolize sovereign power. Nowadays, if a child is said to become a "dragon," it means he or she may have a very good and perhaps prosperous future. However, in Western society, a dragon is mostly portrayed as a brutal animal and might symbolize evil or a barbaric monster that is an enemy to people (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996).

As can be seen, different living conditions, historical backgrounds, and religions may cause different thoughts about the same thing. The same word may have different, or even opposite, imaginary and implied meanings in these two cultures because of the different cultural traditions, customs and ways of thinking.

The intricate bond between language and culture is manifested through various theories and methodologies. Larzén (2005) highlights this complexity by stating that "language is both a constituent part of culture and a manifestation of it" (p. 27). Culture embodies

all shared creations of human society (Robertson, 1981), and our cultural foundations shape our interactions with others, deeply rooted in familial contexts (Hofstede, 1994).

Language serves dual roles: as a universal human capacity to transform sounds into communicative speech, and as the distinctive mode of communication within any given community (UNESCO, 2013). Hofstede (1986) describes language as "an obstinate vehicle" (p. 314）of culture, where distancing oneself from personal values and beliefs is challenging. Thus, it is reasonable to affirm that language and culture are intrinsically interwoven. Language is not merely an element of culture; it is its principal conduit. It acts as a powerful shaper of culture—without language, cultural practices, knowledge, and traditions could not be documented, conserved, or disseminated. Equally, language itself is crafted and molded by the cultural milieu in which it exists.

2.3 Culture and Communication

Communication is often considered the transmission of a message from one person to another, but a deeper perspective reveals it to be a collaborative effort to create shared meaning (Galanes & Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). It includes both language and non-verbal behavior, from the description of space and time to the use of sound and movement, and extends to many aspects of material culture (UNESCO, 2013). Samovar and Porter (1994) suggest that communication happens whenever someone assigns meaning to an action or its aftermath. This implies that communication occurs once an individual interprets another's action or its traces, whether that action was deliberate or accidental, conscious or not.

Gudykunst (1997) posits that culture and communication are interdependent: culture shapes how people think, feel, and behave—all crucial components of communication. According to Samovar and Porter (1994), communication is comprised of eight elements: the originator, the encoding process, the message itself, the medium, the recipient, the decoding process, the recipient's reaction, and the ensuing feedback. Of these, encoding and decoding are particularly critical. In cross-cultural exchanges, it is common for a message to be encoded in the context of one culture and decoded in another, potentially leading to misinterpretations or even a breakdown in communication due to the differing cultural frameworks in which the message is interpreted.

According to Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982), cultural conventions also significantly impact the understanding and interpretation of a speaker. In the process of communication, for example, people sometimes express themselves indirectly and implicitly. Therefore, it is important for language learners to cultivate the ability to develop communicative flexibility so that those indirect and implicitly expressed meanings can be understood correctly. For another instance, some Chinese people would greet others by saying, "Have you eaten already?" Turkish people will say, "Be under God's great power" when they greet each other, and Egyptians would say, "How do you perspire?" If these greetings are translated literally by people from other cultures, there will surely be confusion because they cannot understand the real meaning of the sentences, which are closely connected with their own conventions, cultures, religions, and beliefs.

Knowledge of cultures is important for facilitating communication with people from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, language learners need to learn about and understand the culture behind the language before communicating between

cultures. This is why there is a contemporary emphasis on 'intercultural.' In short, language, culture and communication are inseparable as culture is the foundation of language and communication, and communicative behavior greatly depends on the culture.

In the realm of foreign language teaching (FLT), it is recognized that imparting language skills without the accompanying cultural context is unfeasible, as culture provides the essential backdrop against which language operates (Lochtman & Kappel, 2009). Gaining proficiency in a new language entails not only mastering its syntax or vocabulary but also developing sensitivity to the intricate ways in which culture weaves through language use (Liddicoat et al., 2003). It is imperative for both educators and learners in foreign language settings to cultivate cultural awareness alongside linguistic skills, for without this dual focus, cultural misunderstandings are likely to emerge in communication. Essentially, grasping how language, culture, and communication are intertwined is vital in language education, because the ultimate objective of acquiring a new language is to engage effectively across cultural boundaries. Hence, integrating intercultural competence into the educational objectives for language learners is an essential component of their linguistic development.

In this context, it is of great importance that the courses of foreign language majors in Chinese universities can successfully cultivate the intercultural competence of their students. However, in China, although educators and scholars have devoted themselves to studying intercultural competence in FLT for decades, the teaching and learning outcomes in this regard are not all satisfactory. There is an urgent need to identify major problems in the teaching and assessment of intercultural competence.

Chapter Three:

Intercultural Competence, A Literature Review

Numerous academics consider the ability to navigate different cultures — intercultural competence — as the key factor in improving mutual understanding among diverse cultures (Bennett, 1993). Lustig and Koester (2007, p. 2) encapsulate this sentiment by stating, "As inhabitants of this post-millennium world, there is no longer a choice about whether to live and communicate among many cultures. Your only choice is whether you will learn to do it well." Essentially, the omnipresence of intercultural exchanges around the globe underscores the essential need to foster intercultural competence, which has emerged as an essential objective in the realm of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT).

3.1 Early Studies on Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence

Intercultural communication as a research area has a short history of about 50 years. Many people identify Edward T. Hall as the founder of this field as the definition of "intercultural communication" was first introduced by Hall (1959), an American anthropologist, in his book *The Silent Language*, by putting forward two concepts: intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication, which had the same meaning. Intercultural communication was simplistically defined as interpersonal communication between members of different cultures (Hall, 1959). Later, Hall's anthropological research revealed many important concepts that support the "intercultural communication" field. He investigated the diverse ways in which culture dictates the utilization of space and time and its impact on the way we communicate.

Hall posits that culture and communication are synonymous (Hall, 1976), suggesting that all aspects of our being are in a constant state of communication; it is impossible for us to cease communicating. Given that numerous aspects of our identity are shaped by culture, it follows that our cultural background essentially serves as our method of conveying messages (Hall, 1959; 1976).

Intercultural communication is often characterized as interactions "between people from different national cultures, and many scholars limit it to face-to-face communication" (Gudykunst, 2002, p. 179). It is a common understanding that the essence of internationalization relates in some form to intercultural dialogue. Gudykunst and Kim (2003, p. 17) describe intercultural communication as "...a transactional, symbolic process involving the attribution of meaning between people from different cultures." Liddicoat (2009) explains that intercultural communication is an exchange that is acutely aware of the array of interpretative possibilities that stem from the engagement of diverse cultural frameworks, value systems, and conceptual linkages which shape the production and decoding of messages.

In addition, due to the characteristics of and relationships between culture, language and communication, one outstanding feature of intercultural communication is that different cultures would bring many differences in aspects like language, society, history, living environment, customs, communicative rules, thinking mode and even values. So it is hard to avoid difficulties while understanding and communicating with others from different cultures. This is due to the fact that the practice of intercultural communication molds how individuals manage change, transmit messages across various cultures and international boundaries, and reexamine the essential characteristics of time and space (Brislin, 2000).

The roots of intercultural competence research are found in studies from the early 1960s (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). During that decade, analyses of American service members assigned to duties abroad (e.g., Gardner, 1962; Smith, 1966) led to the recognition of certain elements crucial for proficient intercultural interaction, including adaptability, steadiness, inquisitiveness, and sensitivity, among others. This period saw the initial efforts to systematically define and examine what would eventually be termed as cross-cultural effectiveness. Ruben's work in 1976 was one of the pioneering and significant endeavors in articulating intercultural competence, where he identified seven key dimensions: the exhibition of respect, interaction stance, approach to knowledge, empathy, role behavior oriented towards oneself, managing interactions, and the capacity to handle uncertainty (Ruben, 1976, pp. 339-341). Ruben later refined the concept of self-oriented role behavior, categorizing it into three separate dimensions: roles related to tasks, relational roles, and roles centered on the individual (Ruben & Kealey, 1979).

In the same period, another notable development in defining intercultural competence was the work by Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman in 1978, focusing on what constitutes intercultural effectiveness. They initiated their study by listing competencies deemed necessary for effective living in foreign contexts. After generating a list of 24 skills identified by North American expatriates and refined through their research, they conducted an exploratory factor analysis. This led to a model comprised of three core competencies: the management of psychological stress, the ability to communicate efficiently, and the skill to forge interpersonal connections (Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978). Additionally, Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017) highlight that the late 1970s saw a surge in academic interest concerning intercultural relations, exemplified by the launch of the International Journal of Intercultural Relations (IJIR).

Since the 1980s, researchers' interest in intercultural communication and intercultural competence has significantly increased. Initially, Spitzberg (1983), in addressing intercultural competence in relation to an individual's communicative abilities, asserted that an understanding of context, motivation, attitudes, and skills are conceptually interconnected and crucial for someone to create an image that is commonly recognized as competent. Subsequently, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) determined that the concepts of effective and suitable communication have been central to shaping subsequent interpretations of intercultural competence. Furthermore, Spitzberg & Cupach (1984) proposed that the intercultural communication model is based on the cognitive basis, which emphasizes the importance of understanding, attitudes and knowledge, and combines understanding other cultures, general cultural knowledge and positive attitude as its main formation concept. In this model, intercultural competence is divided into a three-dimensional system: the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

For Meyer (1991, p. 137), intercultural competence is described as the capacity to act suitably and adaptively when faced with the behaviors, attitudes, and expectations of individuals from different cultures, highlighting that such suitability and adaptability necessitate a recognition of cultural variances. Furthermore, Chen and Starosta (1996) contend that intercultural competence encompasses the understanding of diverse critical cultural experiences or accomplishments attributed to individuals distinguished by their ethnicity, race, religion, gender, physical and mental abilities, or sexual orientation, the cultural narratives of various social groups within a society, the interactions between dominant and subordinate cultures, and the intricacies of diversity. More significantly, Chen and Starosta (1996) emphasize that "competent persons must know not only how to interact effectively and appropriately with people and

environment, but also how to fulfill their own communication goals by respecting and affirming the multilevel cultural identities of those with whom they interact" (pp. 358-359).

Moreover, Gudykunst's Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Model, as articulated in 1993 and further discussed in 1998, effectively elucidates that individuals seeking to adapt to unfamiliar cultural contexts must master the management of their anxiety within these new cultural settings (Gudykunst, 1998, p. 232). Gudykunst (1993) further noted that travelers or expatriates might struggle to accurately perceive and understand the reactions of their hosts if their anxiety about engaging in cross-cultural interactions is excessive. Conversely, Gudykunst (1998) observed that when individuals have minimal anxiety while conversing in a foreign country, they may erroneously believe they fully grasp the nuances of the foreign culture, leading to a false sense of understanding and a decreased openness to modifying their beliefs based on new insights gained from intercultural exchanges. Indeed, such theoretical frameworks have historically been integral to preparing individuals for living in different countries.

As one of the most influential scholars in the field of intercultural competence in the past decades, Byram (1997) refers to intercultural competence as "an individual's ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries" (p. 7) and "knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (Byram, 1997, p. 34). As Byram states, *intercultural competence* consists of knowledge, interpretation skills, skills of discovery and interaction, and cultural awareness (as shown in **Table 1** below).

Table 1

Aspects of intercultural competence that need to be addressed in education

Knowledge	Skills/behavior	Attitudes/traits
● Culture specific and culture general knowledge; ● Knowledge of self and others; ● Knowledge of interaction: individual and societal; ● Insight regarding how culture affects language and communication. *Savoirs*	● Ability to interpret and relate; *Savoir comprendre* ● Ability to discover and/or interact; ● Ability to acquire new knowledge and to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction; ● Metacognitive strategies to direct own learning; *Savoir apprendre/faire* ● Ability to evaluate critically perspectives, practices and products in own and foreign cultures. *Savoir s'engager*	● Attitude to relativize self and value others; ● Positive disposition towards learning (intercultural competence) *Savoir eˆtre* ● General disposition characterized by a critical engagement with the foreign culture under consideration and one's own *Savoir-s' engager*

(Lies & Ku, 2004, p. 75)

Shibata (1998) articulates intercultural competence as the aptitude for communicating with individuals from other cultures in a way that reduces the chances of conflict and

misunderstanding. A vital element of this skill is what is known as "cultural self-awareness (p. 106)," where individuals become cognizant of how their culture shapes their perceptions and values, allowing them to adapt their viewpoints in new scenarios to embrace various cultural perspectives (Shibata,1998). Similarly, Deardorff (2006) describes intercultural competence as the capacity to interact effectively and suitably in intercultural scenarios, rooted in one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Wiseman (2003) concurs that intercultural competence involves the knowledge, motivation, and skills required for effective and appropriate interaction with people from different cultures, but also notes that it encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, and sociocultural components. In the same vein, Bennett and Allen (2003) view intercultural competence as the ability to connect effectively and appropriately across diverse cultural settings, which necessitates culturally sensitive knowledge, a driven mindset, and a competent skill set. Expanding on Fantini's (2006) framework, intercultural competence is characterized as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p. 12).

At the same time, Stier (2006) suggests that intercultural competence is comprised of two main components: "content competencies" and "processual competencies". Content competencies refer to fixed knowledge such as understanding languages, worldviews, societal norms, traditions, and cultural "dos and don'ts" (p. 6). In contrast, processual competencies are more dynamic and involve situational awareness and the ability to adapt to the context of various situations (p. 7). These include both intrapersonal competencies, which encompass cognitive functions like critical self-reflection and problem-solving, alongside emotional capabilities like managing frustration, and interpersonal competencies, which cover the capacity to interpret and

respond to nonverbal communication, engage in effective dialogue, and demonstrate situational awareness (Stier, 2006).

Building upon this, Deardorff (2009) broadened the definition of intercultural competence to include a spectrum of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that contribute to successful and appropriate interactions across different cultures. Echoing these ideas, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) define intercultural competence as the skillful and appropriate navigation of interactions among individuals who present a variety of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns (p. 7), highlighting that it is about managing diverse ways of thinking and feeling in our global interactions.

As a final comment, among all the definitions and concepts of intercultural competence, the newest one derived from Byram's work on intercultural competence is deemed most applicable to institutions' internationalization strategies according to Deardorff's three-round Delphi study, which involves a panel of twenty-three intercultural scholars (Deardorff, 2006). Components of intercultural competence in Byram's model are described as follows:

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

Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and others' countries and of the general processes of societal and individual interactions.

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

Skills of discovery and interaction: the ability to acquire new knowledge of culture and cultural practices and the ability to use one's knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

Critical cultural awareness: the 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, 2014, p. 50–53)

In a nutshell, the past decades have witnessed the conceptualization of intercultural competence in varied ways depending on the advocates' academic fields, disciplinary concerns, and theoretical orientations (Song, 2008). Scholars have put forward numerous definitions of intercultural competence, but Byram's (1997; 2014) definition of intercultural competence is comprehensive and more detailed than others. It recognizes that success in intercultural communication requires a combination of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical awareness.

3.2 Previous Studies on Intercultural Competence Assessment

One of the earliest intercultural competence assessment frameworks was Ruben's Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Competence (BASIC), which was a behavioral approach to link the gap between what individuals perceive to be interculturally competent and their actual behaviors in intercultural situations (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). The BASIC assessment framework of Ruben (1976) is regarded as the pioneer in performance assessment of intercultural competence by measuring those seven dimensions of intercultural competence (including the display of respect, interaction posture, orientation to knowledge, empathy, self-oriented role

behavior, interaction management, and tolerance for ambiguity) with four-point rating scales by assessors based on observation of individuals' actions (Ruben, 1985).

Further important research about the behavioral assessment scale for intercultural communication effectiveness was conducted by Koester and Olebe (1988). Based on Ruben and Kealey's work, Koester and Olebe further refined the seven dimensions as:

- *display of respect (the ability to express respect and positive regard for another person);*

- *interaction posture (the ability to respond to others in descriptive non-evaluating and non-judgmental ways);*

- *orientation to knowledge (the terms people use to explain themselves and the world around them);*

- *empathy (the capacity to "put oneself in another's shoes" or to behave as if one could)*

- *role*

- *interaction management (skill in governing contributions to an interactive situation to meet the needs and desires of participants);*

- *tolerance for ambiguity (the ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort).*

(1988, p. 236)

This work was also based on Ruben (1985), who departs from personality and attitudinal approaches in order to center on specific communication behaviors during intercultural encounters.

Before the 1990s, the purposes of intercultural assessment were mainly "(1) to explain overseas failure, (2) to predict overseas success, (3) to develop personnel selection strategies, and (4) to design, implement and test sojourner training and preparation methodologies" (Ruben, 1989, p. 230, cf. Sinicrope et al., 2007, p. 2).

In 1992, Bhawuk and Brislin introduced the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI), a pivotal tool for gauging how well individuals can adjust their behavior to suit different cultural contexts, particularly when navigating the nuances between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. This tool posits that a person's cultural sensitivity correlates directly with their ability to appropriately alter their behavior when interacting within a foreign culture. Individuals capable of such adjustments exhibit higher intercultural sensitivity, suggesting they are better suited for successful engagement in international environments (Bhawuk & Sakuda, 2009, p. 261). The ICSI utilizes a self-assessment format with two parts, comprising 46 questions rated on a seven-point Likert scale. Findings have shown that those with at least three years of intercultural experience tend to have increased levels of intercultural sensitivity (Bhawuk & Sakuda, 2009). According to Bhawuk and Sakuda, intercultural sensitivity is a crucial aspect of cultural learning, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral learning processes.

In 2003, the field of intercultural competence gained a crucial measurement instrument with the introduction of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) by Hammer and colleagues. This tool evaluates individuals' perspectives on cultural diversity. Hammer (2008) outlines the IDI as a comprehensive questionnaire composed of 50 items, alongside selected demographic questions. It also includes four descriptive "contexting" questions that participants can answer, providing deeper insights into their personal encounters with cultural variances (Hammer, 2008, p. 247). Hammer explains that upon completion, the IDI's analytical framework generates a detailed profile, either for

individuals or groups, plotting their position along an intercultural development continuum. This spectrum delineates various stances towards cultural differences, ranging from predominantly monocultural outlooks to increasingly intercultural viewpoints (p. 247) (as shown in **Figure 1** below).

Figure 1: Intercultural Development Continuum

| Denial | Polarization/ Defense/ Reversal | Minimization | Acceptance | Adaptation |

Monocultural Mindset →→→ Intercultural Mindset
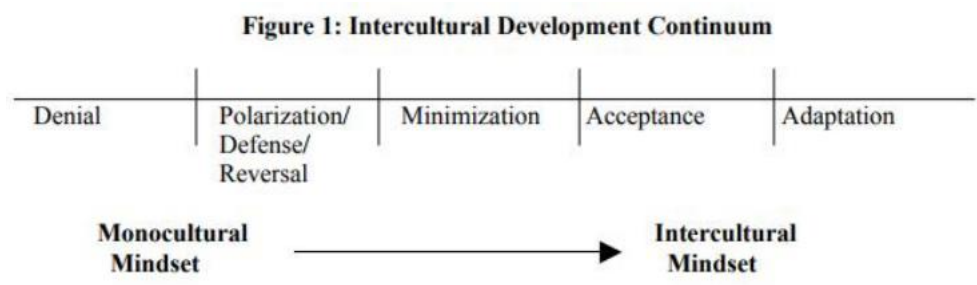
The IDI is grounded in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), originated by Bennett in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to delineate the process through which individuals comprehend cultural variances. This model provides a dynamic means to scrutinize individuals' reactions to cultural diversity and their progression over time. The foundational premise of the DMIS is that one's aptitude for intercultural interactions deepens as the individual's interpretation of cultural distinctions becomes more intricate and nuanced. It suggests that acknowledging cultural differences should be an integral part of one's perspective, leading to a more profound comprehension of both one's own and others' cultures, thus enhancing intercultural competence (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423).

Meanwhole, Hammer et al. (2003) delineate the creation of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as a two-stage process: initially, a preliminary version containing 60 items was developed, followed by the refinement into the final version comprising 50 items. This definitive version of the IDI probes into the five facets of the

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS): the Denial/Defense scale with 13 items ($\alpha = 0.83$), the Reversal scale featuring 9 items ($\alpha = 0.80$), the Minimization scale also with 9 items ($\alpha = 0.83$), the Acceptance/Adaptation scale encompassing 14 items ($\alpha = 0.84$), and the Encapsulated Marginality scale including 5 items ($\alpha = 0.80$). Hammer posits that the IDI is not just a tool to gauge a group's proficiency in managing cultural differences but also serves as a yardstick for assessing the overall intercultural capacity of an entity. It has been effectively implemented across a spectrum of settings including corporate, educational, law enforcement, military, and diplomatic sectors (Hammer, 2008). Furthermore, it is broadly recognized that intercultural competence encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral facets (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017).

To sum up, those concepts and assessments of intercultural competence found in existing scholarship mainly have two important components: effectiveness and appropriateness. The consensus among scholars, as noted by Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017), is that intercultural competence encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. They elucidate that effectiveness pertains to one's capability to attain objectives within a specific interaction, while appropriateness refers to achieving these goals in a way that is deemed acceptable by the other individual involved (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017).

Nevertheless, it seems that all the identified factors in intercultural competence can be grouped into three dimensions: knowledge/cognitive ability, affectivity/attitudes, and behavior/skills, with varied components defined, which will be explained at length through the research. At the same time, although researchers maintain various interpretations regarding the definitions and components of intercultural competence, a

consensus has been reached that intercultural competence is measurable (Deardorff, 2006, p. 257-258).

3.3 Review of Literature on Intercultural Competence in FLT

In the realm of foreign language education, Fantini (2009) conceptualizes intercultural competence as a composite of capabilities essential for effective and appropriate engagement when interacting with individuals from a linguistic and cultural background different from one's own. Fantini (2009) differentiates between "effective," which he relates to how one perceives their own proficiency in the foreign language and culture (a cultural outsider's or etic view), and "appropriate," which refers to how natives of the target culture perceive one's actions (a cultural insider's or emic view). He suggests that the challenge for foreign language learners is to understand and reconcile their own perspectives while exploring and learning about the perspectives of others. Although achieving native-like fluency may not be realistic, learners can strive for a level of communication and interaction that resonates with the mannerisms of the target culture (p. 197).

Fantini (2009) identifies components of intercultural competence for foreign language learners, which include a set of personal traits such as flexibility, humor, patience, openness, curiosity, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and the suspension of judgment. Furthermore, he outlines three key areas: the capacity to forge and sustain relationships; the ability to communicate with minimal misunderstanding or distortion; and the competency to collaborate to fulfill tasks of shared interest or necessity. Additionally, he outlines four dimensions－knowledge, positive attitudes (or affect), skills, and awareness－alongside the requisite proficiency in the target language and various developmental stages (pp. 198-201).

According to those scholars who have researched the development of intercultural competence in FLT (Richards & Sukwiwat, 1983; Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003; Lochtman & Kappel, 2008), in order to promote intercultural competence, it is necessary to change the overall goal of foreign language teaching. According to Lochtman and Kappel (2008), viewed from an FLT perspective, "intercultural communication" can be understood as the successful communication of speakers of different language backgrounds, whereby at least one speaks a foreign language. In order to make successful intercultural exchanges, foreign language speakers need a certain degree of intercultural competence since "communication is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships" (Bryam, 1997, p. 3). Per Bryam (1997), a speaker possessing intercultural competence transforms encounters between cultures into meaningful relationships, thereby achieving an insider's understanding of the other's culture and simultaneously enriching the other person's perception of the speaker's own culture from an internal perspective.

Richards and Sukwiwat (1983) mention several possibilities where cultural differences may result in inappropriate use of language forms by FL learners and identify those speakers as lacking intercultural competence. According to Lochtman and Kappel (2008), if 'intercultural learning' is defined as the ability to thrive in a multicultural society, students need to understand that embracing foreignness requires being open to the cultures of foreigners and migrants within their community. Such objectives should be an integral part of the school curriculum and should not be restricted to foreign languages as teaching subjects (Lochtman & Kappel, 2008). Similarly, Corbett (2003) posits that the primary aim of language education is to cultivate intercultural competence rather than mere 'native speaker competence.' This is because language

abilities are inextricably linked with cultural knowledge and should thus be integrated within the context of foreign language education. Byram (1997) adds that teaching a foreign or second language should equip learners not just with linguistic precision and fluency, but also with the capacity to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, each with their own unique set of social values and behaviors.

Moreover, Shibata (1998) observed from his research that intercultural communication training is crucial for students to develop intercultural competence. In this context, Paige and Martin (1983) pinpointed several competencies essential for such training. These competencies include heightened self-awareness, an understanding of one's own limitations in skills, sensitivity to learners' needs, the ability to address the challenges faced by culture learners, cognizance of ethical considerations in intercultural training, knowledge of conceptual and theoretical frameworks underlying intercultural competence, the ability to design effective programs, and proficiency in conducting research and evaluations. In essence, Shibata (1998) highlights that students of language should cultivate self-awareness, asking questions such as "What are my values?" and "How do I perceive and interpret my reality?" They should also acquire broad knowledge about different cultures, explore various self-conceptualizations, and develop the learning skills necessary for effective communication with individuals from diverse cultures.

In 1997, Michael Byram's work on intercultural learning and language education (Byram, 1997) introduced a model of *intercultural communicative competence* which defined intercultural competence as five *savoirs* (Savoirs / Knowledge, Savoir comprende / skills of interpreting and relating, Savoirs engager / critical cultural awareness, Savoirs apprendre / faire / skills of discovery and interaction, Savoir être / Attitudes (savoir être)) which were oriented specifically in foreign language education,

and these *savoirs* could then be combined with an individual's communicative competence in a foreign language (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1: Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, p. 73)
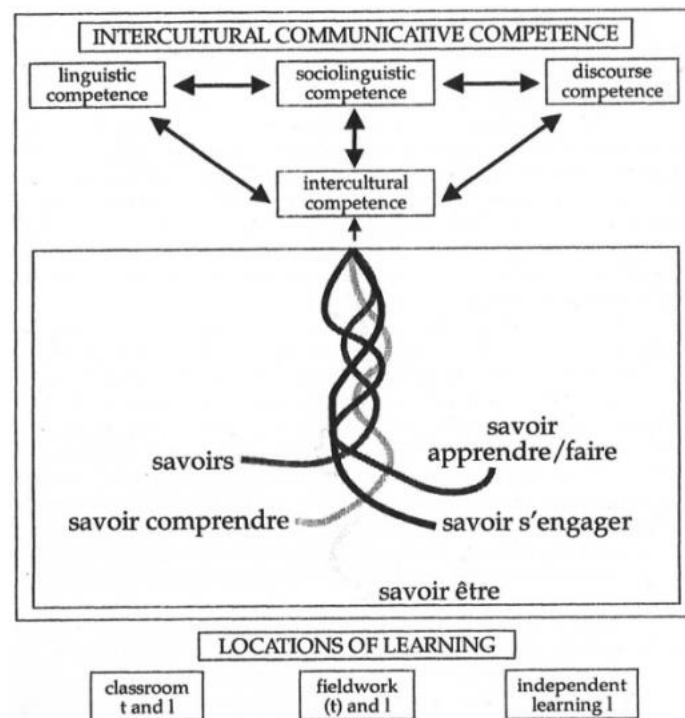
Figure 2 Michael Byram's (1997) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Savoir comprende / skills of interpreting and relating
<u>What? (explanation)</u> = ability to interpret a document/event from another culture, to explain and relate it to documents/ events from one's own culture, learners relate oral and written texts to each other and try to interpret each in the light of the other, involves the skill of mediation   <u>How can it be developed in class?</u>

tasks that allow careful reading, analysis, interpretation of texts – in order to achieve a change of perspective

- creative tasks working with literary texts (writing new scenes, new ending), look at action in literary text from the point of view of minor characters, projects/simulations – learners experience a situation from different cultural point of view (how does the American school work – what is a typical day like at such a school), role plays / certain games

Savoirs / Knowledge

<u>What? (explanation)</u>

- not primarily knowledge about a specific culture but rather knowledge of how social groups and identities function (own and others)

- knowledge of social processes, + knowledge of illustrations of those processes and their products, k. about how other people see oneself as well as knowledge about other people, knowledge about self and other, of interaction (individual and societal)

- comprises traditional Landeskunde knowledge [autostereotypes (+/- stereotypes a person has about his/her own culture), hetero-stereotypes (+/- stereotypes sb has about other cultures)]

- knowledge about social interaction

<u>How can it be developed in class?</u>

facts (film, texts, internet, authentic material), working with stereotypes in class, guest speakers …

Savoir s'engager / critical cultural awareness

<u>What? (explanation)</u>

ability to evaluate critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own culture / other cultures, countries, closely connected with cultural studies, dealing with speakers from another culture always involves the evaluation of a culture – this often leads to an exchange of stereotypes, aiming for a critical evaluation of another culture – development of all the other four levels/competence necessary, including a critical perspective on one's own culture

<u>How can it be developed in class?</u>

- critical comparison of how Australian and German society deals with immigration

Savoir être / Attitudes (savoir être)

<u>What? (explanation)</u>

attitudes, values (one holds because of belonging to social groups / a given society), attitudes of the intercultural speaker and mediator, = foundation of ICC, curiosity, openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own, willingness to relativize one's own values, beliefs, behaviors, willingness not to assume own beliefs, etc. are the only possible and correct ones, ability to 'decentre' – ability to see how own values, beliefs, behaviors might look from the perspective of an outsider who has a different set of values, beliefs, behaviors

How can it be developed in class?

using brainstorming, visual aids when working with texts to create curiosity and interest, using texts written by or about learners from other cultures telling about their lives, children's and young adult literature, authentic texts – brought by learners (songs, interviews), virtual and face-to-face encounter projects (e-mail, exchange) – getting-to-know phase important, cultural similarities in forefront

---

Savoir apprendre / faire /skills of discovery and interaction

What? (explanation) = ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture/cultural practices and to operate knowledge, attitudes, skills in real-time communication and interaction

How can it be developed in class?

comparing e-mails, face-to-face and virtual encounter projects (webcam), chat, study visits – ethnographic observation tasks (sounds, images, smells etc.), negotiation of cultural misunderstandings, role plays, critical incidents

Sharifian (2013) concludes that Michael Byram proposed the more inclusive notion of 'intercultural communicative competence' in foreign language teaching. Byram (2009a) also mentions that the objectives he sets for the teaching and assessment of the five *savoirs* were chosen to encourage teachers to include the intercultural dimension in the linguistic and communicative learning goals they set during their planning. As far as the language component is concerned, the above model of intercultural competence comprises different factors. Foreign language educators, teachers and scholars need to know how to decide which objective of teaching and learning to focus on that can be realistically achieved in a classroom environment.

As Bennett (1993) mentions, foreign language teaching should ideally include cultural components in the curriculum so that language learners are not graduating "fluent fools." It is common to see that, in recent years, colleges and universities that run language courses are beginning to offer intercultural competence classes, and textbooks that are ostensibly for intercultural competence training are being published.

However, according to Shibata (1998), the question is how "intercultural communication" as a field of study differs from merely adding international and cultural components to our language classes, and what role language teachers should play in such a globalized foreign language teaching and learning context. According to Guilherme (2002), the political dimension in foreign language and culture education needs to examine the implications for teachers and reconsider their roles. As Guilherme (2002) concludes, "by discarding their role as ambassadors of a foreign culture… by acknowledging the interactive role of culture learning… and the social, political and ethical implications of intercultural learning/teaching, the foreign language/culture teacher becomes more concerned about issues of communication and solidarity" (p. 159).

It is also important to acknowledge that since the 1980s, the integration of intercultural competence into second and foreign language education has gained prominence, as evidenced in educational curricula and policies across regions such as Europe, Australia, and America (Sercu, 2006). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), in particular, began emphasizing standardized language learning assessments in the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, the focus was on setting pedagogical standards mainly for non-native English speakers, including immigrants or those seeking overseas government jobs (Menken, Hudson, & Leung, 2014, p. 589). However, subsequent revisions to these standards broadened the scope, underscoring the value of

competencies related to language learning (Romanowski & Bandura, 2019). Language learning objectives expanded beyond mere linguistic proficiency to encompass a wider set of proficiencies, famously referred to as the 5Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (Cox, Malone, & Winke, 2018, p.106-107). The acknowledgment that intercultural skills are interwoven with other aspects of the 5Cs underscores their significance in language learning.

The ACTFL guidelines underscore the necessity for language learners to cultivate competencies across five key objectives. As Schulz (2008, p. 10) states:

> *Cultural knowledge and culture appropriate communication skills play an important role in all three modes of communication: interpersonal (implying, of course, culturally appropriate interaction); interpretive (implying sufficient knowledge of the target culture to understand culture-specific meanings); and presentational (implying selection of culture-appropriate contents and use of style and register, i.e., the conscious or subconscious understanding of what can be said to whom, how and in what circumstances).*

As can be seen, these intercultural skills are fundamental aspects of language education and act as supportive tools for students to enhance their communicative abilities.

In Europe, the acquisition of intercultural competence has been addressed in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR),* published by the Council of Europe in 2001. The framework provides a structure for intercultural competence development based on Byram's (1997) model. In terms of expanding European mobility in education, the CEFR aims to provide a "common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum

guidelines, examinations, textbooks etc., across Europe" (CEFR, 2001, p. 1). The CEFR document (2001) outlines FL learning objectives covering the cultural context in which languages are set and pays considerable attention to 'interculturality' in language learning (CoE, 2001). Significantly, from its establishment in 2001, the CEFR has underlined the essential role of intercultural development and skills within language education. As the CEFR (2001, p. 1) states in the introduction:

As a social agent, each individual forms relationships with a widening cluster of overlapping social groups, which together define identity. In an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favorable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to enriching experience of otherness in language and culture.

As such, it is the foundational document that advanced the integration of language and culture in the realms of learning, evaluation, and assessment (Romanowski & Bandura, 2019).

In Australia, the *National plan for language education in Australian schools 2005-2008* emphasized that the purposes and nature of language education are:

- *enriches our learners intellectually, educationally and culturally*

- *enables our learners to communicate across cultures*

- *contributes to social cohesiveness through better communication and understanding*

- *further develops the existing linguistic and cultural resources in our community*

- ***contributes to our strategic, economic and international development***

- ***enhances employment and career prospects for the individual***

(MCEETYA, 2005, p.2)

The National Statement and National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools also states that

"our learners are the future of our nation. Developing in them language skills and inter-cultural understanding is an investment in our national capability and a valuable resource. This was recognized in the 1989 National Goals for Schooling, and re-affirmed in the 1999 National Goals, where the Languages (Other Than English) learning area was identified as one of the eight key learning areas, and one in which all learners are expected to attain high standards of knowledge, skills and understandings"

(MCEETYA, 2005, p. 2)

In China, the "High Schools English Curriculum Standards (《高中英语课程标准》)" released on January 16, 2018, by Demin and Qiang (2017), embraced a comprehensive framework for English language learning. This framework was influenced by the principles of the ACTFL and CEFR and outlined core literacies in four key domains: Linguistic Ability, Cultural Awareness, Thinking Ability, and Learning Ability. Within these, Linguistic Ability forms the foundation, Cultural Awareness serves as the value orientation, Thinking Ability represents the cognitive aspect, and Learning Ability pertains to the capability for ongoing development. Particularly, Cultural Awareness is about grasping both Chinese and international cultures, emphasizing the value-centric

role it plays in English education. It sits at the core of learner development, facilitating not just language comprehension but also national identity, cultural self-confidence, and a broader sense of global community. Achieving Cultural Awareness necessitates proficiency in English (Linguistic Ability), critical processing of information (Thinking Ability), and effective application of knowledge (Learning Ability). The cultivation of this awareness is seen as crucial for fostering individuals who are well-rounded, civically minded, and socially responsible, according to Demin & Qiang (2018).

Again, Michael Byram (1997) has been very influential in his work on teaching and assessing intercultural communication. His work:

> [⋯] moved the field of language education forward from the traditional notion of communicative competence, which had a strong linguistic and functional focus. The latter advocated the teaching of the language with the aim of allowing students to communicate by performing functions such as requesting something, asking permission, inviting, etc. In other words, prior to Byram's contribution, language teaching tended to focus mainly on the teaching of the system of any language (grammar, syntax, vocabulary) in the abstract, devoid of any contextual and cultural setting, with purely instrumental purposes, that is, be able to use the language in question to communicate (Porto, 2013, p.146).

Over the years, Byram and his team have re-examined policies, practices and theories related to foreign language teaching from a cross-cultural perspective, analyzed the potential value of foreign language teaching in macro education from a cross-cultural perspective and explored its possible role in the socialization of a global identity. Based on research on the dynamic interaction between first language, intercultural communication, national identity and intercultural/global identity, Byram proposed the

concept of "intercultural communicative competence" beyond linguistic competence and communicative competence. The concept of 'intercultural communicative competence' covers the essence of (global) civic education. Byram champions the notion that the aim of foreign language instruction should be to cultivate intercultural communicative competence among learners. This perspective acknowledges that language cannot be separated from its cultural backdrop, and thus, evaluation of language skills should extend beyond mere linguistic accuracy and proficiency. In addition, Byram's model of "intercultural communicative competence," which includes the five savoirs, posits that language learners must acquire a set of competences that transcend linguistic knowledge to truly become adept communicators. This model has been influential and has been incorporated into the standards set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which outlines the competencies language learners are expected to develop. At the same time, his theory has been widely cited and verified internationally, especially in European foreign language and intercultural education research, although it has also met with some doubts. In the past decades, many scholars and foreign language teachers in China also began to study, improve and apply Byam's concept of 'intercultural communicative competence.' This is also the reason for adopting Byram's concept as the most appropriate one for the current study.

The integration of Byram's Model of Intercultural Competence within the CEFR framework signals a paradigm shift from a purely linguistic focus to an intercultural one in language education. This change is evident in historical educational documents and curricula that have woven intercultural components into language teaching. This implies that language educators are expected to be adept at incorporating cultural awareness into their pedagogy. There is substantial research evidence supporting the presence of such intercultural pedagogical practices. Many studies have explored the assessment of learners' Cultural Intelligence (CQ), cultural awareness, or competence,

often referencing frameworks such as the CEFR or the ACTFL guidelines and embodying principles of intercultural training as advocated by Byram and others (e.g., Bennet & Bennet, 2005; Blasco, 2009; Constantin, Cohen-Vida, & Popescu, 2015; Solomon & Steyn, 2017; Díez-Bedmar & Byram, 2018). These studies serve to underline the significant role that intercultural training plays in contemporary language education (Romanowski & Bandura, 2019).

Despite the theoretical endorsement of intercultural approaches in the national curricula of foreign language teaching, research by Western scholars such as Shibata (1998), Sercu (2006), Garrido & Alvarez (2006), Larzen-Ostermark (2008), Göbel & Helmke (2010), and Young & Sachdev (2011) indicates that the integration of broad cultural and intercultural competence instruction is not yet widespread in second and foreign language classrooms. A predominant critique highlights the inadequacy with which educators address intercultural topics during teaching. Furthermore, these studies on cultural teaching methods suggest that the cultural instruction practices employed by most language teachers fall short of achieving the anticipated outcomes as outlined in the scholarly discourse (Sercu, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008).

Sercu (2006) also observed that the cultural teaching practices of the majority of European foreign language teachers who participated in her research predominantly fell into one of two groups. The first group of teachers in Sercu's study concentrated almost exclusively on the teaching of communicative competence. The second group, while also prioritizing communicative competence, incorporated elements of cultural knowledge related to the target language country. However, as Sercu highlights, even though these teachers' methods expanded students' knowledge of the target culture, they did not sufficiently encourage students to independently investigate cultural information or to engage in critical reflection. Sercu advocates that, to foster

intercultural competence effectively, teachers need to move beyond a sole focus on communicative competence. They should also enhance their own intercultural competence, become conscious of their own cultural biases and perspectives, and consider how these may impact their students' learning.

Simultaneously, even with the growing recognition of intercultural competence as an essential component of second and foreign language education, the practical integration of this element within language teaching often remains limited. This is primarily because "language instructors frequently lack the necessary preparation to comprehend and impart this aspect assuredly" (Garrido & Alvarez, 2006, p. 174).

Moreover, Shibata (1998) notes that the development of intercultural competence encompasses both linguistic skills and intercultural understanding. Language educators often focus exclusively on linguistic skills, neglecting the intercultural aspect, while interculturalists may not pay enough attention to language proficiency (Shibata, 1998). Therefore, Shibata (1998) emphasizes the necessity for language educators to acquaint themselves with the theoretical frameworks that aid in steering students towards intercultural competence. Concurrently, Sercu's (2006) research deduced that (1) teachers display a deficiency in understanding how to teach intercultural competence, and (2) they are unsure about the pedagogical strategies for teaching and assessing intercultural competence. Sercu's (2006) findings suggest that teachers are not adept at integrating culture into their teaching through an intercultural approach. Furthermore, she observed that teachers lack the identified skills required to teach intercultural competence effectively. Sercu attempts to unravel the reasons behind this shortfall, pointing to potential causes like the absence of intercultural training in teacher education. She also proposes recommendations to aid teachers in adopting an intercultural competence approach, indicating that teachers require support in this

endeavor. Her argument extends to instructional materials, like language textbooks, which she believes should embrace an intercultural perspective to facilitate the incorporation of intercultural competence into classroom practices.

Furthermore, Young and Sachdev (2011) have pointed out that language educators often struggle with understanding the concept of intercultural competence. This misunderstanding leads to difficulties in evaluating and selecting teaching materials, particularly concerning how educators perceive and utilize authentic materials. Young and Sachdev (2011) found that in their investigation into the beliefs and practices of EFL teachers regarding intercultural competence, the teachers—hailing from the UK, France, and the US—assumed that authentic materials inherently possessed educational validity simply because they were genuine. The majority of the teachers involved in their study believed they were employing materials that were critical and appropriate for teaching intercultural competence. Yet, when asked to give examples of cultural content used in their teaching, it emerged that these mostly covered superficial subjects typical of a traditional approach to cultural education. Young & Sachdev's (2011) analysis suggests that such surface-level cultural topics are deemed by them to be insufficient for fostering students' development of intercultural competence.

Göbel and Helmke's (2010) investigation into the pedagogy of intercultural competence within German educational settings delved into the methods teachers employ to impart intercultural skills using the selected cultural content in their courses. Rather than merely cataloging the types of materials and topics chosen, the study focused on the pedagogical strategies in play. The findings revealed that due to a scarcity of formal training in intercultural competence and a lack of cultural depth in educational resources, teachers were often compelled to draw upon their personal intercultural experiences. The study also indicated that those educators with more extensive

exposure to the culture related to the language being taught were adept at adopting an intercultural approach. They effectively encouraged critical thinking and discourse on cultural matters among students. Conversely, educators with limited firsthand experience with the target culture struggled to critically engage with cultural aspects in their teaching resources. Göbel and Helmke (2010) concluded that a teacher's direct experience with the target culture is a crucial factor influencing the effectiveness of intercultural competence instruction and the utilization of cultural content in the classroom.

As can be seen, it has been reported by the previously mentioned scholars and studies that the current challenges of teaching intercultural competence, including inappropriately selected intercultural competence topics and teaching materials, and teachers lacking in intercultural competence knowledge, could become a significant problem when it is time for teachers to implement an intercultural approach in the classroom. Furthermore, the influence that textbooks have on teaching intercultural competence is acknowledged in other research. As Sercu (2006) mentioned, teaching materials and resources, such as textbooks, also need to be organized in an intercultural approach, enriching teachers' comprehension of how intercultural competence could be implemented successfully in classroom activities.

Cheng (2007), through her observation of eight teachers' instructional methods in Taiwan, highlighted the significant influence that textbooks exert within certain Asian contexts for foreign language education. According to Cheng, teachers often tailor their pedagogical strategies, as well as the development of teaching and assessment materials, to align with the content provided in textbooks. This dependency on textbooks is particularly pronounced in countries like China, where a standardized set of textbooks is mandated across schools, colleges, and universities for foreign language instruction.

As indicated in Cheng's study, the teachers reported that textbooks served as their primary knowledge source for specific subjects. Consequently, areas not covered by the textbooks were deemed challenging to teach due to a lack of necessary knowledge on the part of the teachers.

Thus, it is clear that when textbooks incorporate an intercultural approach, teachers are likely to gain more substantial insights into this area. In various Western or other language teaching environments, reliance on textbooks may not be as significant because educators often have the liberty to enhance their curriculum with a range of supplementary materials or to forego textbooks entirely. Therefore, the adoption of an intercultural perspective in textbooks could potentially have a more profound influence on how culture is taught by teachers in Asian contexts compared to Western ones. This difference may also explain why the challenge of integrating intercultural competence is not as prominent in Western foreign language teaching settings.

Beyond the challenges of selecting appropriate materials for fostering intercultural competence among students, and the shortfall in teacher understanding of the concept itself—which can compromise effective teaching—some research has delved into teachers' own attitudes towards the subject. Findings indicate a resistance among some educators to fully embrace and implement intercultural competence in their pedagogy. For instance, the research by Young & Sachdev (2011) revealed apprehensions among EFL teachers regarding the critical examination of cultural issues. Teachers in their study were concerned that an open, critical discourse on culture could allow the airing of racist views, conflicting with the inclusive ethos promoted in educational institutions in the UK, US, and France. A significant number of teachers participating in the study expressed the sentiment that the language classroom should be a space free from controversy, where students are not made to feel uncomfortable or compelled to justify

their cultural practices or the absence thereof. Such concerns underscore the perceived risks associated with a critical cultural pedagogy.

Larzén-Östermark's 2008 research, which surveyed Finland-Swedish English teachers, brought to light similar reservations about critically addressing cultural topics in the classroom. With 12 comprehensive school teachers participating, the study highlighted concerns that critically analyzing cultural issues could empower students harboring racist viewpoints to voice negative opinions about other cultures—challenges the teachers would have to manage. Larzén-Östermark pointed out that such concerns could lead to a reluctance or even a fear of engaging with culture through the lens of intercultural competence. She contrasted this with a traditional teaching method, noting that while an intercultural approach encourages students to engage with and reflect critically on various cultures, a traditional method focuses solely on cultural facts, avoiding the potential controversies of critical engagement.

Despite these apprehensions, some educators expressed a readiness to incorporate intercultural competence into their teaching but cited obstacles like time constraints and a lack of curricular emphasis on this component. This sentiment echoes Cheng's findings in his study in 2007 from Taiwan, where the primary focus of EFL instruction is language mechanics such as grammar, rather than the accompanying cultural context. In Cheng's study, it was also noted that intercultural competence was not a stated goal within the educational syllabus, implying that any effort to teach it would be in addition to the existing language curriculum. Moreover, Cheng observed that the teachers did not consider cultural knowledge an essential part of learning a new language, prompting the question of whether the apparent neglect of culture and intercultural competence is due more to curriculum design or to teachers' perceptions of cultural importance in language education in Taiwan.

In Sercu's 2006 study, a key reason identified for teachers' reluctance to incorporate intercultural competence into their instruction is the belief that such competence is best acquired through authentic interaction, as highlighted in her final observations about teacher beliefs. Sercu categorizes teachers into two groups based on their stance on intercultural competence: those who view it positively and are inclined to include it in their teaching, and those who have a negative perception, fearing it may lead to stereotypical thinking rather than countering stereotypes. Furthermore, teachers in the latter group also doubt the feasibility of developing intercultural competence within the confines of an EFL classroom or any classroom setting.

Conversely, as previously noted, there are educators with a favorable view of intercultural competence instruction in EFL contexts, as confirmed by research, with many teachers acknowledging its importance for student development and the EFL classroom as a suitable environment for such learning (Sercu, 2006; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Larzén-Östermark, 2008). The reluctance of those holding opposing views appears to stem from factors beyond their beliefs about the teaching of intercultural competence. Additionally, Young & Sachdev's research in 2011 suggests that the hesitance may also be linked to students' perceived undervaluing of intercultural competence. Despite this, Sercu's findings suggests that the teachers' willingness to teach intercultural competence is not significantly swayed by student attitudes. Consequently, it might be inferred that the primary deterrent for teachers' reluctance is not student attitudes, as educators' beliefs remained consistent across different national contexts, despite varying levels of student motivation.

Likewise, in a study by Aveling (2002), the attitudes of students and teachers toward self-evaluation of their perceptions of 'the other' and racism were investigated. The findings revealed that the individuals in Aveling's research were of the opinion that tackling such issues was of low priority and chose to focus on what they deemed more significant aspects of education. This suggests that the undervaluation of intercultural competence may not be limited to students alone, but can also extend to teachers.

In conclusion, studies of intercultural competence teaching and assessment in different educational settings show that it is widely agreed among scholars that FLT is not only about teaching and learning language skills but, more importantly, about teaching and learning intercultural competence. Nevertheless, their studies reveal that language teachers are usually not well trained in teaching and assessing students' intercultural competence for various reasons, among which lack of teachers' training, willingness to teach intercultural competence, and appropriate materials and assessment tools seemingly stand out.

3.4 Western Studies of Intercultural Communication among Chinese Foreign Language Learners and Teachers

At first, Jackson (2015) highlights the significance of intercultural elements, identity, and discourse in the teacher education programs for foreign languages in China, emphasizing the country's status as a major sender of students to study abroad. The increasing demands of a globalized world necessitate greater focus on intercultural communication within these programs to improve interactions in both local and overseas settings. However, Jackson points out a gap in the preparation provided to Chinese students bound for international study, noting that many embark with minimal pre-departure training, leaving them ill-equipped for the social and academic challenges

they face in new linguistic and cultural contexts. Therefore, Jackson advocates for well-structured and progressive teaching strategies that elevate students' language abilities and intercultural skills.

Jackson's extensive research, particularly her 2016 study, delves into the language and cultural adaptation, acculturation, and identity reformation among Greater China's exchange students. In her work titled "Global Citizenship and Intercultural Engagement: Insights from an Online Course for International Exchange Students," she reveals that structured critical reflection helps students from a Hong Kong university gain deeper insights into their intercultural exchanges and how to handle cultural disparities. Her analysis, which examines various data forms such as forum contributions, field reports, questionnaire feedback, interviews, and essays, shows that such reflective practices significantly raise students' intercultural awareness and their understanding of what it means to be an empathetic global citizen.

Moreover, Jackson (2017) explores how Chinese students preparing for international exchanges, particularly in English-language environments, can be better supported in their language learning endeavors. Her mixed-methods research on 149 students from a Hong Kong university during a semester-long exchange in an English-speaking country provides insights into the evolution of students' attitudes, motivations, and engagement with language and cultural learning. She discovered varying outcomes among participants, with some achieving greater confidence in English and forging meaningful intercultural relationships, while others struggled with linguistic and cultural obstacles. These findings suggest the need for targeted interventions to enhance language proficiency and intercultural participation for students in such programs.

Another renowned scholar, Fred Dervin, has extensively published on topics like identity, interculturality, and mobility/migration in various languages, with a particular focus on China in recent years. According to Dervin (2011), research on intercultural communication and education often falls short, especially when examining the acculturation of 'the Chinese student' abroad. The studies can be unsatisfactory in their approach to analyzing the utterances of research participants, particularly when these participants are perceived as 'Others'. Dervin (2009) notes that Chinese students studying abroad are frequently viewed as distinct 'Others' by administrators, staff, local and international students, and host societies at large. These students are often stereotyped and pigeonholed, seen as 'cultural robots' who all share the same characteristics.

Dervin (2011) suggests employing a 'fluid' perspective when investigating intercultural dialogues, focusing on four distinct studies within the realms of intercultural education and communication related to 'the Chinese student' overseas. Dervin's findings indicate that certain scholars rely on rigid or culturalist methods for their analysis, emphasizing an ambiguous and unchanging concept of culture. These methods tend to mix culturalist views with a broad, individualistic, and interpretive perception of 'the Other.' Nonetheless, a coherent fluid approach to intercultural discourse has not been established. Therefore, Dervin's work calls for a reevaluation of the epistemological and methodological frameworks used in the examination of otherness and intercultural conversations.

Meanwhile, Dervin (2009) observed that while the discourses of some researchers appeared to embrace the concept of fluid interculturality, their perspectives often solidified when scrutinizing the treatment of mobile Chinese students within the intercultural communication research field. Dervin argues that the processes of

acculturation, adaptation, and integration into new environments are more complex than depicted in the research he reviewed. Echoing the thoughts of Bhatia and Ram (2009), who posited that "Acculturation is a process that involves continuous, contested, negotiations that will forever be in progress as an immigrant grapples with his/her place in the larger structures of the history, culture, and politics," Dervin suggests that a fresh approach to understanding interculturality in the context of academic mobility is possible. This new perspective would move beyond culturalism and essentialism, focusing instead on the nuanced varieties of students' identities and experiences (Dervin, 2008).

Furthermore, in their publication, "Interculturality in Chinese Language Education," Jin and Dervin (2017) advocate for a revised approach to presenting interculturality within the scope of Chinese language instruction, especially as the global demand for teaching the Chinese language grows. They point out that the teaching of "Chinese culture" within language programs has traditionally focused on imparting factual knowledge about China, instructing students on ways to communicate and behave in alignment with Chinese norms. However, just like any culture, Chinese culture is not static; it is dynamic, continuously evolving, and interacting with other cultures rather than existing in isolation. Consequently, Jin and Dervin (2017) propose that Chinese language educators should gain deeper understanding of their students' cultural identities and intercultural sensitivities, as well as their own. They argue that this understanding is essential to achieve the ultimate aim of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), which is to develop a more effective culture-centered pedagogy for students.

From the same perspective, Xu and Moloney (2017) examine the attitudes of Chinese heritage learners towards an intercultural learning activity designed to stimulate critical intercultural thought. Xu and Moloney (2017) suggest that to assist Chinese heritage

learners from Australia in exploring their perspectives and opinions about 'others' and themselves, particularly in the context of their knowledge about both China and Australia, and to boost their language learning and skill development for effective interaction within their heritage language community, several key questions must be addressed. These include assessing the extent of these learners' intercultural experiences, understanding their awareness and critical perception of managing different cultural aspects in their lives, and determining how they view the relevance and impact of an intercultural approach to learning Chinese. Additionally, the research conducted by Xu and Moloney (2017) identifies various themes in the feedback from heritage learners, utilizing data from the students' reflective journals and their writings after the project's completion. This reflective process seems to contribute to the growth of self-awareness among these learners.

As can be seen, although previous studies have paid great attention to Chinese language learners and teachers within the field of intercultural communication in FLT, they mainly focused on the development of intercultural competence for those Chinese language students and teachers who are studying and teaching abroad. Take English teaching and learning in China as an example; most Chinese English learners are currently learning this target language in China which is a non-English speaking context. However, few scholars and language educators from English-speaking countries have researched the current situations or issues English learners face in China. The truth is that almost all students from preschool to university in China are currently taking English as a compulsory subject. This is also why, in China, the majority of studies and research about FLT and those about intercultural competence in FLT mainly focus on English language teaching and learning.

3.5 Studies on Intercultural Competence Development in FLT in China

In the era of globalization, there is a prevailing trend for foreign language teaching (FLT) to align with intercultural educational goals. It is a common conviction among Chinese FLT professionals and academics that cultivating students' intercultural competence represents the primary objective of language education (Song, 2008; Han & Song, 2011). Consequently, pedagogical strategies aimed at fostering intercultural competence have sparked significant interest in China's foreign language teaching community, particularly within higher education institutions. Since the 1980s, language education has been a critical component of Chinese higher education and has consistently garnered substantial focus from Chinese scholars and language educators.

There are numerous studies on cultural teaching in FLT in China (Xu, 1980; Wu, 1990; Chen, 1999; Hu, 1999; Gu, 2002; Wang, 2013). The earliest study on cultural teaching in China was conducted by Xu (1980) and was published in an article entitled *Culturally Loaded Words and English Language Teaching (《文化负载词与英语教学》)*. He pointed out that English teaching in China does not pay enough attention to the cultural factors of words and should draw attention to the culture of English-speaking countries. Since then, the relationship between language teaching and understanding of culture in the Chinese tertiary education context has increased. As Wu (1990) points out, culture teaching has been considered by many as one of the most significant teaching objectives of FLT in China, and successful foreign language learners need not only to be skillful in basic linguistic competence but also to have a sharp insight to distinguish intercultural differences.

Other Chinese scholars, too, have noticed "intercultural pragmatic failure" in their studies. For example, Chen (1999) summarized that culture teaching in foreign language education could be put into three circles: *prohibition, selection* and *substitution*. *Prohibition* is motivated by the intention of protecting one's home culture

and maintaining its traditions, and entirely prohibits people from learning anything from foreign culture; *substitution* expresses a desire for radical changes and blind worship of foreign culture, aimed at taking over everything from foreign language; and, *selection* is a reaction to the failures of the two extreme solutions, suggesting that China should select what is needed from foreign culture (pp. 262-263). Hu (1999) refers to pragmatic linguistic failure simply as learners' inappropriate or incorrect use of the foreign language caused by the language traditions and habits in their first language, which leads to pragmatic failure. A typical example could be that Chinese English learners tend to use the same words and expressions in different circumstances. That is to say, in foreign language teaching in China, it is essential to teach students to avoid first language interference and prevent the occurrence of "intercultural pragmatic failure."

According to Gu (2002), educators have long focused on the linguistic aspects of language teaching. Cultural teaching pedagogy is outdated, and learners' cultural competence is neglected. Wang (2013) raises several concerns in the realm of cultural instruction within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at Chinese universities and colleges: "(1) Although numerous courses incorporate elements of English culture, their instruction predominantly prioritizes language proficiency. Culture is relegated to a mere backdrop; (2) While English instructors often impart basic knowledge or communicative skills and strategies, they tend to overlook the development of cultural literacy. Rarely do they expose students to the deep-seated frameworks of English culture or prompt students to contemplate the root reasons for cultural disparities" (Wang, 2013, p. 857). Drawing from these observations, Wang (2013) offers the following recommendations in his study: (1) Cultural instruction in EFL should be emphasized more and integrated into everyday teaching and learning practices; (2) English teaching goals should transition from language skills enhancement to the nurturing of cultural acumen; (3) Students should not only be encouraged but expected

to engage in intercultural communication; (4) Concrete steps ought to be implemented to assist students in developing open-mindedness and unbiased perspectives towards the culture of English-speaking nations (p. 857).

Some significant studies on intercultural competence in the Chinese FLT context have focused on teacher cognition. For example, Han and Song's (2011) study investigates the current state of the teachers' understanding of various aspects of intercultural competence-oriented ELT.   The authors conducted a questionnaire survey of 30 Chinese university English teachers to investigate how they conceptualized intercultural competence and its relation to ELT and how their perceptions materialized in their own teaching practice. Their research shows that the teachers' conceptualization of intercultural competence and its relevance to ELT was ambiguous. The study also points out that a number of Chinese foreign language instructors express skepticism about the feasibility of developing intercultural abilities within the university setting and integrating the teaching of foreign languages with cultural education. The research conducted by Han and Song (2011) further uncovers that the content provided for intercultural education is often limited and not comprehensive, attributed to the teachers' lack of familiarity with certain aspects of the cultures being taught and a deficiency of intercultural content in their educational resources. They observed that even when these teachers are committed to fostering intercultural competence among their students and dedicate a significant portion of class time to cultural instruction, the incorporation of intercultural elements into their English language teaching requires further advancement. According to Han and Song (2011), the teachers expected more opportunities for intercultural contact, more teaching resources and materials, and professional development and training in integrating language and culture teaching (p. 190).

Intercultural competence studies in China are mainly conducted by scholars in the field of FLT. However, only a few studies focus on both intercultural competence assessment in the Chinese FLT context (Liu, 2008; Fan et al., 2013), compared with the multitude of assessment tools of intercultural competence developed and utilized in Western contexts. As one of the most eminent scholars of intercultural competence in China, Liu (2008) explores the feasibility of assessing intercultural competence in a test for English majors in China. Liu (2008) introduced a tentative model of language competence, which has three components: grammatical competence, intercultural communicative competence, and textural competence. In Liu's model, intercultural communicative competence comprises three aspects: cultural knowledge, cultural comprehension and cultural behavior (Liu, 2008, p. 92). Based on the model, Liu designed a culture test consisting of multiple-choice questions, true-false statements, matching, short answer questions and translation by inserting them into the second-year undergraduate final exam at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU). The Test for English Majors — Grade 4 (TEM 4) scores of the 719 culture test participants are retrieved from the TEM testing center of SISU for comparative statistical analyses. Although the results of Liu's study display a low reliability coefficient, Liu's cultural test has been proven valid and practical in China.

Another important study about intercultural competence assessment in China is Fan et al.'s (2013) empirical study on the self-assessment of Chinese college students' intercultural competence. This study involved 1300 college students from seven universities in China. The respondents were students from different majors and grades (38% of Arts majors, 41% of Sciences and Engineering majors, and 21% of other majors). According to the survey and interview results, Fan et al. (2013) found that Chinese college students generally believe their knowledge of foreign cultures is insufficient when performing intercultural communication with others. As a result, they are reluctant to take the initiative to make adaptations during communications with

people from other cultural backgrounds. Moreover, participating students felt inadequately prepared in intercultural communication skills and had low awareness and understanding of foreigners' mentalities and behaviors (Fan et al., 2013, p. 57).

In order to discover the reasons behind the difficulties of teaching intercultural competence in China, a few Chinese scholars and foreign language educators examined national policies and guidelines for foreign language teaching implemented by the Chinese tertiary education authorities. As Cheng (2007) states, there are some guides and documents given out by the national authorities in Western countries, such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)* published by The Council of Europe, and *National statement for language education in Australian schools: National plan for language education in Australian schools 2005-2008* published by the MCEETYA, that are useful for FL teachers to clarify the concept and in what way it could be included in the curriculum and classroom. In China, taking English majors offered in Chinese universities as an instance, there are two official teaching guidelines, *the National Curriculum Guide for English Majors* (2000) (《国家英语专业课程指南》(2000)) and *the National Curriculum Requirements for the Teaching of College English* (2004) (《国家大学英语教学课程要求》(2004)). They include intercultural communication as part of the teaching principles and teaching content (Song, 2008; Han & Song, 2011). The revised College English Curriculum guidelines, released by China's Ministry of Education in 2016, emphasize that a key goal of college English education is to foster intercultural communication competence. The objective is to equip students with the capability to use English effectively in interactions with individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds, thus facilitating effective communication across cultures (Li, 2019).

Implementation of these regulations and policies indicates that the tertiary education authority in China believes that culture learning is theoretically and practically as important as linguistic learning for foreign language education. However, existing studies show that Chinese students' intercultural competence does not seem to comply with the curriculum.

To sum up, in China, how intercultural competence development can be most productively and systematically integrated into the FLT agenda remains a great challenge for Chinese foreign language educators and scholars. Both Western and Chinese scholars have proved that FL teachers undoubtedly will play a critical role in any pedagogical response to such a challenge as they are fundamental to any pedagogical improvement or reform. Furthermore, scholars have determined that there are difficulties with teaching intercultural competence in FLT, both within and outside of China, while the lack of teachers' knowledge and skills in cultural teaching and the underlying reasons persist.

Nevertheless, FLT practices significantly impact what is taught and what is not taught because teachers basically design their own delivery methods and create their own teaching and assessing materials in accordance with official guidelines, policy documents and syllabuses designated by the tertiary education authority. This is because these documents at a school level, for most foreign language courses in most schools, colleges and universities in China, are centrally designed and mandated by the Ministry of Education. Previous studies conducted by Chinese scholars and foreign language educators usually focused on the reasons behind the difficulties of teaching intercultural competence in Chinese universities and colleges. National policies, guidelines, syllabuses and textbooks for foreign language teaching implemented by the Chinese government were not adequately analyzed.

Meanwhile, the suggestions made by scholars do not seem helpful for solving the issues that have long beset FLT in China. Their suggestions indicate the absence of systematic and practice-oriented review and evaluation of syllabuses, textbooks and other teaching materials commonly used by Chinese foreign language teachers and students and the pedagogy used to substantiate the teaching. In addition, although some scholars note that the barriers to teaching intercultural competence in China also resulted from the lack of Chinese foreign language teachers' limited knowledge of intercultural communication, they still have not come up with a system to integrate intercultural competence teaching into the national curriculum and syllabus mandated by the tertiary education authority.

Contemporary higher education demands that students navigate a broad spectrum of experiences, develop skills pertinent to learning and employment, and embrace their roles as citizens of a globalized society, regardless of their major. This is due to the inherently international nature of today's higher education landscape. Upon their entrance, students must be prepared to engage with the international aspects of a modern higher education institution. These challenges are twofold: 1) the academic and personal development expectations placed upon the student by the educational program; and 2) the expectation for the student to mature into a global citizen over the course of their studies (Romanowski & Bandura, 2019).

Additionally, the global exchange of ideas is a hallmark of higher education, particularly in foreign language learning settings. Universities, for instance, recruit academic staff, professors, and instructors from across the globe to ensure scholarly excellence. These individuals bring diverse cultural expectations and professional

standards that students must be adept at navigating. Moreover, the widespread practice of translating academic materials into multiple languages means that students must apply intercultural skills when engaging with such resources.

Beyond the academic realm, intercultural competence is increasingly valued as a lifelong skill essential for future employment. Higher education institutions and their educators highlight the importance of students developing intercultural skills during their studies (Romanowski & Bandura, 2019). Graduates are anticipated to leave their institutions not merely with academic or professional credentials but also with a well-rounded set of intercultural competencies. In the contemporary workplace, there is an expectation for employees to collaborate effectively within global teams and for graduates to exhibit confidence in their communication abilities, including proficiency in a foreign language.

The responsibility of higher education is thus to provide an environment where students can practice and refine these skills, ensuring they are well-equipped to transition into the global workforce. Intercultural competence is relevant to speakers of all languages; language competence, accuracy, or proficiency no longer serve as gatekeepers to intercultural adeptness in the modern world.

3.6 Research Aims and Research Questions

The purpose of the research is first to identify the problems and then to suggest solutions. The current research will take Michael Byram's (1997; 2014) model as the theoretical framework because Michael Byram proposed a more inclusive notion of 'intercultural competence' in foreign language teaching than other scholars (Sharifian, 2013), and the

objectives that Byram has set for the teaching and assessment of the five *savoirs* in his model of intercultural competence were chosen with the intention of encouraging teachers to include the intercultural dimension in the linguistic and communicative learning goals they set during their planning (Byram 2009a, p. 324).

The first purpose of the research is to analyze FLT policies, guidelines and curricula formulated and implemented by China's national education authorities. The following questions will be pursued in the process of analysis.

1.   How is intercultural competence defined by education authorities? Do policymakers and curriculum designers understand what intercultural competence means and represent their understanding in the official discourse?

2.   How has this understanding formed in the history? What political, educational, social and cultural elements have affected the formation of this understanding by the top policymakers and curriculum designers? How has the perception of intercultural competence evolved, especially since the late 1970s when the Chinese government decided to open up the country and join the world market?

3.   What intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives, assessment framework and criteria are required by the education authorities? Compared with Byram's model, how are the teaching and learning objectives, assessment framework and criteria different? What could be the reasons behind the difference?

Then, I will examine how these policies, guidelines and curricula are materialized in reality at the university level. Questions I seek to explore include:

1. How do front-line educators understand intercultural competence? From what sources do they acquire knowledge of intercultural competence? How do they perceive their intercultural competence?

2. How do front-line educators appraise the practicality of the guidelines and curriculum implemented by the education authorities?

3. How do they implement the intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives in their teaching activities?

4. How do they design concrete assessments to evaluate students' intercultural competence? How close is the concrete assessment aligned with the national guidelines?

5. How do they evaluate the outcomes of their intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives? How accurately do they think the assessment methods or frameworks reflect the level of the student's intercultural competence? To what extent do they think the student has achieved the learning goals of intercultural competence after the learning process?

6. What is good or bad about the assessment method or framework in the eyes of the front-line educators? What are the reasons behind the methods' or framework's good or bad aspects?

Based on the findings in the steps mentioned above, I will propose policy and curriculum improvement suggestions to address the problems identified in the research.

Chapter Four:

Methodology

Every research method or technique has its own purpose, advantages, and challenges, but the goal is the same: to obtain genuine, valid and credible data. As a rule of thumb, research methods are decided by research questions. For the current study, I chose the methods that most suit my research purpose and questions. I also considered the resources available to me. As a result of extensive consideration, the research employs qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. The research first identifies policy-making communities. Preliminary research has identified four policy-making communities: national policymakers, tertiary educational institutions, teaching staff and students. It is expected that further categorization is necessary with the progress of fieldwork and data analysis. Data constitute two categories. One is documentary data, including educational policies and curriculum specifying intercultural competence standards, syllabi and materials, university policies and documents, and tutors' teaching plans. The other is interviews with university managers, tutors and students.

4.1 A qualitative approach

This research selected a qualitative method to collect and analyze data. Scholars tend to define this approach from different perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3) describe qualitative research as a process rooted in the researcher's active engagement with the environment. It is an array of interpretive actions that bring the nuances of the world into focus, often transforming these nuances into various forms of representations

like field notes, interviews, conversations, images, audio recordings, and reflective writings. Essentially, qualitative research is about immersing oneself in a natural setting and striving to understand phenomena through the lens of the subjective meanings that individuals ascribe to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Building on this, Parkinson and Drislane (2011) characterize qualitative research as a methodological approach that employs techniques such as participant observation or case studies to generate a rich, narrative description of a particular environment or behavior.

For this study, there are several reasons why I adopted a qualitative research method. First, qualitative research methods recognize and perceive realities as diverse and open to interpretation and maintain the position that not all phenomena or ideas have a quantifiable element (Marsen, 2006). In other words, there is no careful control of variables in the research, but findings are more directly related to the real world and not influenced by an artificial experimental situation. Consequently, a qualitative approach is used when the nature of research questions requires exploration, and research questions in a qualitative study will always begin with *how* and *what* so that the researcher will generate an in-depth understanding of what is occurring relative to the topic.

More importantly, qualitative research methodologies are particularly well-suited for delving into phenomena in their authentic environments and gaining insights into contextual social processes. These methods are adept at probing into areas that quantitative approaches might not reach, such as personal emotions and cognitive processes (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). The qualitative approach is tailored for disentangling the intricacies of a given phenomenon. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) suggest that qualitative research is not the path for those seeking swift and simplistic solutions; rather, it is a means to deeply comprehend a condition or a process. It typically requires

an extended period of investigation and a commitment to iterative inquiry. This depth is achieved through employing various data collection techniques, ranging from interviews to observations, to repeated engagements, each selected based on how well they can uncover the underlying meanings and dynamics within particular scenarios and environments (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Mason (2002) vividly summarizes the purpose of qualitative research as: "…can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work and the significance of the meanings that they generate" (p. 22).

Moreover, according to Merriam (1988), qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process rather than outcomes or products, and a qualitative approach emphasizes the researcher's role as an active participant and the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. It allows the data to be mediated through the human instrument rather than inventories, questionnaires, or machines. These characteristics fit the current research well. For the current research, the researcher will be the key instrument in data collection and the interpreter of data findings while exploring the major problems and where they are in FLT policies, guidelines, syllabi, curricula, textbooks and current pedagogies in China. Such a research method allows the researcher to pay greater attention to what actually happened in the processes, rather than viewing the results as the products of an impartial environment. Therefore, it is safe to say that qualitative methodology will be an appropriate choice.

4.2 Data Collection

Specifically, as mentioned above, the case study method of qualitative research is used in this research. Case study is a common framework for conducting qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and is depicted as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, Yin (2009), a leading scholar in case study methodology and qualitative research, defines case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). As a major qualitative approach, a case study is often longitudinal because it looks at developments and changes over time in individuals or small groups (Yin, 2003b, 2009). Case study allows in-depth examination of a phenomenon's inner workings and dynamics. It is also suitable for studying whole organizations, such as a college, or focusing on a particular event (Yin, 2003a).

In this research, I selected an undergraduate English major course as the sample and chose X International Studies University (XISU) for the case study. There are two reasons behind the selection.

Nowadays. the prevailing belief that native speakers of major world languages do not need intercultural competencies is increasingly being challenged (Romanowski & Bandura, 2019). Gaining intercultural communication skills is not just about showing respect for other cultures; it reflects the reality that languages are no longer the sole domain of those who grew up speaking them. The trend of people using a second language for communication with other non-native speakers is on the rise, leading to the evolution and global use of native languages. English, for instance, has surpassed its native roots to become the international language of choice, frequently used by non-native speakers to communicate with each other. It serves as a bridge language, or lingua franca, in various international contexts, including conferences, business

negotiations, trade agreements, and the operations of multinational and joint-venture companies in China.

According to Crystal (1997), the speakers of English in the world can be summarized into three categories: native speakers, second language speakers and foreign language speakers. They can also be divided into three circles: inner circle, outer circle and expanding circle (Crystal, 1997). Countries in the inner circle are the traditional native English-speaking countries such as Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with a combined population of about 320-380 million. Countries in the outer circle include Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, Singapore and other former British colonies with a population of 150-300 million. Before colonization, English was not an important language in these countries, but later, it became the primary language used in business, education and government. Finally, beyond the outer circle, there is an expanding circle consisting of at least one billion English learners and users in the remainder of the world, vastly outnumbering those in the inner and outer circles, and this number is clearly on the rise.

Nowadays, English is used by more and more people worldwide and plays an irreplaceable role in the world's economic, political, scientific and cultural exchanges and development. According to Crystal (1997), about 85% of the 12,500 international organizations included in the 1995-1996 Yearbook of the Union of International Associations identified English as their working language; 80% of the world's electronic information is in English; more books have been published in English than any other language; and, English plays a vital role in higher education in many countries.

The development of English has fully reached the following four criteria of a lingua franca as identified by Brutt-Griffler (1998, p. 27): 1. the integration of world economy, science and technology and culture; 2. usually coexists with local languages and is the dominant language of multilingual or bilingual groups; 3. different from general interlanguage, it is not limited to a small number of elites engaged in social and economic activities, but is the object of study and tool used by all social strata; 4. a lingua franca was spread not by native speakers emigrating to other parts of the world, but by a large number of people who learned the language throughout the world. As a result, the popularity of English on a global scale has promoted the process of globalization and made outstanding contributions to international exchanges and cooperation (Zhang, 2006).

Although the number of native speakers of English remains relatively unchanged, the number of countries and regions where English is listed as the second and preferred foreign language keeps increasing. The use of English has gone far beyond business activities and the elite levels of society and has become a universal communication tool in the international community as well as in various fields in many countries. At the same time, almost all countries have listed English as an important subject in school education (Zhang, 2006).

In China, English is typically the primary or sole required foreign language from elementary to high school, with a significant emphasis on its instruction at the middle school level. Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the College English Test (CET) became a standard requirement across full-time colleges and universities for students who had selected English as their mandatory first foreign language, a criterion necessary for obtaining their college diploma. The year 2001 marked the issuance of the "English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education." Following this, the

initiation of English instruction moved from the first year of junior middle school to the third year of primary school, signifying a systematic bolstering of English education throughout the foundational stages (as reported by the Chinese government website, 2019).

According to statistics from the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources of China, the employment rate of English majors remains among the top 10 of all majors. Even though the employment of college students has generally declined in China in recent years, the employment rate of graduates of English majors in most universities and colleges remains over 90%, and the employment prospect is optimistic. With the acceleration of China's economic development, China's links with the world will be strengthened. So English majors will maintain high popularity with good employment prospects over an extended period.

Today, the term "International English" encompasses not only the global use of English but also the diverse forms of English spoken by individuals worldwide. Proficiency in English to any degree and the ability to travel internationally are now generally considered adequate. For native English speakers, the rise of global English, which deviates from traditional native English forms, can lead to communication challenges. Variants like Chinglish, Singlish, Middle Eastern English, or European English are no longer seen as unacceptable but are recognized as facets of the evolving landscape of international language use. Thus, embedding intercultural competence into foreign language education becomes crucial to navigate this linguistic diversity. This underscores the importance of intercultural competence in language instruction, whether for native languages or second languages.

Second, XISU was chosen because it is an international studies university that offers the most foreign language courses in northeast China. XISU offers a wide range of language subjects in thirteen language majors (English, Japanese, German, French, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Mongolian, Indonesian, and Persian) in twelve schools, namely the School of Translation and Interpreting, School of English, School of Oriental Languages, School of Western Languages, School of Central-Eastern European Languages, School of International Economics and Trade, School of International Business Administration, School of Chinese Language and Literature, School of Education, School of International Exchanges, School of General Education, School of Marxism. Its English major is central to its language teaching. At present, XISU has 3,000 students enrolled in English majors. Over the past five years, the average number of graduates majoring in English at XISU has been 610, with around 90% graduate employment rates. Their major career destinations include Chinese translation, cross-border e-commerce, education, international trade and business process outsourcing (BPO). Therefore, XISU is an ideal case as it typifies international studies universities mainly focusing on teaching foreign languages and related courses.

4.3 XISU English major for case study

An undergraduate English major course at XISU was selected as a case study for this research. The course name is *English (*course code: 050201), with a study duration of four years, and the course area is *Foreign Language and Literature*. The course focuses on training students who are going to be engaged in teaching and management work in primary and secondary school, high school or senior training institutions to obtain the following competencies: high cultural accomplishments, solid basic English skills, broad international vision and innovation consciousness, strong ability in cross-cultural communication, to master the basic knowledge and skills of English or English educational media systematically, and can skillfully use modern information and

network technology. At the same time, the course aims to cultivate application-oriented, compound, export-oriented English talents who are going to work in the news and communication media industry, foreign enterprises and institutions, foreign exchange departments, and government community departments, engaged in the interview and writing, event planning and organization, departmental relations coordination, public relations management after graduation. In addition, the course consisted of several compulsory subjects such as *Comprehensive English 1 - 6, English Reading 1 - 3, English Listening and Speaking 1 - 3, English Grammar and Writing, English Reading and Writing, Intercultural Communication, Chinese Translation and Interpreting, and Culture and Society of English Speaking Countries*, and some other elective subjects.

In this study, the following subjects were selected: *Comprehensive English 1, Comprehensive English 3 and English Reading and Writing for first and second-year undergraduates, Comprehensive English 6 and Chinese Translation and Interpreting for third-year undergraduates and Intercultural Communication*. The core teaching outcomes for these subjects include: 1) Good English language organization and application skills, good English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills; 2) Strong critical thinking and intercultural communication competence; 3) Good ability to acquire and process information and innovation; 4) Have specific practical ability in English education and teaching; 5) Have specific abilities in organization, management, language expression, communication and coordination; and 6) Good working ability and self-development and improvement ability. The reason for choosing these subjects is that they have a common second teaching objective: developing students' intercultural competence.

4.4 Data Collection

This case study collected and analyzed two data types: documents and interviews. The research pinpointed four key communities that interpret policy, as previously discussed: those crafting national policy makers, institutions of higher learning, their teaching staff, and the students they educate. Each community has its way of making sense and generating meanings.

National policy makers refer to the officials and experts involved in formulating tertiary education policies. They are usually senior bureaucrats working in the Ministry of Education or eminent experts commissioned by the ministry or ministerial agencies. However, these officials and experts are not accessible to the researcher of this project for interviews. Moreover, given the purpose of the current research design, there is no need to interview them. The focus is on the policy documents these people have generated as national guidelines, standards, rules, and other documents. Consequently, a documentary analysis method will be used for national policies relevant to intercultural competence cultivation in universities. Detailed are given below.

The second policy interpretive community is the educational institutions that implement national policies and standards at a local level. In this research, that refers to XISU. National policies, guidelines and standards have to be implemented at the local level. The implementors do not mechanically enforce what is imposed on them. On the contrary, they tend to interpret or re-interpret policies from higher-level administrative or governmental agencies and formulate local implementation plans so that the policy can be better embedded in the local environment and with local practice. In the process, local implementors may adjust or even amend or distort the original policy by formulating local narratives of the situation and demands to reflect local practice, local priorities and local knowledge (Yanow, 1999). Such practice by local implementors is not limited to China but is a widespread phenomenon in governments worldwide (see,

for example, Roe, 1994; Lipsky, 2010; Stone, 2012). In fact, without local implementors' interpretation and modification, a national policy cannot be translated into a practical plan for local implementation.

Nevertheless, in this process, the meanings intended by the national policy makers for the original policy, guidelines or standards will likely be "twisted" by implementing institutions to fit into local practice. These institutions form local policies, guidelines, or standards for local implementation. In this research, these institutions function more like moderators, translating national policies, guidelines, and standards into local policy documents for local implementation. For this community, this research also employed documentary analysis methods to examine local policies formulated by XISU as an implementing organization. Details are provided below.

The third policy interpretive community is the teaching staff in this case study. They are the ones who apply local policies, guidelines, and standards in their teaching activities and evaluate the outcomes of their teaching and the appropriateness of policies. As discussed above, institutions represent the middle layer of policy interpretation, translating national policies into local implementation. Teaching staff are the actual implementors. They are individuals and also have different interpretations of the national policies, guidelines, and standards from their organizational employer. When implementing policy in actual teaching practice, they are likely to form down-to-earth interpretations and pedagogies, which may differ from national and organizational policies. For this community, I used interviews to collect data (see below). In addition, documents generated by this community, such as subject descriptions, teaching notes, and examination papers, are also examined.

The last community this research studies consists of students, who are the target of the national and local policies and teaching activities. All the policy efforts in the field of intercultural competence training and assessment are to foster intercultural communication capacity in foreign language learning students. They are the "end-product" of the entire policy process, and they are also the vital link in a policy feedback loop that informs the success/failure of the policies, guidelines and standards and indicates further improvement of the policy. This research employed interviews to map students' understanding and interpretation of intercultural competence and their appraisal of policies and pedagogies.

4.5 Documentary analysis of policies

As indicated above, the current research employed two major data collection methods: documentary analysis and interviews. Review and analysis of documents is a key data generation method in qualitative research. It uses information that already exists in records, receipts, meeting minutes, reports and so on. The documented resources include public documents such as those published by governments at all levels. This data collection method has many advantages for the present study. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992), document review enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of informants, which can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher as an unobtrusive source of information. The data are thoughtful in that informants have given attention to compiling. Documentary data save a researcher the time and expense of transcribing them into written evidence.

In this research, most published governmental policy documents relating to foreign language teaching in tertiary education in China since the 1980s were collected and reviewed. In addition, documents containing the latest plans for the future development

of foreign language courses formulated by local and central governments and the university were also collected and reviewed. For example, one of the most important documents reviewed in the current study is the latest revision of *The Catalogue of Undergraduate Majors of General Institutions of Higher Learning* (Ministry of Education, 2012)*,* a primary guiding document for higher education in China. As one of the essential guiding documents for the work of higher education, it stipulates the division, names and categories of majors, and is an important basis for setting up and adjusting majors, carrying out talent cultivation, arranging enrollment, awarding degrees, guiding employment, conducting educational statistics and forecasting talent demand. Since the "Reform and Opening Up," China has carried out four large-scale subject catalogue and specialty setting adjustments. The first revision was issued and implemented in 1987, with the number of professional categories reduced from over 1,300 to 671. A new version was published in late 2020. At the same time, all the documents have been collected through the education yearbook, government website, authoritative person anthology and other channels.

For instance, at the university level, an important document, the *Undergraduate Talent Training Program of XISU (2021),* includes teaching objectives, curriculum system design, core curriculum and subjects, teaching requirements, teaching plans, and curriculum structure proportion have been reviewed. More importantly, some other documentary data has been collected at XISU, including teaching plans, teaching contents, syllabuses, curriculum design, teaching materials, assignments, classroom activities, extracurricular activities, examinations, assessment tasks and results, and notes from interviews, also constitute the core of data to be reviewed.

These reviews identified the major issues of integrating intercultural competence teaching and assessment into the national curriculum and syllabus mandated by the

Ministry of Education in China. Meanwhile, the reviewed documents also explain how the national curriculum and standards have been implemented and materialized in teaching at university level in China.

4.6 Interview as a qualitative method

Interviews are usually defined as "conversation with a purpose" or "professional conversation," but are different from a conversation as it is a very common type of elicited self-presentation (news interview, employment interview, police interview, survey interview). It can serve as the sole data source in qualitative studies but is more frequently used as one among several. Its data can be taken at face value ("interview as a research tool") or viewed as co-constructed accounts ("interview as social practice") (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), the main task in interviewing for qualitative research is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. There are three interview types for qualitative research, including structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured (open interviews (Thomas, 2009), which have been listed and explained in **Table 2**:

Table 2

Structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured (open)
Highly standardized interview schedules	Follow an interview guide	No imposed structure, just overall question; Case studies

Often large-scale survey interviews (e.g., opinion polls) "Oral questionnaires"	Often smaller-scale, 5-10participants or focus groups Provide structure but give respondent some leeway	Oral or life history interviews

(Thomas, 2009)

For this study, all interview data were collected from XISU (a university specializing in foreign language teaching in northeast China) using semi-structured and unstructured (open-ended) interviews to gain participants' flexible, adaptable, deep and free responses. Twenty full-time teaching staff of these subjects and thirty full-time undergraduate students majoring in English were selected as participants. Of the selected student participants, ten were first and second-year students, and twenty were third and fourth-year students. All participants were recruited from the English Department. Teachers and students of advanced English language and culture subjects offered in years 3 and 4 were mainly recruited because subjects taught at these levels are required, by the national curriculum, to focus more on cultural content and intercultural competence than lower-level subjects.

Sample size has always been an issue in qualitative research. It is subject to issues such as methodological assumptions, scales of research, and aims of projects. This research follows sampling strategies for interview-based studies recommended in several seminal works on qualitative methodology. In deciding the sample sizes, I took into consideration the scale of the current research (PhD thesis limited by time and

resources), the size of the institute where the case study was carried out, and the purpose of the study that looks at how national education policy and curriculum is interpreted locally in a particular tertiary educational institution. Based on the above considerations, the project set an *a priori* sample size for teachers and students.

This research focused on one case for consistent representation of local knowledge. It was reasonable to expect that staff within an institution would likely achieve a significant degree of consistency in interpreting policy and curriculum issues. Based on Lincoln and Guba (1985), sampling was guided by informational redundancy, which means stopping interviews once it is reasonable to believe that little new data would be generated and data saturation has been reached.

4.7 Recruitment of Participants

In this study, as shown in **Tables 3** and **4**, 20 teaching staff and 30 students in XISU were recruited for interviews. The university's department chosen for the study is a medium-sized unit with 20 teaching staff and administrative leaders, constituting the majority of staff involved in English language teaching and leadership. I knew most of the teaching staff and leadership personally and interviewed as many of them as possible to collect as much rich data as possible.

Table 3

Basic Information of Teacher Respondents

NO.	Sex	Length of Teaching	Main Subjects Taught	Students Taught	Audio recorded
T1	F	14y	Selected English Short Stories /English Writing	Second year students	√
T2	F	24y	Intercultural Communication/Chinese-English Translation	Second year students/Third year students	√
T3	F	7y	Comprehensive English /English Writing	Second year students	√
T4	F	10y	Comprehensive English /English Writing / Extensive Reading	First year students /Second year students	√
T5	F	24y	Advanced English/ Thesis Writing	Third year students /Forth year students	√
T6	F	15y	Comprehensive English	First year students /Second year students	√
T7	F	10y	Comprehensive English/Chinese-English Translation	Third year students /Forth year students	√
T8	M	7y	Comprehensive English/Intercultural Communication	Second year students	√

				/Third year students	
T9	M	10y	Comprehensive English/Chinese-English Translation /English Writing	Third year students /Forth year students	√
T10	M	6y	Chinese-English Translation	Third year students /Forth year students	√
T11	F	6y	English Audio-visual Speaking/Comprehensive English	First year students /Second year students	√
T12	M	4y	English Audio-visual Speaking/Comprehensive English	First year students/Second year students/Third year students	√
T13	F	7y	Comprehensive English/Intercultural Communication	First year students/Second year students/Third year students	√
T14	F	4y	Comprehensive English	First year students /Second year students	√
T15	F	8y	Comprehensive English/Intercultural Communication	First year students/Second	√

				year students/Third year students	
T16	F	5y	Comprehensive English/Intercultural Communication	First year students/Second year students/Third year students	√
T17	F	10y	Comprehensive English/Extensive Reading//English Writing	Second year students/ Third year students /Forth year students	√
T18	M	12y	Extensive Reading/Intercultural Communication	Second year students /Third year students	√
T19	M	7y	Comprehensive English/Extensive Reading	First year students /Second year students	√
T20	F	20y	Selected English Short Stories /English Writing	Second year students /Third year students	√

Table 4

Basic Information of Student Respondents

No.	Sex	Grade	Notes	Audio recorded
S1	F	First year	Head of Learning Department with School of English in JIXU	√
S2	F	First year	Serving as an intern for two months in the International Office of XISU	√
S3	M	First year	Class Monitor	√
S4	F	First year	Excellent Student	√
S5	M	First year	Excellent Student	√
S6	F	Second year	Excellent Student; determined to study abroad (in the UK) after graduation	√
S7	F	Second year		√
S8	F	Second year	Class Study Monitor	√
S9	M	Second year	Class Study Monitor	√
S10	F	Second year	Class Monitor	√
S11	F	Second year	Excellent Student	√
S12	F	Second year	Excellent Student	√
S13	F	Third year		√

S14	F	Third year	Class Monitor	√
S15	M	Third year		√
S16	F	Third year		√
S17	F	Third year	Excellent Student	√
S18	F	Third year	Excellent Student	√
S19	F	Third year	Class Monitor	√
S20	M	Third year		√
S21	F	Third year	Excellent Student	√
S22	F	Third year	Excellent Student	√
S23	M	Third year		√
S24	M	Third year		√
S25	F	Third year	Excellent Student	√
S26	F	Fourth year	Excellent Student	√
S27	F	Fourth year	Class Monitor	√
S28	M	Fourth year	Class Monitor	√
S29	F	Fourth year	Excellent Student	√
S30	F	Fourth year	Excellent Student	√

Note: In the above table, M=Male, F=Female.

All teaching staff contacts were obtained through a personal network, as I had previously worked as a language tutor at the university where the interviews were conducted. I have established a good rapport with some teaching staff and have their contact details. They have been invited to join the study if they indicate agreement. I also requested the teachers who knew me to distribute my research information and contact details among their colleagues. They were invited to contact me directly in order to ensure confidentially.

To obtain contact details of student participants, I asked participating teachers to circulate a recruitment flyer among their students or allow me to give a five-minute information session at the beginning or end of one of their teaching sessions in which I would brief the students about my project and hand out flyers. My contact details and a brief project description were included on the flyer. Interested students were encouraged to contact me.

Initial informal communication with former colleagues who met my selection criteria (see below) indicated their strong interest in the research topic and willingness to participate. They each received a Participant Information Sheet and consent form (see Appendix II) to seek their formal confirmation of participation before conducting the interviews. To recruit student participants, I asked teachers of the cohorts that met my selection criteria to hand out recruit flyers in the classroom or by email, whichever the teacher felt most comfortable and appropriate. To prevent students from feeling pressured to participate, I have confirmed that the flyer was handed out or sent to students without promotional words or influence from the teacher. Then I sent the information sheet and consent form to students who contacted me, and confirmed signing of the consent form before interviewing those who agreed to participate

Meanwhile, I considered hiring a third party to approach the teaching staff to obtain contact details and recruit participants to minimize the risk that my former colleagues might feel obligated to participate in the study; however, the third-party option seemed to either increase the risk or be unworkable. If I asked the department leadership to approach the teachers, the teaching staff would feel pressured to participate. If I asked an ordinary teacher I previously knew to approach other teachers I also knew before, other teachers would feel that their friendship with me was not appreciated as much as the contact teacher's. As a result, I contacted the department leadership first to seek the head's agreement and support and show my respect for his leadership and authority before commencing the recruitment phase. After receiving the head's agreement and support, I approached former colleagues individually to seek their agreement and support. In the process, the potential participants were informed that I had reported this research to the head of department, who had authorized me to carry out the fieldwork. However, beyond that, I did not comment on the support from the head of school to avoid giving the teachers pressure. Considering the nuance and subtlety of *guanxi* （关系）[16] culture in China and that China has always been a society of acquaintance, I believe that my approach demonstrated cultural sensitivity to local practices and minimized risk to potential participants.

In addition, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and I ensured the anonymity of interviewees and that their institute would be deidentified in the research report.

---

[16] The definition of "guanxi" (关系) in Chinese refers to the complex system of social networks and influential relationships which facilitate business and other dealings in China. It is a concept deeply rooted in Chinese society, embodying the importance of personal connections and reciprocal obligations, trust, and mutual understanding. "Guanxi" is a reflection of the Chinese cultural emphasis on interpersonal harmony and the maintenance of social order.

Interviewees received research information and consent forms before the interview. The interviews took between 20 and 50 minutes. The interviews of teaching staff/administrators were conducted in their offices or their nominated on-campus location. Student interviews were conducted on campus, in a study room in the university library during office hours. Teaching staff/administrators did not need to travel unless they nominated a place outside the campus. Students of this university lived in dorms on campus, and they did not need to travel outside the campus. Interviewees were asked to nominate a convenient time to do the interview.

In addition, all the interviews were audio-recorded with the interviewee's consent for later transcription. No interviewees declined the interview being recorded. The first two interviews of teachers and students served as pilot interviews to test the soundness of the questions. These participants were also invited to comment on the interview schedules after the interviews. Their opinions were assessed, and appropriate suggestions were accepted to improve the schedules. After the pilot interviews, interview questions were refined to ensure consistency.

The interview questions (see Appendix I) given to each group of respondents were slightly adjusted to reflect each group's unique composition and characteristics. Therefore, the interview questions were different for different groups of participants. However, they were all about teaching content and materials developed in line with the national syllabus and official textbooks, management of classes, teaching methods and in-class activities, and the assessment and homework tasks given to students. By doing this, I obtained firsthand accounts of how front-line educators understand, teach, and assess intercultural competence in an authentic teaching context.

4.8 Potential risk/harm to the participants

Risk or harm refers to any detriment or adversity affecting the physical, psychological, or general welfare of an individual, institution, or group. This encompasses a spectrum of potential negative outcomes, from tangible physical harm like sickness or injury to intangible psychological impacts, including emotional distress or humiliation. The potential risk to participants in the current study is very low. At first, the researcher sought each interviewee's agreement to record, and no one declined. If anyone did not consent, the interview would not be recorded. Instead, the researcher would only take detailed written notes. Secondly, the topic of the current study is not sensitive in the Chinese political context. Indeed, intercultural communication is a policy priority in China's tertiary education system. Many studies have been conducted in this space, although they did not employ the same theoretical framework. Thirdly, the interview questions (see Appendix I) only explore interviewees' interpretations of intercultural competence and communication and how they implement their understandings in reality. No questions probed the interviewee's private or political opinions. Interview schedules were worded and spoken in a way deemed polite and respectful with regard to the interviewee's social, gender, and age status in Chinese culture to avoid any impression of domineering or officiousness. Fourthly, as indicated by the interview questions, the research is intended to seek participants' interpretation of national policies and curricula only. Their performance in both teaching and learning was not probed. Fifthly, interviews were conducted at a place and time that was convenient for the interviewee. Sixthly, interviews were conducted in an environment that the researcher was familiar with and had good personal networks. These measures also ensured the security and convenience of the researcher. Overall, the magnitude of the potential risk to participants, including the researcher, was low.

In addition, a preparticipation explanation of the project and acquisition of consent was a priority strategy to manage potential risks. Interviewees were provided with the interview schedule beforehand for two purposes. First, interviewees could scope the interview and decide if they feel comfortable participating. Second, if they chose to participate, they could ponder the questions/leads beforehand and provide quality answers during the interview.

At the same time, the researcher is a Chinese citizen and has a supportive local network. During the fieldwork, I practised commonsense, prudence and a culturally appropriate approach in my research activities as strategies to minimize any potential risks.

As explained before, I previously worked in the university chosen for this project and maintained good relationships with former colleagues and administrators. They trusted me and supported me before. Some participants showed great interest in my research project, and most were keen to participate. Student participants were mainly recruited through advertisement. The researcher also asked former colleagues to circulate flyers or emails and text messages among potential student participants rather than directly requesting students to participate. This arrangement also prevented students from being pressured into participating in the research.

4.9 Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 111), "Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements

about relationships among categories of data." Patton (2002) outlines the process of qualitative data analysis as one that involves multiple stages: collecting data through methods such as interviews and observations, organizing the data through coding and sorting into categories, conceptualizing and linking these categories, synthesizing these links into broader themes and theories, and ultimately interpreting the data to gain deeper insights and understandings. The aim of this analytical journey is to unearth recurring themes, patterns, and concepts that offer a richer comprehension of the subject matter.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a dynamic and interconnected approach to qualitative research, where data collection and analysis are not sequential but occur in tandem, influencing each other throughout the research process. Key to this process is the strategy of creating memos and sketches, which serve as critical tools for tracking the researcher's thought process, steering the development of final concepts that address the research questions, and formulating theories to explain these findings. They identify the core phases of data analysis as the condensation of data, the visualization or presentation of data, and the processes of drawing conclusions and confirming those conclusions.

In this research, I first transcribed all the data collected from interviews, observational notes, and memos by typing the text into word processing documents before analyzing the data. Then, the data were organized by checking for completeness and accuracy and removing incomplete responses or those that did not make sense. Meanwhile, the mass of data was also organized and somehow meaningfully reduced and reconfigured; in other words, the data reduction was completed first.

Miles and Huberman (1984) define data reduction as the act of distilling and refining the mass of data collected, which can include selecting key aspects, narrowing the focus, simplifying complex information, summarizing, and converting data found in extensive field notes or transcriptions into a more manageable form. In order to complete the data reduction for the current research, I carefully read the transcribed data word by word, divided the data into meaningful analytical units to locate meaningful segments, and then coded them by marking the data segments with symbols, descriptive words, or category names.

Data display, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) in their model for qualitative data analysis, takes the process a step further than data reduction by arranging information into an orderly and succinct compilation, which enables the analyst to derive conclusions. In this research, as one of the types of diagrams commonly used in qualitative research, network diagrams were used by the researcher, which helped to show direct links between variables and events over time.

In this study, all the data were analyzed based on Michael Byram's theory and framework as his model of intercultural competence was chosen as the basic theory for the current research. I first analyzed FLT policies, guidelines and curriculum formulated and implemented by national education authorities at all levels and by the sample university. In this data analysis process, I first identified the definitions of intercultural competence made by education authorities and how policymakers and curriculum designers in China represented their understanding of what intercultural competence means in the official discourse. In addition, I identified the intercultural competence

teaching and learning objectives and assessment framework and criteria required by the education authorities for Chinese college and university students.

After that, by comparing with Byram's model, I also identified whether the teaching and learning objectives, assessment framework and criteria are different and the reasons behind these differences. Then I examined how these policies, guidelines and curriculum materialized in reality at university level by analyzing the data collected from transcripts of interviews and reviewed documents.

More importantly, it is crucial to ensure the validity of the research conclusions. Here, validity encompasses a much broader concern for whether the conclusions drawn from the collected data are credible, warranted, and defensible. As a result, verification has been integrally linked to conclusion drawing. In this research, the data was revisited as many times as necessary to verify and cross-check the conclusions. Meanwhile, to validate the findings and explanations of the research, I also used stakeholder checks. In other words, some of the informants and participants interviewed were invited to evaluate the findings and interpretations extracted from the data. At the same time, some other participants and stakeholders, especially those affected by the research, were invited to comment on the study results.

Chapter Five:

National and Local Policies and Curriculums

In this chapter, I will first examine the evolution of national foreign language education policies since 1978, focusing on the latest curriculum standards of tertiary English education.

5.1 Evolution of Foreign Language Education Policy

With the convening of the third National Conference of the 11th Central Committee (Di Shi Yi Jie San Zhong Quan Hui 第十一届三中全会) in 1978, China ushered in a new historical period of the "Reform and Opening-up". The National Conference on Education, on April 22, 1978, significantly impacted China's higher education. Afterward, the Ministry of Education held the National Symposium on Foreign Languages Education in Beijing from August 28 to September 10, 1978. The meeting discussed how to strengthen foreign language education and the measures to cultivate foreign language talents in all aspects. The "Opinions on Strengthening Foreign Language Education" (Opinions) proposed at the meeting were later approved by the State Council and circulated to the tertiary education system on March 29, 1979.

The Opinions made six commitments regarding foreign language education in China at the start of the "Reform and Opening-up." Firstly, it endeavored to correct the mistakes in foreign language education made during the Cultural Revolution, emancipate

thinking, and quickly change the stagnated state of foreign language education after the Cultural Revolution. It intended to transform the backwardness of foreign language education in China within five years. Secondly, to actively conduct public foreign language education in colleges and universities. Third, to concentrate on operating key foreign language colleges and departments as a base for cultivating high-level foreign affairs translation professionals, professional foreign language teachers in colleges and universities and foreign language and literature research talents. Fourth, to gradually increase the enrollment of postgraduate students to train senior translation and research talents and backbone teachers in colleges and universities. Fifth, to increase the enrolment capacity of foreign language departments of normal universities (师范类大学) [17], local foreign language colleges and foreign language departments of comprehensive universities. Sixth, it was planned to step up research on foreign language teaching pedagogy and linguistic science, especially research on the basic theory and applied science of foreign language.

In April 1979, the State Education Commission of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the "State Education Commission") issued the Four-year Teaching Plan for English Majors in Foreign Language Colleges (Trial Draft) (《外语类高校英语专业四年教学计划(试行)》), the Four-year Teaching Plan for English Language and Literature Majors in Comprehensive Universities (Trial Draft) (《综合性高校英语语言文学专业四年教学计划(试行)》) and the Four-year Teaching Plan for English Majors in Normal Universities (Trial Draft) (《师范类高校英语专业四年教学计划(试行)》). In these three trial drafts, it is stipulated that the training objectives of English Majors in these three categories of institutions would be as follows: 1) foreign language colleges train English translators, teachers and other English professionals with all-round development of morality, intelligence and physique; 2)

---

[17] A normal university in China refers to a modern comprehensive university established as a normal school in the early twentieth century. These "normal universities" are usually controlled by the national or provincial government.

comprehensive universities train British and American language and literature researchers, teachers and other English professionals with all-round moral, intellectual and physical development; and, 3) Normal colleges and universities train English teachers with all-round development of morality, intelligence and physique. However, the documents did not address any requirements for cultivating intercultural competence. This is because, at that time, foreign language education was still at its initial stage, and many foreign language education concepts were passed down from foreign language education before 1949 and Russian education before 1966. China's foreign language education was relatively closed, and the textbooks were outdated. At the same time, the international theory of intercultural communication was also backward. As a result, the policy and syllabus only emphasized language learning and taught literature as culture.

In 1980, the Ministry of Education issued the first university English syllabus since the "Reform and Opening Up," English Teaching Syllabus (Trial for Undergraduate in Science and Technology in Higher Education) (《英语教学大纲（高等学校理工科本科试用）》), which played an important role in the rapid restoration and development of university English teaching in the early stage of the "Reform and Opening Up." In 1985 and 1986, the State Education Commission (now the Ministry of Education) promulgated the Syllabus of College English (for undergraduates in science and technology) (《大学英语教学大纲（理工科本科用）》) and the Syllabus of College English (for undergraduates in arts and science) (《大学英语教学大纲（文理科本科用）》), establishing the status of College English as a compulsory public course, putting forward the requirements for graded teaching of College English, and stipulating that students should take the national examination after completing the College English course. In 1985, the State Education Commission established the "College English Test (CET-4 and 6) Standard Test Design Group" (renamed as "National College English Test 4 and 6 Committee" in 1994) to develop and implement the CET-4 and CET-6.

By 1987, the Catalogue of Undergraduate Majors in Social Sciences in Colleges and Universities (Draft for Comments) had been formulated. This catalog divided foreign language disciplines into four categories: foreign language (foreign language and culture), foreign language and literature, foreign language for special purposes, and linguistics. Within each category, there are several majors, 48 in total. Among them were seven undergraduate majors related to English majors, namely, English (English language and culture), English language and literature, foreign language for special purposes (science and technology), foreign language for special purposes (Tourism), foreign language for special purposes (foreign trade), foreign language for special purposes (foreign affairs management) and linguistics. This catalog clearly divided the majors and direction of foreign language majors and positioned them for training objectives and specifications, which became an important basis for talent training, specialty adjustment and teaching evaluation in colleges and universities. Chinese colleges and universities then began to set up English majors on a large scale according to specific school characteristics.

In 1998, the Ministry of Education issued "Opinions on the Reform of Undergraduate Education in Foreign Languages for the 21st Century (《关于外语专业面向 21 世纪本科教育改革的若干意见》) (hereinafter referred to as "Opinions")". The "Opinions" clearly pointed out that, in general, a foreign language was a type of ability and a carrier; only when a foreign language was combined with a particular carrier could a profession be formed (Wang, 2018). The "Opinions" also indicated that, as the demand for foreign language talents had been diversified, the single foreign language majors and basic skills talents in the past could no longer meet the needs of the market economy, and the market demand for graduates majoring in language and literature was gradually decreasing. Therefore, foreign language majors must shift from the single-subject

'college-style' talent training to the training mode of broad-caliber, application-oriented and complex talents (Wang, 2018).

However, the views on foreign language education in the above documents did not vary significantly from those earliest documents, except that they are more detailed in classification. There were still no guiding contents or clear requirements for cultivating intercultural competence. That is to say, China's universities at that time did not have many conceptual breakthroughs in foreign language education.

5.2 "English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities" 2000

In 2000, the English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities （《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》2000）(hereinafter referred to as the 2000 Syllabus) was officially promulgated. It is a syllabus for English majors in colleges and universities drafted by the English Group of the Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of Colleges and Universities (高等院校外语教学指导委员会英语组) since the early 1980s and commissioned by the State Education Commission with the primary purpose of standardizing the teaching of English majors in colleges and universities all over the country. At the turn of the century, in line with the new requirements demanded by the socialist market economy on the cultivation mode of English majors in Chinese colleges and universities, and the English Group of the Steering Committee for Teaching Foreign Language Majors in Higher Education formed a syllabus revision group in 1998 with ten professors at the direction of the Ministry of Education, including He Qishen, He Zhaoxiong, Huang Yanshen, Yao Naiqiang, Wu Guhua, Chen Jianping, Zhu Yongsheng, Zhong Meisun, Wang Qiang and Wen Qiufang, and drafted a new syllabus for consultation. In June 1999, the draft for comment was completed. After listening to the opinions of more than two hundred

institutions, the English group discussed each item of the new syllabus at the annual meeting in October 1999 and passed the final version of the new syllabus in principle. Then, the English Group sent the English Syllabus for English Majors in Higher Education to the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education for approval in December 1999. The Syllabus approved by the Ministry of Education became the guide for all English majors in China and serves as the basis for organizing teaching activities, preparing teaching materials and evaluating the teaching quality of English majors in Chinese colleges and universities. It also provides an important guarantee for implementing the "Opinions on the Reform of Undergraduate Education for Foreign Language Majors in the 21st Century," approved and issued by the Ministry of Education.

First, the 2000 Syllabus was formulated as a standard for teaching English in institutions of higher education nationwide. To date, the provisions of this syllabus still hold guiding significance for English majors and serve as the basis for institutions to organize teaching activities, prepare teaching materials, and check and evaluate the quality of teaching. It is explicitly outlined that English majors at colleges and universities are to develop multi-disciplinary talents who possess a strong command of the English language and extensive cultural knowledge. These individuals should be adept at using English in various professional contexts, including translation, teaching, management, and research across diverse sectors such as foreign affairs, education, economics and trade, culture, science and technology, and the military (English Group of Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of colleges and universities, 2000). It is also emphasized in the document that the 21st century is an era of the internationally oriented and knowledge-based economy. The challenges the country faces determine the goals and specifications for cultivating English majors. Students of these majors should be equipped with solid basic skills, broad knowledge, relevant professional knowledge, strong capabilities and high quality. That is, on the premise of

helping students lay a solid foundation of English language skills and master English professional knowledge, the syllabus should help students expand their knowledge of humanities and science and technology, grasp the professional basic knowledge related to the work they are engaged in after graduation, focus on cultivating student's ability to acquire knowledge, think independently and innovate, and improve the ideological and moral quality, well-rounded quality.

Regarding the course curriculum, the 2000 Syllabus requires that the undergraduate English program have a span of 4 years. At the same time, according to the patterns of teaching English majors, the 4-year teaching process is generally divided into two stages, namely: the foundation stage (first and second years) and the advanced stage (third year and fourth year). The document proposes that the main teaching tasks of the foundation stage are to teach basic English knowledge, provide students with comprehensive and intensive basic skills, cultivate students' ability to apply the language and their learning competence to lay a solid foundation for the advanced study during the fourth year. The main teaching tasks in the fourth year stage are to consolidate the basic language skills, learn professional knowledge, broaden their horizon, enhance their awareness of cultural differences, and improve their ability to use English for communication. The arrangement of subjects in the two teaching stages can have different focuses, but the four-year teaching process should be whole, and attention should be paid to building up students' basic English language skills throughout the entire process.

Meanwhile, the 2000 Syllabus requires that three types of subjects be offered at the undergraduate level: English professional skills subjects, English professional knowledge subjects and relevant compound professional subjects. The syllabus provides that English major skills subjects include basic English, listening, speaking,

reading, writing, interpretation and translation, accounting for about 65% of the total credit hours of English subjects. Knowledge subjects for English majors include English linguistics, English lexicology, English grammar, English stylistics, British and American literature, British and American society and culture, western culture, etc., accounting for about 15% of the total credit hours of English teaching. Relevant professional knowledge subjects include diplomacy, economy and trade, law, management, journalism, education, science and technology, culture, military affairs, etc., accounting for about 20% of the total credit hours of English teaching. The subjects are shown in the following tables.

Curriculum Setting for English Major

Grade/ Semester / Subjects			first grade		second grade		third class		fourth class		Remarks
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Professional Skills	required subjects	Basic English	√	√	√	√					Each school can adjust the professional skills subjects, professional knowledge subjects and related professional knowledge subjects according to the specific situation and determine the teaching hours, opening time and teaching content.
		Advanced English					√	√			
		Phonetics	√								
		Listening	√	√	√	√					
		Oral English	√	√	√	√					
		Reading	√	√	√	√					
		Writing			√	√	√	√			
		Grammar			√	√					
		Interpreting							√	√	
		Translation						√	√	√	
	elective subjects	Audio-visual & Speaking									
		Practical writing									
		Selected Foreign Newspapers and Periodicals									
		Online Reading									
Professional knowledge	required subjects	Introduction to Linguistics					√				
		English Literature					√	√			

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	remarks
		American Literature							√	√	
		Academic							√		
		Overview of English Countries			√						
		The British society and culture									
		American society and culture									
	elective subjects	Introduction to Western culture									

Grade/ Semester Subjects			first year		second year		third year		fourth year		remarks
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Professional knowledge (continuous)	elective subjects (continuous)	History of English and American Literature									
		Selected English Novels									
		English Prose selection									
		English Dramas selection									
		English Poetries selection									
		English Phonology									
		English Lexicology									
		English Grammar									
		English Pedagogy									
		English Stylistics									
		Rhetoric									

| Related specialized knowledge | elective subjects | Introduction to Foreign Affairs, International Relations, Western Political System, Introduction to International Law, Language Learning Theory, English Test, English Education, Introduction to Chinese Culture, Introduction to Communication, English News Writing, International Trade Practice, Introduction to International Business, Introduction to Economics, Introduction to International Finance, Introduction to Foreign Enterprise Management, Introduction to Statistics, World History of Science and Technology, British and American Military history, Computer Applications | | | | | | | |

Credit Hours Allocation for English Major

Grade Credit Hours	first year	second year	third year	fourth year	total credit hours
Weekly hours (40 weeks in total)	14—15	14	12—14	10—12	50×40 55×40
School year total credit hours	560—600	560	480—560	400—480	2,000—2,200

Credit Hours Allocation for English Major Subjects

School year, term Weekly credit hours	first year		second year		third year		fourth year		ratio of total credit hours	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	total	ratio
Professional skills subjects	14	12	14	12	6	8	4	4	74	67%
Professional knowledge subjects			2	2	4	2	4	2	16	15%
Relevant professional knowledge subjects					4	4	6	6	20	18%
Total hours per week	14	12	16	14	14	14	14	12	110	100%

Note: 1. This syllabus requires 2,000-2,200 credit hours, including reviewing and examining various subjects each semester, excluding public compulsory subjects and public elective subjects. This table is arranged according to the maximum total of 2,200 credit hours. The proposed proportion of credit hours is for reference only, and each school can adjust it according to the specific situation.

2. 65% credit hours for professional skills subjects, 15% for professional knowledge subjects and 20% for relevant professional knowledge subjects are suggested.

In addition, this syllabus is divided into semesters, with each semester being a level. The entrance requirements and the individual teaching requirements for levels 2, 4, 6 and 8 are set out below：

Project	Admission requirements	Level 2 requirements	Level 4 requirements	Level 6 requirements	Level 8 requirements
Pronunciation	Can skillfully use spelling rules and phonetic symbols to read new words; can read materials fluently without new words, difficulty equivalent to fourth year three English text, reading with clear speech and generally correct pronunciation, intonation.	Can consciously imitate and correct pronunciation, correctly master the common stress patterns of polysyllabic words, compound words and sentences, initially master the rhythm of reading and speaking, and pay attention to the stress pattern influence on expression, the rules of phonetic change, continuous reading, consonants, blasting and phonetic assimilation, and the intonation of statements, interrogative and imperative sentences.	Pronounce words correctly; acquire a good sense of rhythm in reading and speaking; master phonological patterns in the flow of speech, alliteration, consonant blasts and assimilation, as well as intonation in declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences; acquire an initial understanding of the relationship between stress and the transmission of old and new information in a passage.	Correct pronunciation; natural intonation; smooth language flow.	Correct pronunciation; natural intonation; smooth language flow.

Grammar	Can identify word classes; distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns, singular and plural forms of countable nouns; have a basic understanding of the forms and uses of various pronouns, the syntactic functions of radicals and ordinal words, common prepositions and conjunctions, adjectives and adverbs, comparative and superlative constructions and basic sentence patterns, and the general use of coronals; know the main types of verbs, tenses, inflections, and basic uses of infinitives and participles, and sentence types, basic sentence patterns and basic word formation.	Master the subject-predicate agreement, the use of the epithet, object, determiner and gerund clauses, the use of direct and indirect quotations, the use of the infinitive and participle, the tenses, the active and passive voice, and morphology.	Master subject clauses, cognate clauses, inverted sentences, and conditional sentences. Initially, master the articulation between sentences and paragraphs.	Master the articulation between sentences and passages, such as illumination, omission, and substitution.	Use a variety of articulation techniques skillfully to express ideas coherently.

Project	Admission requirements	Level 2 requirements	Level 4 requirements	Level 6 requirements	Level 8 requirements

Vocabulary	Know at least 2,000 vocabulary words, 1,200 common words and a certain number of idioms and fixed collocations, and be able to use them in oral and written language; know 740 words and a certain number of idioms and fixed collocations, and be able to understand their meanings based on contextual cues.	Through basic English classes, reading classes and other means, learn 4,000-5,000 vocabulary words (including 2,000 learned in secondary school), using 2,000-2,500 of these words and their most basic collocations correctly and proficiently.	Know 5,500-6,500 words (including the 4,000-5,000 required for Level 2) through basic English classes, reading classes, and other means, and use 3,000-4,000 of these words and their most basic combinations correctly and proficiently.	Know 7,000-9,000 words through classroom instruction and other means; and be able to use 4,000-5,000 of these words and their most common combinations correctly and proficiently.	Know 10,000-12,000 words through classroom instruction and other means; and use 5,000-6,000 of these words and their most common combinations correctly and proficiently.
Listening	Understand the teacher's language and explanations of the content of the text in the classroom; understand others talking about everyday life at a slower pace; understand more than 70% of passages without new vocabulary, familiar with a subject, and slightly less difficult than Grade nine text.	Understand lectures given by English speakers that are no more difficult than what has been learned, can grasp the main idea, understand the main content and identify the attitude and tone of the speaker. Listen to slow VOA news broadcasts and cultural programs and grasp the main content. Be able to dictate a recording (150 words, listen four times, at a rate of 100 words per minute) based on what they have learned within 15 minutes, with no more than 10% error rate.	Listen to conversations of English speakers about everyday and social life; listen to more than moderately difficult listening material (e.g., short essays in TOEFL) to understand the main ideas and comprehend the attitudes, feelings, and true intentions of the speaker. Understand the main content of VOA normal speed and BBC news programs. Be able to generally identify various variants of English (e.g.,	Understand difficult materials, understand the main idea, comprehend the author's attitude, feelings and true intentions; listen to understand news programs on English-language radio stations; be able to dictate recorded material with about 250 words at a rate of 150 words per minute in 15 minutes with an error rate of no more than 6%.	Understand a variety of English conversations in real-life communicative situations; understand English-language radio and television (e.g., CNN) reports on topics related to politics, economics, culture, education, science and technology, as well as speeches and post-speech question-and-answer sessions related to such topics.

			American English, British English, Australian English). Be able to dictate an audio recording within 15 minutes of approximately 200 words at a rate of 120 words per minute, based on knowledge learned, with an error rate of no more than 8%.		

Project	Admission requirements	Level 2 requirements	Level 4 requirements	Level 6 requirements	Level 8 requirements
Listening (continuous)					Understand dialogues from TV current events and TV sketches. Understand the dialogue within two times at a rate of 150-180 words per minute, and pass with 60% accuracy.
Oral expression	Be able to ask questions and engage in brief discussions about the content of texts with proficiency; be able to retell passages heard or read simply and coherently after preparation; be able to engage in initial communication	Can answer and retell passages heard; can talk about everyday topics; express ideas correctly, with a natural voice and intonation, no major grammatical errors, and generally appropriate language.	Be able to communicate with English-speaking people in general social situations, expressing ideas correctly, with natural voice and intonation, without major grammatical errors, and with basically	Can communicate on familiar topics; can introduce domestic scenic spots, current situations and policy directions to foreign guests fluently and accurately; can express opinions systematically, in-	Communicate fluently and appropriately with foreign guests on major domestic and international issues; express opinions systematically, in-depth and coherently.

	about everyday topics; be able to speak clearly and coherently about topics and texts familiar to the student in no less than eight sentences.		appropriate language.	depth and coherently.	

Project	Admission requirements	Level 2 requirements	Level 4 requirements	Level 6 requirements	Level 8 requirements

Reading	Be able to read biographies, stories, and short science articles at a rate of 60 words per minute with no more than 3% new words, with a 70% correct comprehension rate; be able to read simple application texts; be able to grasp the main content and central idea of the material read.	Be able to read at a level of difficulty equivalent to Thirty-Nine Steps and Reader's Digest, reading at a rate of 70-120 words per minute, understanding the central idea and grasping the main plot or argument.	Be able to read and understand international news reports at a level of difficulty equivalent to Newsweek; be able to read and understand original literature at a level of difficulty equivalent to Sons and Lovers. Be able to grasp the main points based on comprehension and evaluate the content of ideas from a correct point of view. The reading speed is 120-180 words per minute, and the comprehension accuracy rate is at least 70%. Be able to read a moderately difficult text of about 1,000 words quickly and grasp the general idea of the text in 5 minutes.	Be able to read and understand editorials and political articles with a level of difficulty equivalent to that of the Times or New York Times; can read and understand original literary texts with a level of difficulty equivalent to that of The Great Gatsby and historical biographies with a level of difficulty equivalent to that of The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. Can analyze the ideas, chapter structure, and style of the text based on comprehension. Reading speed is 140-180 words per minute, with a comprehension accuracy rate of no less than 75%. Be able to read a text of about 1,300 words quickly and grasp the main idea and meaning of the text within 5 minutes.	Be able to read and understand editorials and book reviews in general British and American newspapers and magazines, historical biographies and literary works published in English-speaking countries with a certain degree of difficulty; be able to analyze the ideological views, discourse structure, linguistic features and rhetorical techniques of texts on the above topics. Be able to read a text of about 1,600 words quickly within 5 minutes, grasp the main idea and general meaning of the text, and understand facts and details.

Project	Admission requirements	Level 2 requirements	Level 4 requirements	Level 6 requirements	Level 8 requirements
Writing	Be able to write a short text of about 100 words in 20 minutes without serious grammatical errors and with a clear meaning; be able to rewrite the text; be able to write simple letters, notes, and notices without serious errors in style and layout and with standard writing.	Be able to write out a short text of 120-150 words in 30 minutes, with relevant, clear, and correct language; rewrite or abbreviate the text; write notes, notices, and other applications correctly.	Be able to write a short essay of 150-200 words in length within 30 minutes based on the essay topic, outline or graphs, data, etc. The content is relevant, well-structured, clearly organized, grammatically correct, linguistically fluent, and appropriately expressed; and be able to write an application essay of 60 words in length within 10 minutes based on the prompt.	Write story summaries, book reports, subject papers, and formal correspondence with correct language, appropriate expression, and depth of thought. Writing speed is 250-300 words in 30 minutes.	Be able to write in a variety of genres with sufficient content, fluent language, appropriate diction, and appropriate expression. Write at a rate of 300-400 words per 30 minutes. Thesis writing is 3,000-5,000 words in length and requires clarity of thought, content, and language.

| Translation & Interpretation | Can translate phrases and sentences that are no more difficult than those in the Grade Nine text into Chinese with correct understanding and fluent language. | Be able to independently complete the various translation exercises in the subject with accurate understanding and fluent language. | Be able to independently complete various translation exercises in the subject, and the target text is faithful to the original text and fluent in expression. | Have a preliminary understanding of the basic theory of translation, the differences and similarities between English and Chinese, the commonly used translation skills, and the ability to translate moderately difficult English chapters or paragraphs into Chinese. The speed of translation is 250-300 English words per hour, and the speed and translation requirements for C-E are the same as those for E-C. Be able to serve as an interpreter for foreign guests in their daily lives. | Be able to use the theory and skills of translation to translate articles in the British and American press and original literary works into Chinese or to translate articles in Chinese newspapers and magazines and general literary works into English at a rate of 250-300 English words per hour. The translation must be faithful to the original meaning and fluent in the language. Be able to interpret general foreign affairs activities. |

Project	Admission requirements	Level 2	Level 4	Level 6	Level 8

Use of reference books	Use a small- or medium-sized English-Chinese dictionary to grasp the correct pronunciation, meaning, and basic usage of words.	Use the English-Chinese Dictionary or simple English-Chinese dictionaries such as the Oxford Advanced English Dictionary and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English to solve language problems independently.	Use a variety of English-Chinese dictionaries or English-English dictionaries (e.g., Collins Cobuild College English Dictionary and Random House College Dictionary) proficiently to solve language problems and some intellectual problems independently.	Use a variety of English-English dictionaries or large encyclopedias (such as Encyclopedia Britannica and Encyclopedia Americana) to solve language problems and some intellectual problems independently.	Be able to independently use various tools and reference books, and effectively access information and knowledge through computer networks to independently research simple topics.
Cultural literacy	Have a good understanding of Chinese culture; have a solid understanding of basic Chinese language skills; have a good understanding of the geographic history and development of English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States; have a basic knowledge of mathematics and chemistry.	Be familiar with Chinese cultural traditions and have a certain degree of artistic cultivation; be familiar with the geography, history, development status, cultural traditions, customs and traditions of English-speaking countries; have more knowledge of humanities and science and technology; have strong oral and written Chinese expression skills; have a strong sense of creativity and certain innovative abilities.			

In terms of teaching principles, the 2000 Syllabus points out that teaching professional subjects is the main way to carry out comprehensive quality education. Professional subject teaching should go beyond improving students' professional quality to cultivating their ideological and moral quality, cultural awareness and psychological health. The relationship between professional quality education and other quality education should be properly balanced so that they are integrated organically and harmoniously. The document further emphasizes that attention must be given to the logical organization of students' knowledge. This entails underscoring the intrinsic systematic character of each subject and the interconnections among them to fulfill the comprehensive knowledge requirements of students. It aims to ensure that students develop strong foundational language skills, focus on the holistic enhancement of all language abilities, and prioritize the development of language communication skills. Additionally, the curriculum should foster intercultural competence, enhancing students' awareness of cultural variances, promoting tolerance, and encouraging adaptability in navigating cultural differences.

At the same time, the 2000 Syllabus presents two constructive suggestions on pedagogy and teaching methods: 1) Classroom teaching should be student-oriented and teacher-led instead of the outdated teacher-centered teaching model and should focus on cultivating students' learning and research abilities. More task-centered and diverse teaching activities should be carried out in teaching. While strengthening basic training, teachers should adopt heuristics, discussion, discovery and research teaching methods to fully motivate students to learn and maximize their engagement in the entire learning process. Students are guided to actively and positively apply available library materials and online information to develop various abilities in the process of applying knowledge. At the same time, attention should be directed to diversifying teaching

methods. The teaching methods should consider students, contents, teaching purposes and requirements, and teachers should be encouraged to actively explore new teaching methods. 2) Classroom teaching should be complemented by extra-curricular learning and exercises. These extracurricular learning and practical activities should be based on the content of classroom teaching to stimulate students' interest in learning and develop their learning ability, comprehensive language skills in organization, communication, critical thinking and creativity. The activities should be accessible to all students, centering on the development of individuality and participation by all to cultivate the spirit of cooperation. The forms may include, for example, extra-curricular reading, lectures, debates, book reports, role-play, editing newspapers and magazines, interviews, filming and videos. In addition to participating in extracurricular learning and practical activities on campus, students should also be encouraged to actively participate in various social practice activities related to their majors.

The 2000 Syllabus also proposes a method for testing and assessing students' English proficiency and teaching quality. It emphasizes that tests and assessments are an important means for understanding students' English proficiency, checking how well the curriculum is being implemented, assessing the quality of teaching, and promoting teaching reform. Such evaluations should be objective, scientifically designed, and actionable, and must help to improve students' language skills as well as their thinking ability and analytical skills. These evaluations should include language skills, communicative competence, and knowledge of culture that students are expected to master at each stage of study, as specified in the syllabus. Furthermore, the assessment should measure students' problem-solving skills. It is also important to maintain a balanced mix of objective and subjective questions, with advanced courses incorporating more essay writing, oral presentations, and discussions, according to the 2000 Syllabus.

At the same time, in order to help schools and relevant departments understand the implementation of this syllabus, the Ministry of Education commissioned the English Group of the National Steering Committee for Teaching Foreign Languages in Colleges and Universities to administer the National Unified Examination for English Majors 4 (TEM 4) and the National Unified Examination for English Majors (TEM 8) exams in the fourth and eighth semesters, respectively. The TEM 4 and TEM 8 exams focus on checking students' ability to use English comprehensively. The document also requires that each school should also use various forms to assess the quality and ability of students according to the training objectives and curriculum. The document states,

> The specific content and requirements of the TEM 4 and TEM 8 exams are based on the syllabus of the TEM 4 and TEM 8 exams issued by the English Language Teaching Guidance Committee. The TEM 4 and TEM 8 exams spoken test should be gradually promoted nationwide. All schools should treat the TEM 4 and TEM 8 exams Unified Examination correctly and make sure that the normal teaching order will not be affected, and schools should not take improper means to arrange the Unified Examination."

The document also points out that writing a thesis is an important way to assess students' comprehensive ability and academic performance; and that the thesis is generally written in English, with a length of 3,000-5,000 words, with requirements being fluent writing, clear thinking, substantial content, and independent opinion; and that the grading should take into consideration independent opinion, innovation and expression.

The 2000 Syllabus has had a significant impact on China's English education. The "Compound" refers to "English + professional knowledge," and "professional

knowledge" refers to practical professional knowledge such as economy and trade, business, law, news and tourism.

As mentioned above, the 2000 Syllabus is a guideline for English majors in all types of higher education institutions nationwide and the basis for organizing teaching, preparing teaching materials and checking teaching quality. However, we can see that this syllabus does not clearly reflect the regulations and requirements for developing intercultural competence. Indeed, until the present time, the concept of "intercultural" was still unclear to Chinese foreign language teaching experts, but they were already paying attention to it. For example, many institutions started to offer Anglo-American Society and Culture as a specialized subject; however, there was still no clear concept or approach to integrating intercultural competence training into the classroom, and neither specific content nor assessment requirements were not clearly defined.

5.3 "Lists and Descriptions of Undergraduate Courses of General Tertiary Universities" 2012

In addition, the Major Catalogue and Introduction of Undergraduate Courses of Common Colleges and Universities (2012) (《普通高等学校本科专业目录和专业介绍（2012 年）》) (hereinafter referred to as the 2012 Major Catalogue) issued in 2012 is also one of the most important guiding documents for the specialty construction of Chinese colleges and universities. Among them, the introduction to the specialties is one of the crucial components of the document. It "plays a guiding role in setting and adjusting majors in colleges and universities, and makes a detailed introduction to the training objectives, training requirements, main disciplines and core courses of various majors." While being an important basis for "setting, adjusting majors and implementing talent training in colleges and universities" it plays a significant guiding

role in comprehensively improving the quality of higher education, especially the quality of talent training. At the same time, the 2012 College Major Catalogue and Introduction provide the latest guidance for the curriculum of English majors in foreign language colleges.

The Introduction to English major norms Is one of the most Important documents for college English education in China since the promulgation of the College English Syllabus in 2000. It defines the training goals of English majors as

> "train English professionals with high humanistic quality, English language skills, solid professional knowledge of English language and literature and other relevant professional knowledge, and talents who can skillfully use English and native languages in foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, culture, science and technology, military and other departments to engage in foreign affairs, translation, education, management, research and other work."

The document outlines detailed training criteria for English majors. These students primarily focus on foundational English language and literature knowledge. Additionally, they study humanities and social sciences, encompassing topics from major English-speaking countries like literature, history, philosophy, politics, economics, art, and law. They undergo systematic training in English skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. By the end of their training, they should be proficient in English communication and be capable of engaging in intercultural dialogues with individuals both domestically and internationally. The document also defines the five aspects of knowledge and competencies that English majors should acquire.

In addition, the document also stipulates two types of core subjects — English professional skills subjects and English professional knowledge subjects. English professional skills subjects include basic English, advanced English, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, interpretation, and translation and so on. The credit hours of such subjects shall be no less than 40% of the total credit hours of professional education subjects. English professional knowledge subjects include an introduction to linguistics, English phonetics, English lexicology, English stylistics, selected readings of newspapers and periodicals, selected readings of English literature, selected readings of American literature, academic paper writing, society and culture of English-speaking countries, English teaching methods, translation theory and practice and so on. The credit hours of such subjects take up no less than 35% of the total credit hours of professional education subjects.

When comparing the 2000 Syllabus to the 2012 College Major Catalogue and Introduction regarding English major norms, notable differences in training objectives emerge.

The 2000 Syllabus aims to develop "versatile talents," prioritizing a "solid English language foundation." It emphasizes students having a strong language foundation complemented by a broad cultural knowledge. Its focus is on students "mastering professional basic knowledge related to post-graduation work" and highlights the development of skills like independent thinking and innovation. However, this syllabus doesn't provide specific professional training requirements, emphasizing mainly language skills.

In contrast, the 2012 Catalogue aims to produce specialized "English majors," with the primary goal of "cultivating students with high humanistic quality." It expects students to acquire "skilled English language skills" alongside a "solid professional knowledge of English language and literature." Additionally, students should gain understanding in literature, history, philosophy, politics, economics, art, law, and other humanities and social sciences from major English-speaking countries. Furthermore, this catalogue emphasizes systematic training in fundamental skills like listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. Students are also expected to be proficient in both spoken and written English and develop competencies in intercultural communication, continuous knowledge acquisition using technology, and problem-solving using professional knowledge, creative thinking, and research skills.

Furthermore, the 2012 Catalogue requires students to "be familiar with China's guidelines, policies and regulations in diplomacy, foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, cultural exchanges and so on," while the 2000 Syllabus does not touch upon it. Also, the 2000 Syllabus only proposes improving students' "ideological and moral quality, cultural quality and psychological quality" in the training objectives, while the 2012 Catalogue requires students to "have good ideological and moral quality, strong legal concept and integrity consciousness, high cultural quality, literary and artistic cultivation, strong modern consciousness and intercultural communication consciousness," "with the spirit of seeking truth and innovation, professional discipline consciousness and critical thinking, healthy physique and sound psychology," students are also required to "master scientific thinking methods and research methods."

Compared with the 2000 Syllabus, the introduction to English major norms in the 2012 College Major Catalogue and Introduction reveals, with clarity, the requirements for learning professional knowledge and humanistic and social knowledge. In addition,

English majors are required to become familiar with the content of possible future jobs and the requirements for the quality and consciousness of English majors. Furthermore, it attaches importance to, for example, the cultivation of English majors' competence in spoken and written English and intercultural communication. However, the training requirements for English Majors in the 2012 college specialty catalog and introduction only specify the teaching requirements of "professional knowledge" specified in the training objectives, that is, "basic knowledge of English language and literature," but do not identify the "relevant professional knowledge" specified in the training objectives. The knowledge of humanities and social sciences stated in the training requirements is not mentioned in the training objectives. In addition, the 2012 College Major Catalogue for English majors outlines five primary training requirements. These can be grouped into two categories. Under the 'knowledge' category, students are expected to gain a "basic understanding of linguistics and literature" as well as familiarize themselves with relevant "principles, policies, and regulations." In terms of "competence", the guidelines emphasize the ability to "identify, analyze, and address problems" and foster "creative and scientific research skills." They also stress the importance of competence of "spoken and written communication" and "intercultural communication." However, the "moral quality," "legal concept," "integrity consciousness," "cultural literacy," "literary and artistic cultivation," "modern consciousness," "intercultural communication consciousness," "realistic and innovative spirit," "professional discipline consciousness," "healthy physique" and "sound psychological quality" cannot be classified into the category of knowledge and competence. Therefore, the training requirements for English majors in this document are separated from their training objectives, and the knowledge, competence and quality requirements mentioned in the training requirements have not been clearly defined.

There are 60 foreign language majors under the category of foreign language and literature in the 2012 Major Catalogue of Colleges and Universities, but only four

majors, namely English, Russian, Spanish and Arabic, identify humanistic quality as a priority, while the rest put language skills first. It raises the question of whether humanistic quality cultivation is more important than language skills improvement in teaching English as a major and how to balance the relationship between language skills teaching and humanistic quality cultivation. In addition, according to the 2012 British and Technical Specifications, graduates are expected to be proficient in English and their native language in foreign affairs, translation, education, management, research and other work in foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, culture, science and technology, military and other departments. However, it also raised the following questions: How to ensure that students can use English and their native language to engage in these areas without taking any core subjects that help them get familiar with the knowledge? How can we ensure that students are engaged in foreign affairs, management, research and other work without taking core subjects such as foreign affairs, management and research? How can we ensure that students will reach the corresponding native language level and use their native language to work in the relevant departments without providing the native language core curriculum?

In addition, the knowledge, ability and quality requirements related to intercultural competence in the 2012 Major Catalogue of Colleges and Universities are not clearly defined. For example, "the ability of spoken and written communication and intercultural communication" falls under the competence category. However, "intercultural awareness" cannot be classified as knowledge and ability. As a result, the core curriculum cannot meet the training objectives and requirements related to intercultural competence. The prescribed core subjects mainly support the teaching of language skills, professional knowledge of English language and literature, communication with people from other countries and intercultural communication in spoken and written form, cultural literacy and artistic accomplishment, and basic knowledge of linguistics and literature. However, they do not meet the training

objectives and training requirements. For example, the training requirements of "spoken and written communication and intercultural communication foreigners," "cultural literacy and literary and artistic accomplishment," "familiarity with China's policies, policies and regulations in diplomacy, foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, cultural exchange, etc.," and "strong modern awareness and intercultural communication awareness" were not accomplished by the core subjects. This means that the existing core curriculum can only try to focus on the training objectives and requirements in actual teaching, but once not enough attention is paid to the above knowledge, ability and quality in teaching, then the specified training objectives and requirements will likely ring hollow.

5.4 *"National Standard of Teaching Qualities of Undergraduate Majors in General Tertiary Universities" 2018*

On January 30, 2018, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China promulgated the National Standard for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Colleges and Universities (《普通高等学校本科专业类教学质量国家标准》) (hereinafter referred to as the 2018 National Standard). The 2018 National Standard became the basis for the admission, construction and evaluation of foreign language undergraduate majors in China. It involves 92 undergraduate majors and includes the national standard for teaching quality of foreign language and literature. The 2018 National Standard requires that foreign language majors

> cultivate foreign language professionals and compound foreign language talents with sound comprehensive quality, solid basic foreign language skills and professional knowledge and competence, master relevant professional knowledge, and meet the needs of China's foreign exchange, national and local economic and social development, various foreign-related industries, foreign language education

and academic research. (Higher Education Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 92).

The 2018 National Standard also stipulates the training specifications of English majors from four aspects — school system and degree, quality requirements, knowledge requirements and competence requirements. The knowledge requirements stipulate that

> foreign language majors master foreign language knowledge, foreign literature knowledge, national and regional knowledge, be familiar with Chinese language and culture knowledge, understand relevant professional knowledge and basic knowledge of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, and form an interdisciplinary knowledge structure that reflects characteristics of the major.

The 2018 National Standard not only defines the intent and disciplinary basis of foreign language majors but also stipulates the training objectives and specifications, curriculum system, teachers, teaching conditions and quality management. Meanwhile, it also clarifies positioning the attributes of foreign language disciplines. "The foreign language specialization is an important part of the humanities and social sciences in colleges and universities across the country with interdisciplinary characteristics" (Higher Education Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 90). Alongside this, the 2018 National Standard clearly states that "foreign language majors in colleges and universities should formulate training programs to meet the needs of social development and reflect the positioning and operating characteristics of the university according to this standard" (Higher Education Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 90). It puts forward precise requirements for the overall construction of the curriculum system, which is the basis for formulating talent training programs for English majors.

Concurrently, the 2018 National Standard curriculum is divided into five parts: general education curriculum, major core curriculum, training direction curriculum, practical teaching link, and graduation thesis. The practical teaching link emphasizes the practice of innovation, entrepreneurship and international exchanges. In addition to the different provisions placed on the core subjects of English, translation, business English, Russian, German, French, Japanese, Spanish, Arabic, non-lingua franca and other majors in the "curriculum structure" of the curriculum system, other contents of the 2018 National Standard applies to all foreign language majors. This allows Chinese colleges and universities flexibility to formulate school standards and training programs that highlight the positioning and characteristics of their school programs. According to the National Standard, English major training should not focus on teaching the four core skills — listening, speaking, reading and writing — but on practising and cultivating compound talents with interdisciplinary knowledge. This requires the design of English majors to comprehensively consider formulating a talent training plan that cultivates "compound talents who have solid basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, understand professional knowledge in a certain field and can meet the needs of social development." At the same time, speculative competence [18] and intercultural competence are the indicators for core competence stipulated in the "National Standard."

Additionally, the training goal set by the 2018 National Standard for English major education is "to cultivate English professionals who have good comprehensive quality, solid basic English language skills, solid English language and literature knowledge and necessary relevant professional knowledge and can meet the needs of national economic construction and social development." It also determines the five-part framework for College English majors – basic public subjects, professional compulsory

---

[18] "Speculative competence" typically refers to the abilities of critical and abstract thinking within the context of language use. It encompasses the capacity to engage in higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, as well as the ability to think abstractly and critically about language and its use.

subjects, professional elective subjects, teaching practice links and graduation thesis (design). In addition, the following subjects are specified,

Table 5

Subject Category	Subject Description	Subject Offerings
Public Foundation Subjects	Common Curriculum	Ideological and Political Theory, Information Technology, Sports and Health, Military Theory and Training, College Chinese and other subjects, and general subjects in Humanities and Art, Nature and Science and Technology, and Social Sciences
	School / Department Public Subjects	Methodology, Critical Thinking, Second Foreign Language
Major compulsory subjects	——	English Pronunciation and Correction, English Grammar and Discourse, Spoken English Communication, English Subject Reading, Basic English Writing, English Audio-visual Speaking, English Public Speaking and Debate, English Analytical Reading, English Academic Writing, Overview of English Countries, Intercultural Communication, Introduction to Literature, Introduction to Linguistics, and History of Western Civilization
	Language	Language Form and Meaning, Introduction to Linguistics, Comparison between English and Chinese, Language and Society, English History, Introduction to English Lexicology, Introduction to Stylistics, English Rhetoric, Discourse Analysis, Second Language Acquisition, Translation Theory and Practice, Interpretation Theory and Practice, Appreciation of Famous Articles

Major elective subjects	Literature	History of English Literature, History of American Literature, Selected Readings of British and American Novels, Selected Readings of British and American Prose, Selected Readings of English Poetry, Selected Readings and Performances of English Drama, Stories of the Bible, Ancient Greek and Roman Mythology, Introduction to Literary Theory, Comparative Literature
	Culture	British Society and Culture, American Society and Culture, General Theory of European Culture, General Theory of Chinese Culture (English), British History, Evaluation and Analysis of American Historical English Films, Selected Readings of Western Humanistic Classics, Selected Readings of Chinese Ideological Classics, and Gender and Society
	Special Module	English Majors in colleges and universities tailored to the school's academic focus and teachers
Practice	Professional internship and practice, extracurricular practical teaching, practical social activities, international exchanges	
Dissertation (Design)	Academic papers, translation works, project reports, creative writing	

5.5 *"Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities" 2020*

In order to implement the principles and provisions of the "National Standard," the "Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities (《普通高等学校外语文学本科专业教学指南》)" enacted by the Ministry of Education carefully developed and issued the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and

Universities (for Trial Implementation) on April 25, 2020, including the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate English Majors in Colleges and Universities (hereinafter referred to as the 2020 Guidelines). Specifically, it includes teaching guidelines for English majors, business English majors and translation majors. The basic principle of developing the 2020 Guidelines was to implement the concept and spirit of the 2018 National Standard. Its main content includes training objectives, training specifications, school system credits, curriculum system, teaching plans, teaching requirements, teaching evaluation, teaching teams, teaching conditions, quality management, terminology and interpretation, and core curriculum description. In addition to the teaching plans, all contents are formed in accordance with the 2018 National Standard, but the 2000 Guidelines give a more detailed description in combination with the latest developments in English majors and national and social needs. For example, on the "competence requirements" of the "training specification," the 2018 National Standard states that "foreign language majors should possess the ability to apply the foreign language, appreciate literature, understand and interact across cultures, engage in critical and abstract thinking in the language (referred to as 'speculative competence'), and demonstrate research abilities, innovative thinking, adeptness in using information technology, skills for autonomous learning, and practical language application."
(Higher Education Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 92). According to the 2018 National Standard and the actual needs of English majors in Chinese colleges and universities, the 2020 Guidelines are as follows,

> students of this major should have good English language application competence, English literature appreciation competence, English Chinese interpretation and translation competence and intercultural competence; have sound competence in thinking, lifelong learning, information technology application competence, innovation and entrepreneurship competence and certain research competence; have good Chinese expression competence and certain second foreign language application.

The 2020 Guidelines put forward more specific and clearly defined competence requirements for English majors than the previous guiding policy documents. Taking the "knowledge requirements" of "training specifications" as an example, the National Standard states that "foreign language majors should master foreign language knowledge, foreign literature knowledge, national and regional knowledge, be familiar with Chinese language and culture knowledge, understand relevant professional knowledge and basic knowledge of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, form an interdisciplinary knowledge structure and reflect professional characteristics" (College Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 92). The 2020 Guidelines require that, "students of this major should master the basic knowledge of English language, literature and culture, understand the history, society, politics, economy, culture, science and technology of major English-speaking countries, be familiar with Chinese language and culture, understand China's national conditions and international development trends, master the basic theories, basic methods and academic norms of this major, and master relevant humanities, social sciences and natural sciences basic knowledge." The provisions on knowledge requirements in the guidelines provide specific guidance for colleges and universities to formulate training programs.

Alongside this, the "Description of core subjects" is another important part of the 2020 Guidelines. It establishes the knowledge objectives, competence objectives and quality objectives that students should achieve through core subjects learning (collectively referred to as teaching objectives) and designs the teaching content of each subject according to the teaching objectives. The description of core subjects has the following characteristics. First, it changes the traditional concept driven by language skills and emphasizes the close relationship between professional skills training and humanistic

knowledge teaching. For example, the teaching content of "Comprehensive English" clearly proposes to reflect the "comprehensive" characteristics, integrate language, literature, translation and cultural knowledge, and promote the comprehensive application and all-round development of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills through language communication tasks. Besides, importance is attached to reflecting the overall system, highlighting the humanistic characteristics of the discipline through the teaching of literature and cultural knowledge, the perspective of the history and culture of English-speaking countries with classic themes, and the civilization and progress of modern society with current topics. This stipulation emphasizes the content-driven transformation of traditional skill subjects, which is more in line with the current needs of English majors.

Second, the document states that teachers should focus on cultivating students' thinking skills and intercultural competence. As mentioned above, thinking skills and intercultural competence are the core competence indicators specified in the 2018 National Standard. The Guidelines elaborate on how to cultivate these attributes in specific subject teaching. Taking "spoken English" as an example, the subject's teaching goal requires students to use oral communication strategies to facilitate language communication and intercultural exchanges, freely express and discuss specific topics, and have strong critical thinking skills. The teaching content should integrate English language knowledge, social and cultural knowledge, focus on pronunciation and intonation and intercultural communication, and cultivate students' English thinking skills, coherent expression competence and intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the 2020 Guidelines also stipulate the training objectives of English majors — "the English major education aims to cultivate English professionals and students who have comprehensive and high-quality skills, solid basic English language

skills, strong intercultural competence, solid English professional knowledge and necessary relevant professional knowledge, can meet the needs of national and local economic construction and social development, and skillfully use English to engage in foreign-related industries, English education and teaching, academic research and other inter-disciplinary English talents." Compared with the 2000 Syllabus, the 2020 Guidelines put forward higher requirements for talent training objectives, including the competence to use English skillfully (language skill requirements), strong intercultural competence (Inter-disciplinary competence requirements), solid English professional knowledge (English subject literacy requirements), necessary relevant professional knowledge (Interdisciplinary literacy requirements), able to adapt to the traditional foreign-related industry and English education and teaching, and be able to engage in academic research.

The 2020 Guidelines set five professional directions: linguistics, literature, translation, country and region, comparative literature and cross-culture. It emphasizes the construction of interdisciplinary and intercultural knowledge. Therefore, based on core subjects and traditional subjects for English majors, subjects in national and regional, comparative literature and intercultural directions are offered. The purpose is to cultivate students' professional and intercultural competencies and enable students to form relevant knowledge systems in the field of English subjects. This is also a noticeable change in the curriculum for major subjects. The direction also emphasizes that the English major cultivates innovative talents who can engage in scientific exploration, English majors who can take the above five fields as research directions, adhere to the combination of taking root in China and integrating the fine elements of China and foreign countries, and have systematic disciplinary knowledge with a global vision.

Regarding the definition of various abilities required by foreign language majors in the 2018 National Standard, the 2020 Guidelines expound and define the following competencies required by English Majors as follows:

English Language Competence

- Be able to understand the information, views and emotions transmitted by spoken and written English
- Be able to use spoken and written foreign languages to convey information effectively, express thoughts and emotions, reproduce life experiences, and pay attention to the appropriateness and accuracy of language expression
- Be able to translate with the help of language reference books and relevant resources, and be able to complete general interpretation tasks
- Be able to use strategies effectively to enhance communication effect
- Be able to use language knowledge and basic research methods to analyze and explain language phenomena

Appreciation Competence of English Literature

- Be able to understand the main content and themes of English literary works
- Be able to appreciate the characteristics, styles and language of literary works from different genres
- Be able to comment on literary works

Intercultural Competence

- Respect the world's cultural diversity, have intercultural empathy and critical cultural awareness

- Master the basic theoretical knowledge and analytical methods of intercultural research, and understand the basic characteristics, similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures

- Be able to interpret and evaluate different cultural phenomena, texts and works and can carry out effective and appropriate intercultural communication

- Be able to help people from different cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively across cultures

Competence to Think and Analyze

- Be diligent and inquisitive, believe in rationality, respect facts, make prudent judgments, and make fair evaluations

- Be sensitive to exploration and persevere in the pursuit of the truth

- Be able to elaborate, analyze, evaluate, reason and explain the evidence, concept, method, standard, background and other elements

- Be able to reflect consciously on and adjust thinking processes

Practical Competence

- Be able to expand knowledge, master skills and learn to communicate and cooperate with others through practical activities

- Be able to use the learned theories and skills to solve practical problems

- Be able to manage time, plan and complete tasks

- Be able to withstand pressure and adapt to new environments

- Be able to use basic information technology

In short, the 2018 National Standard for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Colleges and Universities (Foreign Language and Literature) is the first national standard for teaching quality of higher education covering all majors in foreign languages issued by the Ministry of Education in the history of foreign language education in China. It provides fundamental principles and general requirements for the admission, construction and evaluation of foreign language and literature majors in all ordinary colleges and universities in China. The 2020 Guidelines issued by China's "foreign language committee," on the other hand, is the implementation of the 2018 National Standard and also provides a roadmap and solutions for the innovation and development of various majors in colleges and universities across the country. Therefore, the two documents are the latest norms and standards for constructing foreign language majors in colleges and universities nationally.

However, it should be noted that, although intercultural competence has been defined as one of the competences required by English Majors in the document, the definition and explanations provided in the document are more general than and different from the definitions provided by the scholars cited in previous chapters such as those by Byram, which, potentially differ in emphasis or implementation, and somehow ambiguous. It seems that the policymakers and curriculum designers in China might not have a clear understanding of intercultural competence. Therefore, they did not clearly represent their understanding in the official discourse, especially before the "Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020" was published. This lack of clarity might have several causes. One such reason can be drawn from the teaching staff interviewed in the current study, who suggested that China's high-stakes, test-focused education system could potentially result in an overemphasis on linguistic proficiency (including

aspects such as grammar and vocabulary and so on) at the expense of intercultural competence in practical implementation, regardless of the official curriculum's emphasis on intercultural competence.

Generally speaking, according to the Dean of the School of English of XISU, who also worked at the Department of Higher Education, Jilin Province, policy and guiding documents at the national level play a crucial role in cultivating the intercultural competence of foreign language majors. Specifically, these policies can:

1.) Set standards and expectations: These documents typically articulate expectations for intercultural competence and indicate the students' required level of competence, which helps ensure consistency in education and provides clear objectives for students and teachers.

2.) Provide guidance and resources: Policy and guidance documents often should provide methods and resources to guide teachers on how to teach and assess intercultural competence, including suggestions on curriculum design, demonstrations of teaching methods, assessment tools and technology.

3.) Facilitate change: These documents can drive transformations in education systems to foster better intercultural competence. For example, the documents may require educational institutions to adjust their curricula to integrate more opportunities for intercultural learning.

4.) Emphasize importance: These documents officially stress the importance of intercultural competence for modern society and a globalized world.[19]

As with any education system, it's likely that opinions vary. Some educators may find the national guidelines and curriculum very practical and helpful in structuring their

---

[19]Interviewed on 17 June 2020.

teaching, while others may find them restrictive or disconnected from the realities of the classroom. Several factors can influence these views, such as educators' teaching style, personal beliefs about education, their specific teaching context, students' needs, and many others. In general, policy and guidance documents at the national level provide a framework and direction for developing students' intercultural competence and help ensure that the education system meets this goal. However, the actual effectiveness of implementation can be influenced by many factors, including teachers' preparation, school resources, and the social and cultural environment, and so on.

Furthermore, the rapidly changing global environment and technological advancements often prompt discussions about the need for curriculum reform and updates. These conversations could include integrating more technology in teaching, the need for intercultural competence, and preparing students for globalized workplaces.

Chapter Six:

Localization of National Policies and Curriculum: XISU's Example

In this chapter, the researcher will analyze the localized curriculum and syllabuses of the English major of XISU, developed in light of the national guidelines and requirements. Interview findings are reported in the next chapter.

6.1   Introduction of XISU's English Major Curriculum and Syllabus

XISU's English major curriculum is divided into two levels. The first level is the XISU English Major Curriculum, which is the general outline of the English major's education policies and regulations, including the National English Major Curriculum for Higher Education. The second level is the syllabus for 39 English subjects. XISU's Syllabus is designed in line with both national and university standards and guidelines. Based on a study of the evolution of English education policies at the national level since the founding of the People's Republic of China, XISU developed its English Major Syllabus (known as the XISU English Major Training Program) with reference to the English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities 2000 and the Teaching Requirements for College English Courses (for Trial Implementation) issued in 2004. The latest revised syllabus for English majors in 2021 implements the 2010 Outline of the National Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan, which states that "international exchange and cooperation should be strengthened. XISU's English Major Training Program will adapt to the requirements of the opening

up of the economy and society and train international talents with a global vision, respecting international rules, and ability to engage in international affairs and international competition." The XISU syllabus also adopts the National Standards of Teaching Qualities of Undergraduate Majors in General Tertiary Universities 2018, the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate English Majors in Colleges and Universities 2020 and the requirements of the Chinese English Proficiency Scale, validated by the Specification and Standardization Committee of the State Language Work Committee and approved by the Ministry of Education and the State Language Work Committee.

In actuality, XISU's syllabus for English majors has always been amended in alignment with the school's development plan at all stages. The latest version of 2021 was completed in accordance with the Development Plan of X International Studies University (2020-2030). Also, the Training Program for English Majors at XISU is formulated based on the policy and guidance documents outlined above. Firstly, the document stipulates that students can be awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree only after completing all requirements specified in the talent training program of this major, accumulating 170 credits, complying with the regulations of the People's Republic of China on conferring academic degrees, and XISU's regulations for the administration and awarding of bachelor's degrees. The talent training program clearly identifies the aims of English majors to cultivate correct political beliefs, sound comprehensive quality, solid basic English language skills, strong intercultural communication skills, solid English professional knowledge, and necessary educational/international communication professional knowledge and skills, which meet the needs of national and local economic and social development, application-oriented, compound and export-oriented English talents who can skillfully use English to engage in English education and teaching, news communication and other fields.

The specific training objectives require students to:

Training Objective 1: Have correct political beliefs and practise socialist core values. Have both Chinese feelings and international vision, and a strong sense of responsibility and mission to participate in primary and secondary education or international communication.

Training Objective 2: Have basic knowledge of the English language and solid core English language skills. Master the basic knowledge and skills of English education or international communication. Students should be able to skillfully use relevant knowledge and skills to engage in relevant work in the field of education and international communication.

Training Objective 3: Have extensive knowledge of the humanities. Have the awareness and vision of interdisciplinary, intercultural and multi-angle examination of various information and knowledge, grasp the leading concepts of international education and international communication development, and have strong skills in international exchange and intercultural communication.

Training objective 4: Master modern information and internet technology, optimize the methods and skills of English teaching or international communication, and have experience using information technology to support English teaching/international communication design and change students' mode of learning or communication.

Training objective 5: Have competent independent learning, self-reflection and teamwork, and be able to formulate clear, specific and appropriate professional development plans according to the development trend of education and international communication and their personal characteristics.

In addition, the document points out that English major students should meet the following requirements in terms of quality, knowledge and competence：

1. Have a correct worldview, outlook on life and values and sound moral quality

2. Be patriotic, have an international vision and a high sense of social responsibility

3. Have the spirit of cooperation, innovation and basic disciplinary literacy

4. Have a healthy physique and good psychological quality

5. Have profound basic knowledge of the English language (such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, text, intercultural communication)

6. Master the basic knowledge of the English language, literature, culture and other humanities

7. Understand the history, society, politics, economy, culture, science and technology of major English speaking countries

8. Be familiar with international development trends and professional needs in the field of English education / international communication

9. Master the basic theories and knowledge of national education policies and regulations and English education / international media

10. Be competent in English language expression and application, English literature appreciation, English interpretation and translation and intercultural competence

11. Have strong competence in thinking, lifelong learning, information technology application, innovation and entrepreneurship and basic research

12. Have strong competence in Chinese expression and the competence to use a second foreign language

13. Have advanced education/media appreciation and strong competence in English education and teaching / international communication practice.

Its core subjects include Comprehensive English, Spoken English, English Public Speaking, English Debate, English Audio-visual Speaking, English Reading, English Grammar, English Writing, English Interpretation, Chinese-English Translation, Introduction to English Literature, Introduction to English Linguistics, and Intercultural Communication. The teaching arrangement (teaching plan) of its professional subjects is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Subject category	Nature of Subjects	Subject Code	Subject Name	Credit	Credit Hour Allocation			Semester	Assessment method
					Total Credit Hours	Theory	Practice		
Core major subjects	Compulsory subjects	ENG1001	Introduction to Major Subjects	0	8	8	0	1	non-test
		ECC1001	Comprehensive English I	4	68	52	16	1	test
		ECC2002	Comprehensive English II	4	68	52	16	2	test
		ECC3003	Comprehensive English III	4	68	52	16	3	test
		ECC4004	Comprehensive English IV	4	68	52	16	4	test
		ECC1005	English Audio Visual Speaking I	2	34	8	26	1	test
		ECC2006	English Audio Visual speaking II	2	34	8	26	2	test
		ECC3007	English Audio Visual Speaking III	2	34	8	26	3	test
		ECC1008	Spoken English I	2	34	8	26	1	test
		ECC2009	Spoken English II	2	34	8	26	2	test
		ECC3010	English Public Speaking and Debate	2	34	8	26	3	test
		ECC1011	English Reading I	2	34	8	26	1	test

		ECC2012	English Reading II	2	34	8	26	2	test
		ECC3013	English Reading III	2	34	8	26	3	test
		ECC2014	English Writing I	2	34	8	26	2	test
		ECC3015	English Writing II	2	34	8	26	3	test
		ENG4001	English Writing III	2	34	8	26	4	test
		TRA4001	English-Chinese / Chinese-English Translation	2	34	8	26	4	test
		TRA5002	English Chinese/Chinese English Interpretation	2	34	8	26	5	test
		ENG4002	English Speaking Society and Culture	2	34	26	8	4	test
		ECC4016	Summary of Chinese culture	2	34	18	16	4	non-test
		ENG1003	English Grammar	2	34	26	8	1	test
		ECC4017	Introduction to English Literature	2	34	26	8	4	non-test
		ECC6018	Intercultural Communication	2	34	26	8	6	non-test
		ECC5019	Introduction to English Linguistics	2	34	26	8	5	test
		ECC7020	Dissertation Writing	1	16	12	4	7	examine
			Subtotal	**57**	**976**				
English	Compulsory	ENG4022	Professional Skills of English Teachers	2	34	8	26	4	non-test

education subjects	subjects	ENG5023	English Teaching Theory and Practice	3	51	34	17	5	test
		ENG6024	Principles of Pedagogy (English)	2	34	26	8	6	test
		ENG7025	Interpretation of English Curriculum Standards and Analysis of Teaching Materials in Primary and Secondary Schools	2	34	26	8	7	non-test
			Subtotal	**9**	**153**				
	Elective subjects	PSY4001	Educational Psychology in Primary and Secondary Schools	2	32	26	6	4	non-test
		ENG4026	English Learning Psychology and Strategies	2	32	26	6	4	non-test
		EDU4001	History of English Education	2	32	26	6	5	non-test
		TEC5001	Modern Educational Technology Practice	2	32	26	6	5	non-test
		ENG6027	Foreign Language Teaching Literature Reading	2	32	26	6	6	non-test
		INT6001	Contemporary Early Childhood Education (International)	3	48	32	12	6	non-test
		ENG6028	English Teaching Case Analysis	2	32	8	22	6	non-test
		ENG7029	Subject English Teaching Workshop	1	16	4	12	7	non-test
		ENG7030	English Test and Evaluation	2	32	26	8	7	non-test

		ENG7032	Second Language Acquisition	2	32	26	8	7	non-test
		INT7001	Educational Research Methodology (International)	3	48	32	12	7	non-test
		INT7002	Sociocultural Issues in Education (International)	3	48	32	12	7	non-test
		Subtotal		**8/26**	**128/416**	**International project subjects can be credited to professional subjects**			
International communication subject	Compulsory subjects	COM4022	Introduction to News Communication	3	51	43	8	4	test
		COM 5023	News Interview and Writing	3	51	34	17	5	test
		COM 6024	Intercultural Communication and International Communication	3	51	34	17	6	test
		Subtotal		**9**	**153**				
	Elective subjects	COM4025	History of Chinese and Foreign News Communication	2	32	6	26	4	non-test
		COM4026	Selected Readings of Media Works	2	32	6	26	4	non-test
		COM5027	Communication and Technology	2	32	6	26	5	non-test
		COM5028	Digital Media and Video Production	2	32	6	26	5	non-test
		COM6029	Analysis of Chinese and Foreign Media	2	32	6	26	6	non-test
		ENG6030	News English Translation	2	32	6	26	6	non-test
		INT6001	Interpersonal Communication (International)	3	48	32	12	6	non-test

		INT6002	Organizational communication (International)	3	48	32	12	6	non-test
		COM7031	Media and Culture	2	32	6	26	7	non-test
		ENG7032	News English Interpretation	2	32	6	26	7	non-test
		ENG7030	Program and Planning	2	32	26	6	7	non-test
		INT7001	Methodology and Academic Writing (International)	3	48	32	12	7	non-test
		INT7002	International Negotiations (International)	3	48	32	12	7	non-test
		Subtotal		*8/30*	*128/480*	**International project subjects can be credited to professional subjects**			
Professional elective	Elective subject	ENG2005	Ancient Greek and Roman Mythology	2	32	24	8	2	non-test
		ENG2006	Western Culture in English Films	2	32	24	8	2	non-test
		ENG3007	English-Chinese Comparison and Translation	2	32	8	24	3	non-test
		ENG3008	Selected Readings of English Pose and Drama	2	32	8	24	3	non-test
		ENG4009	Selected Readings of English Poetry	2	32	8	24	4	non-test
		ENG4010	History of Western Civilization	2	32	24	8	4	non-test
		ENG5012	Selected Readings of English Literary Works	2	32	8	24	5	non-test
		ENG5013	Comparison of Chinese and Western	2	32	24	8	5	non-test

			Cultures					
		ENG5014	English Stylistics	2	32	24	8	5	non-test
		ENG5004	Advanced English I*	2	32	8	24	5	non-test
		ENG6005	Advanced English II*	2	32	8	24	6	test
		ENG6015	Selected Readings of English Novels	2	32	8	24	6	non-test
		ENG6016	Applied Translation	2	32	8	24	6	non-test
		ENG6017	Introduction to International and Regional Organizations	2	32	24	8	6	non-test
		ENG7018	Introduction to English Lexicology	2	32	24	8	7	non-test
		ENG7019	Thematic Interpretation	2	32	12	20	7	non-test
		ENG7020	Modern and Contemporary International Relations	2	32	24	8	7	non-test
		ENG7021	Selected Readings of Female Literary Works	2	32	8	24	7	non-test
		Subtotal		*20/48*	*320/768*				
Total		**Compulsory**		**66**	**1117**				
		Elective		**30**	**49**				

At the same time, the syllabuses of the above subjects are also formulated based on this talent-training program. Comprehensive English (Intensive Reading) is the subject with the highest total credit hours and credits among the core subjects of English majors. Taking Comprehensive English IV as an example, its syllabus identifies that it is the main subject for English majors and business English majors at the undergraduate stage. It is offered in the fourth semester as an introductory subject integrating knowledge and skills; its purpose is to cultivate and improve students' English proficiency. This subject mainly starts with topics related to daily life, takes the communicative teaching method as the theoretical basis, and uses task-based language teaching principles to guide teaching objectives and the design of teaching tasks. Learners can then engage in incremental learning tasks in various forms through extensive exposure to language input with different themes, genres and styles, gradually cultivating their competence to use language appropriately and effectively to obtain information, express ideas and enhance understanding. The textbook selected for this subject is New Communicative English (Comprehensive English IV), co-authored by Li Xiaoju and Zhong Weihe and published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. The textbook has rich content, clear learning objectives, diverse task forms and extensive topics. It takes the task series as the compilation framework; and the language tasks mainly summarize the laws of typical language phenomena in the input materials, which helps cultivate students' sensitivity to the matching relationship between language form and function, and further improves learning efficiency. In the whole teaching process, attention is required to be paid to the education of students' world outlook, outlook on life, values, ideology and moral quality in combination with the current form and real life, and strive to make students learn the truth of being a human while acquiring knowledge. The textbook's teaching objectives (including overall objectives, specific objectives or phrasal tasks) are as follows:

1) Overall objective: The purpose of the subject is to impart systematically basic language knowledge, train basic language skills, cultivate students' initial

competence to communicate in English, guide learning methods, cultivate logical thinking skills, and lay a solid foundation for senior learning.

2. Specific objectives: To achieve specific teaching objectives through four series of tasks: start-up task, target task, language form task and consolidation and extension task,

Arouse students' interest, activate topic-related knowledge and provide topic-related vocabulary and expressions through start-up tasks.

Take the target task as the core, deepen students' understanding of relevant topics, train language skills, and improve cognitive skills and the competence to use thinking mode.

Guide students to discover and summarize the language rules in the text and learn relevant language knowledge through language form tasks.

Guide students to practice their knowledge, skills, thinking and language knowledge by consolidating and expanding tasks.

Correspondingly, the following teaching contents of the subject Comprehensive English IV are listed, and the distribution of teaching contents and credit hours are shown in Table 7 below:

Unit 1 Language

I. Origins

    A. According to myths

    B. According to linguistic theories

II. Popularization of *putonghua*

A. Standard language vs local dialects

B. Accept, reject, or withhold? – analyze an argument

III. Hand gestures and communication

Unit 2 Entertainment

I. The essence of entertainment

II. Beijing opera and Western opera

III. Horror films: attractive or repulsive?

Unit 3 Ancient Civilizations

I. The mystery of Stonehenge

II. Why did the Roman Empire fall?

III. Preserving the historical resources

Unit 4 Science and Technology

I. Purpose of science

II. Controversies surrounding human cloning

III. Exploring the universe

A. Should we explore the universe?

B. Understanding the theory of relativity

Unit 5 Social Problems

I. The great population debate

II. Will China's smoking ban work?

III. Economic and social effects of unemployment

Unit 6 International Relations

I. The role of interstate territorial boundaries

II. Is there true friendship between countries?

III. China as a rising power—theorizing international relations

Table 7

Distribution of teaching content and credit hours

Item/Credit hours	Total	Lecture	Discussion Practice	Experi -ment	Exercise and Test	Other
Unit 1 Language	12	6	6			
Unit 2 Entertainment	12	6	5		1	
Unit 3 Ancient Civilizations	12	6	6			
Unit 4 Science and Technology	12	6	5		1	
Unit 5 Social Problems	12	6	6			
Unit 6 International Relations	12	6	5		1	
Unit 7 Economy and Trade	12	6	6			
Unit 8 Mythological and Religious Traditions	12	6	5		1	
Spoken Test	6				6	
Total	102	48	44		10	

Table 8

Subject Evaluation

Subject Objectives	Assessment Content	Evaluation Basis
Objective 1	To assess students' mastery of knowledge and vocabulary related to subject-related topics through the	A solid grasp of the language, topic, and cultural content knowledge covered in the

	topic, logic, content and form of expression of each pre-class presentation. To assess students' understanding and mastery of each unit's language knowledge and relevant cultural content through a combination of formative and summative assessments through vocabulary tests, unit quizzes, final oral test and final written exam for each unit.	subject and a strong ability to remember the above content accurately, retell or express it fluently and accurately, and apply the knowledge in specific contexts and social situations.
Objective 2	To assess students' development of communicative language skills through the completion of practical projects in each unit of the subject. To assess students' ability to acquire and process information, critical thinking skills and intercultural communication skills through in-class questions and group discussion performance. To assess students' ability to organize and use language and their critical thinking skills through a final oral exam.	Good English language organization and application skills, strong English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills; strong critical thinking skills, cross-cultural communication skills and adaptive skills; strong ability to acquire and process information and innovative skills.
Objective 3	To assess the current status of the development of students' worldview, outlook on life and values through the completion of practical projects in each unit of the subject. To assess the development of students' comprehensive qualities such as cooperation, innovation,	A correct worldview, outlook on life and values, good moral character; Chinese sentiment and international perspective, sense of social responsibility; spirit of cooperation, innovation, and basic qualities of the discipline.

	and cultural self-awareness and confidence through in-class questions and group discussion performance.	

As in Comprehensive English IV, as observed, all Comprehensive English subjects use exam-based assessment, and the final examination is divided into written and spoken components. The ratio of usual scores, final oral test scores and final written test scores is 30%, 10% and 60%, and the assessment of daily performance is composed of three parts: classroom performance, quizzes and homework. Absence from class receives a minus score. In-class performance accounts for 10% of the total score, tests account for 10% of the total score, and homework accounts for 10% of the total score, which includes personal homework (e.g., pre-class duty report, recording homework, writing) and group homework (e.g., unit vocabulary, group research and discussion, presentation tasks). The final exam is moderately difficult according to the requirements of the syllabus. The assessment content includes the knowledge of language skills, communicative competence and language culture that students must master in the basic English stage and pays attention to cultivating students' competence to analyze, problem-solve and innovate. The exam duration is 120 minutes. When designing the exam, teachers can refer to question types such as word spelling, filling in the blanks using the appropriate form of words, single choice of grammar and vocabulary, judgment of cultural knowledge, English interpretation, translation, cloze, reading comprehension, and writing. The teacher can make adjustments according to actual situation requirements.

Meanwhile, the assessment for second-year students ensures competence in basic skills competence and highlights the assessment of comprehensive language application competence, which can be referred to as the College English Test 4 (CET-4). The

collective lesson preparation group and other teachers delivering the Comprehensive English subject will grade and moderate the final exam papers.

According to the interviewed teachers and students' introduction (see next chapter) in this study, Comprehensive English 1 - 4, the most important subjects in all core subjects, are also the most prominent in cultivating intercultural competence. Concurrent with the college English curriculum reform, the construction of the intercultural communication curriculum has also become a critical link in cultivating college students' intercultural competence.

Indeed, the English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities issued in 2000 (the 2000 Syllabus) has unambiguously proposed that English major course designers establish socio-cultural components such as Intercultural Communication. The document mentions that the purpose of social culture courses is to enable students to understand the history, geography, society, economy, politics, education and cultural traditions of English-speaking countries, improve students' sensitivity, tolerance and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences, and cultivate students' intercultural competence. The teaching contents may include an overview of English-speaking countries, British Society and Culture, American Society and Culture, Introduction to Western Culture, Greek and Roman Mythology, and The Bible. At the same time, the primary teaching task of the senior stage is to continue to enhance basic language skills, learn English professional knowledge and related professional knowledge, further expand the scope of knowledge, enhance sensitivity to cultural differences, and improve the competence and extent of English usage for communication, be familiar with Chinese cultural traditions, the geography, history, development status, cultural traditions and customs of English speaking countries.

In general, all the guiding documents related to undergraduate English majors, including the 2012 College Major Catalogue and Introduction, 2018 National Standard, 2020 Guidelines and 2000 Syllabus, emphasize the need to focus on training students to have the competence to critically absorb foreign culture, inherit and promote the excellence of traditional Chinese culture, and put forward the need to cultivate students' intercultural competence. In other words, in addition to emphasizing the accuracy of students' language use, the above documents also require students to cultivate their sensitivity, tolerance and flexibility to deal with cultural differences to meet the needs of increasingly extensive international exchanges.

Therefore, another core subject for English majors, Intercultural Communication, sets its aims to start with the basic terms and theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication, analyze the differences between Chinese and Western cultures in verbal communication and nonverbal communication, as well as the performance of these differences in social etiquette, education and values, and introduce a large number of vivid and appropriate cases. The subject integrates theory with practice, aiming to cultivate students' intercultural awareness. It seeks to develop students' understanding of basic intercultural communication principles and equip them with strategies and skills to address intercultural conflicts. Furthermore, the course encourages embracing multiculturalism with an open attitude, critical thinking, and an inclusive mindset, all of which contribute to enhancing referential competence. It is worth to note here that, according to the interviewed teachers, referential competence refers to the ability to understand and appropriately use cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and other context-dependent elements of communication, especially when interacting across cultures. Meanwhile, another goal of the subject is to enhance Chinese college students' confidence in their mother tongue and cultivate their Chinese cultural feelings, deepen

their understanding of mother tongue culture and heterogeneous culture, especially the target language culture, comprehensively improve students' intercultural competence, and finally promote college students to establish a correct world outlook, values and outlook on life in the new era. The specific teaching content and competence objectives are shown in Table 9, and the distribution of teaching content and credit hours are shown in Table 10.

Table 9

Specific teaching content and competence objectives

Teaching unit	Main Teaching Contents	Requirements for Knowledge and Competence	Difficulties in Teaching	Teaching Methods, Classroom Activities and Assignments
Unit 1	Definition of intercultural communication. The connotation of intercultural communication. The importance of intercultural communication. Possible obstacles in intercultural communication Basic principles to be followed.	Knowledge points: Understand the definition of intercultural communication, master the connotation of intercultural communication, and understand the main reasons for the failure of intercultural communication Competence points: Be able to cultivate the competence to find problems in intercultural communication through case analysis	Understand the success and failure cases of intercultural communication.	Case study, Successful cases, criticism caused by "Chinese Ambassador walking on people's backs." Failure cases, Naming of Covid-19 Compare Chinese students to "dogs"? After being scolded and deleted, the US embassy in China apologized. Small case
Unit 2	Definition of culture Cultural characteristics Metaphors about culture	Knowledge points: Master the definition and characteristics of culture Competence points: Be able to give a cultural metaphor and make a reasonable explanation	Understanding culture is a broad concept. There is no unique definition. Understanding culture is like an iceberg. Understanding culture is like onion	Literature review (students find out the expression closest to their definition of culture and give some explanations by consulting literature) discuss Case study (after class exercise)

Unit 3	Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory Definition of values Values are the core of culture Hofstede's cultural dimension theory	Knowledge points: The same as the teaching content Competence points: understand your own value orientation. Understand Chinese traditional cultural values. Be able to use the theoretical knowledge learned to deepen the understanding and comparison of different cultures in practice.	Understanding and application of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory	Discussion (Textbook P96 exercise, sort the characters and explain the reasons, to lead to what values are and understand the priorities of values.) Pick the top three and explain why Case analysis (group activities, class presentation, mainly using Hofstede's cultural dimension theory for analysis)
Unit 4	*Cultural diversity Appreciation of Outsourced the world is flat*	Knowledge points: Understand the differences between different cultures (the film shows the cultural differences between India and the United States) Competence points: Enhance the sensitivity and awareness of cultural differences. Strive to overcome cultural centralism. Master the strategies and basic principles of intercultural communication to a certain extent		Mid-term Assignment

Unit 5	Verbal Communication The relationship between culture and language The influence of culture on language at the level of word meaning The influence of culture on language at the pragmatic level	Knowledge points: The same as the teaching content Competence points: Improve verbal communication	Understanding the influence of culture on the connotation of words Understand the influence of culture on daily pragmatic behavior, such as praise, invitation, address	Case study (intercultural advertising, offensive advertising) Group activities (comparison between Chinese and English, the influence of culture on basic pragmatic behavior)
Unit 6	Nonverbal communication Definition and function of nonverbal communication The influence of culture on nonverbal symbols (such as gestures) Temporal language and spatial language	Knowledge points: The same as the teaching content Competence points: Cultivate a kind of consciousness - nonverbal communication also differs from culture to culture. Successful intercultural communication depends not only on what people say, but also on what people do in some cases.	Understanding the cultural rules behind different nonverbal symbols Understanding the use of time and space is also influenced by culture. In other words, how to use time and space in intercultural communication is also influenced by culture.	Case analysis Multicultural conference episode Single-time Americans and multi-time Mexicans
Unit 7	Appreciation of intercultural films *Guasha Treatment* 《刮痧》	Knowledge points: Understanding the cultural differences between China and the United States Competence points: Enhance the self-confidence of mother tongue culture and the competence to output		Sharing and discussion of film-viewing feelings

		mother tongue culture English		
Unit 8	Cultural shock Definition of cultural shock Causes and symptoms of culture shock Five stages of cultural shock	Knowledge points: The same as the teaching content Competence points: Master the strategies to overcome cultural shock		Survey and Report (P127 Individual Work) Postcard Writing (P133—Writing)

Table 10

Distribution of teaching content and credit hours

Item \ Credits	Total	Lecture	Discussion Practice	Experiment	Exercise and Test	Other
Session1	4	3	1			
Session 2	4	3	1			
Session 3	4	3	1			
Session 4	2	1	1			
Session 5	8	6	2			
Session 6	4	3	1			
Session 7	6	5	1			
Session8	2		2			
Total	34	24	10			

Correspondingly, the specific teaching objectives of this subject, as well as the corresponding professional training objectives and graduation requirements, are shown as follows:

Subject Objectives	Corresponding Professional Training Objectives, Graduation Requirements
1. Knowledge 1.1 To understand the meaning and constraints of culture, the differences between cultures, especially between values, introduce the various factors involved in communication and its processes, and demonstrate the complexity and openness in communication, focusing on culture and communication. 1.2 To help students learn about the relationship between cultures and communications, focusing on cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal behavior. 1.3 To strengthen the perception and awareness of different cultural groups and cross-cultural regulation and adaptation.	1. Knowledge To acquire knowledge of Chinese language and culture, understand the differences between English and Chinese language and Chinese and Western culture, and understand China's national conditions and international situation.
2. Ability 2.1 To cultivate students' interest in and understanding of the culture of the target language, equip them with the ability to actively observe, analyze, compare, and evaluate culture and the phenomenon of	2. Ability To have a good command of English-Chinese bilingual skills, translation skills, intercultural skills and preliminary translation research skills.

cultural differences, as well as to understand the culture of English-speaking countries in a more objective, systematic, and comprehensive manner. 2.2 To broaden students' international perspective to enhance their cross-cultural awareness, form and develop sensitivity and tolerance for cultural differences and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences, and develop their ability in intercultural communication.	
3. Values To enhance students' cultural confidence in their native language, cultivate their Chinese cultural sentiment, enable them to treat multiple cultures with an open attitude, a critical mind and a tolerant heart, and ultimately help them establish a correct worldview, values and outlook on life for new-age college students.	3. Values To have a correct world view, outlook on life and values; have good ideological and professional ethics; have Chinese sentiment and international vision and a sense of social responsibility.

As with Comprehensive English, this subject also has exam-based assessment. Students' Daily performance accounts for 50% of the total grade: 10% for subject work, 10% for presentation, 20% for quizzes, 10% for daily performance, and 50% for the final test/paper. For attendance, 1 point will be deducted for sick leave, 0.5 points for tardiness, and 2 points for absenteeism, all from the total score.

6.2 The Curriculum Evaluation of Key Subjects for English Majors

In addition, to meet each English major subject's teaching requirements and objectives, the course evaluation system, including the development of specific assessment and assignment contents and its guiding documents, is of particular importance. Therefore,

the researcher collected the following information (see Table 11), including the composition of the grades of each core subject of the English major, the basis of evaluation and the matching of teaching objectives.

Table 11

Evaluation of Core Subjects for English Majors

Grade	Subjects	Assessment method	Score Composition	Evaluation Basis	Teaching Objectives
First year	Comprehensive English (I)(II)	Exam	Daily performance 50% (class participation 10%, presentation 10%, quiz 10%, homework 10%, final spoken test 10%) final exam 50% (120-minute written test, including: vocabulary, multiple choice on language, true or false questions on culture, description of pictures or charts, reading comprehension, translation, and writing, etc.)	Taking reference from the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and Universities 2020 (the 2020 Guidelines) - Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate English Majors, this subject formulates an assessment plan and content in accordance with XISU's talent cultivation plan for English majors, curriculum teaching outline. The 2020 Guidelines clearly indicate that the Comprehensive English Course aims to cultivate students' communication ability with comprehensive language knowledge and skills, including language knowledge such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, etc., and the application of language,	According to the subject outline of Comprehensive English: 1. Through presentation, progress tests, final spoken exams, and final written exams, the subject assesses the goal of a solid command of language, topic, and cultural content. Students should be able to accurately remember the abovementioned content, retell or express it fluently and precisely, and apply relevant knowledge in specific contexts and social scenarios. 2. Through classroom participation (group discussions, project presentations, etc.) and final spoken tests, the subject assesses the goal of good English language organization and application abilities, strong

| | | | | including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. In the meantime, students' critical thinking ability should be strengthened through language knowledge and skills. This subject enhances humanistic characteristics and the integration of language and knowledge teaching. Therefore, the assessment methods of pre-class presentation, classroom participation, and final spoken tests are to test students' verbal expression and communication abilities; the final written test examines students' abilities of comprehension, writing, and translation through different question types; students' dialectical thinking ability and mastery of corresponding humanistic knowledge are tested through speeches, assignments, and in-class discussions. This subject combines formative evaluation and final evaluation on the knowledge and ability level. The exam combines content of language and humanistic, examines students' ability in comprehensive language application. | abilities of English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, strong analytical skills, cross-cultural communication skills and adaptability and ability to collect and process information, as well as innovation.

3. Through in-class participation (group discussions and project presentations, etc.), final spoken tests, writing tasks in the final written exam, and other methods to assess the quality of this subject. Students should have a correct outlook on the world, life and values, good moral character, patriotism and international vision with a sense of social responsibility, cooperation, innovation, and a basic understanding of the discipline. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Second year | Compreh -ensive | | Daily performance 30% (quiz 5%, | The subject's assessment content and methods are | According to the curriculum outline of "Comprehensive |

	English (III)(IV)	Exam	discussion 5%, presentation 5%, homework 10%, spoken test 10%); final exam 60%, including: vocabulary 20%, multiple choice on culture 10%, cloze 10%, reading comprehension 20%, translation 20%, and writing 20%).	designed per the National Standards for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018. Students are evaluated on vocabulary, reading comprehension, translation, writing and other aspects through presentations, in-class discussions, group tasks, writing, and speaking tests to comprehensively evaluate students' abilities of language expression, communication, and critical thinking.	English," the objectives of this subject are to accumulate and consolidate students' basic English skills and language knowledge, and to cultivate and enhance students' cross-cultural communications and critical thinking abilities, so that they can objectively understand Chinese and Western cultures, display correct views on life and values. 1. Through unit tests, final oral exams, and final written exams, the subject assesses the proficiency of language and culture involved in the subject. 2. Through in-class discussions, writing, final and oral exams, etc., this subject assesses students' language proficiency, critical thinking and cross-cultural communication ability. 3. Through in-class discussions, group tasks, spoken tests, and writing tasks in the final written exam, this subject guides students to have a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values to achieve quality education.
First year and second year	English Visual Audio Oral Practice (I) (II) (III)	Exam	Daily performance 50% (online class 10%, participation 10%, dictation 10%, homework 10%, progress test 10%)	The evaluation content and methods of this subject are designed in accordance with the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and Universities	According to "The Syllabus of English Audio-Visual and Spoken Practice," subject objectives are set on knowledge, ability, and quality. The current assessment content is consistent with the syllabus. The

| | | | Final exam 50% (multiple choice 20%, cloze 20%, true or false questions 20%, essay question 20%, and dictation 20%). | 2020 (the 2020 Guidelines) - Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate English Majors. The document points out that through this subject, students should be able to correctly identify the pronunciation and intonation of Standard English and its common variants; distinguish between main points and details, infer implicit meanings, summarize the main idea, and quickly record key points using abbreviations. Therefore, assessment methods of multiple choice, cloze, true or false questions, essay questions, and dictation are set to evaluate students' abilities in listening, pronunciation recognition, reasoning, induction, shorthand note-taking, and application of listening skills. Through E-learning, in-classroom discussion, dictation training, group work and progress tests, this subject assesses students' listening level and progress across the board. | knowledge and ability objectives of the subject are mainly assessed through the progress test and final exam on abilities such as listening to and identifying different words, reasoning and induction, shorthand note-taking, and applying listening skills through dialogue, text and other audio materials. The quality-level objectives of the subject are mainly assessed through in-class Q&A, group work, online discussions, etc. This subject enables students to gradually master and apply listening skills through online and offline learning, and cultivate students' awareness of self-learning and teamwork through independent learning and teamwork. |
| First year and second year | English Reading (I) (II) (III) | Exam | Daily performance 50% (online micro-subject 10%, online discussion 10%, participation 10%, homework 10%, extracurricular reading 10%) | The assessment content and methods of this subject mainly take reference from the "English Professional Talent Training Plan (2021)" formulated under the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and Universities | According to the syllabus, the subject objectives are set at three levels: knowledge, ability, and quality. The current assessment content of this subject is completely consistent with the objectives. Through this subject, students are expected to learn the following |

			Final exam 50% (relationships 5%, Fact or Opinion 5%, Inferences 10%, Purpose and Tone 10%, argument 10%, and reading comprehension 10%).	2020 (the 2020 Guidelines) - Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate English Majors. The talent cultivation plan of English professionals clearly states that students should develop a "solid English language foundation and core English language skills," "independent learning, self-reflection, and teamwork," and "experience in applying information technology to support and transform learning methods." In view of this, the assessment content of English Reading Courses includes: (1) advanced English reading skills, such as relationships, facts and opinions, reasoning, purpose and tone, argument, etc.; (2) IT literacy, independent learning and cooperative learning; Assessment forms include formative and summative assessments. The former includes participation in E-learning (mini-lecture, online discussion, analysis and evaluation of homework), offline classroom performance (topic discussion, interactive Q&A); The latter includes progress tests (after class classic reading) and final examination (English reading advanced skills sub-item and comprehensive ability	skills: relationships, facts and opinions, inference, purpose and tone, and argument. In addition, through the flipped class, both online and offline, students can use information technology for study, and improve information literacy. Through self-learning of mini-lecture and offline group work, students' independent learning, reflective learning and teamwork can be improved.

				assessment).	

| First year | English Writing I &II | Exam | Daily performance accounts for 50%, 10% each for preview, daily performance, mid-term examination, and 20% for homework. Basic theories of writing and sentence writing are assessed in mid-term examinations according to the content learned in the stage. The final exam accounts for 50% of the total grade. Writing techniques, punctuation, sentence writing skills and paragraph arrangement are assessed in the closed-book form of written examination according to the content learned in the semester. The type of question, quantity and percentage of score for each part are determined accordingly. The final examination mainly | This subject's assessment content and evaluation method mainly take reference from the National Standard on the Undergraduate Teaching Quality of English Majors 2018. In terms of content, writing techniques, skills and tasks are set up to evaluate students' mastery of grammar application, writing structure and language style. In terms of evaluation, writing grading, feedback on writing assignments, and writing ability tests are adopted to comprehensively assess students' writing proficiency and progress. | English Writing I & II are required subjects for undergraduate English majors and important parts of their English major education. Through learning this comprehensive and practical subject with a strong language foundation, students can master and proficiently apply the basic knowledge and skills of English writing through systematic writing training, write sentences and paragraphs that conform to English expression habits, and achieve goals with smooth language, correct expression, focus emphasis, and standard format.

This subject is based on the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) philosophy and adopts various teaching approaches such as guided, lecture, task-driven, discussion and contextual teaching methods and BOPPPS teaching models. Through independent and collaborative learning and exploration, thinking and discussion, and mutual evaluation and reflection during |

			focuses on students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills related to English writing in practice. It is uniformly designed by the subject-preparation group and marked by teachers in the group.		various writing activities, students can build their knowledge and polish their critical thinking. These teaching methods and models are instrumental in developing logical thinking and critical writing, cultivating independent and rigorous writing habits, and laying a solid foundation for the dissertation.
Second year	English Writing III	Non-test Subject	Daily performance accounts for 50% and 10% each for mutual evaluation of composition, micro-lecture, chapter quizzes, class discussion, and homework. The final exam accounts for 50%. (The format is an examination containing questions on business correspondence, abstract writing, transaction letters, graphs, etc.)	This subject's assessment content and evaluation mainly take reference from the National Standard on the Undergraduate Teaching Quality of English Majors 2018. In terms of content, final examination, mutual evaluation of composition, micro-lecture, in-class discussion, chapter quizzes and homework are set up to evaluate students' mastery of grammar application, writing structure and language style. Regarding approach, writing grading, feedback on writing assignments, and writing ability tests are adopted to get a comprehensive overview of students' writing proficiency and progress.	English Writing III is designed to develop students' practical writing skills in social and official/ business scenarios. This subject adopts a combination of formative and summative assessment. Summative assessment is the final subject examination, which mainly examines English writing of various genres in complementary and independent writing. The formative assessment contains a series of activities in both online and offline classrooms, including mutual evaluation of composition, micro-lecture, in-class discussion, chapter quizzes and homework. The ultimate goal is for students to acquire the basic knowledge and skills of English practical writing and to be able to apply them in social interaction and workplace-

| First year | English Grammar | Exam | Daily performance accounts for 50%, and 20% each for unit assignments, online tests and class performance. The final exam accounts for 50% as a written examination. | Participation: To evaluate student' devotion to the class, including volunteering to answer questions, asking questions, and participation in discussions, which reflect their interest and engagement with the subject.

Outcomes: To evaluate students' performance in acquiring grammar, including their ability to understand and apply grammar rules and their performance in post-class exercises and exams.

Assignment: to evaluate subject homework, including the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of assignments. Assignments can include exercises, writing, translations, etc., through which students' mastery and application of grammar can be tested.

Expression in Writing: To evaluate students' abilities in written expression, including grammar, logic, and presentation. The subject can be assessed through writing, translations, and papers.

In-class interaction: To evaluates student' interaction | related English writing scenarios.

The evaluation criteria of this subject match the goals of grammar teaching. The basis of evaluation mainly covers the goals and expectations that students should achieve in the grammar subject.

Participation: Students' participation in class activities reflects their understanding and mastery of grammatical knowledge, interest and engagement with the subject.

Assignment: students' completion of subject work reflects their application of grammatical knowledge and their expression in writing.

Expression in writing: to evaluate students' abilities in written expression, including grammar, logic, and presentation, demonstrating their ability to apply their knowledge of grammar in writing and translation.

In-class interaction: Students' interactions with teachers and other students reflect their ability to understand and apply their grammar knowledge and communicate and cooperate with |

				with the instructor and other students, including asking and answering questions, discussing, and teamwork. It reflects the student's ability to communicate and cooperate with others. Self-directed learning ability: to Evaluate students' efforts and achievements in independent learning, including accessing reference materials, writing notes, and reading relevant books. It reflects the students' independent learning ability and attitude towards grammar learning.	others. Self-directed learning ability: students' efforts and achievements in independent learning reflect the students' independent learning ability and attitude towards grammar learning. In conclusion, these evaluation bases cover the teaching objectives of the grammatical subject, enable a comprehensive assessment of students' mastery and application of grammar, and the development of their language expression and learning abilities.
Second year	Understanding China-English Speaking	Non-test Subject	Daily performance accounts for 50%, and 10% each for presentations, homework and quizzes, and online learning). The final exam accounts for 50% in the form of a speech video.	This subject's content and evaluation measure are mainly based on the series of teaching materials — Understanding Contemporary China. In terms of content, students are required to master the basic concept and internal logic of Xi Jinping -The Governance of China, complete spoken tasks through thematic content learning and presentation skills training, and improve their ability to tell Chinese stories in English. Regarding the evaluation approach, various formats, such as speech, written reports, and	According to the syllabus of Understanding Contemporary China—English Speaking Course, students are guided to master the discourse system with Chinese characteristics from the knowledge level, to master the core concepts of each unit, key sentences, and to learn ancient Chinese wisdom. Students systematically comprehend the original, historical and global contributions of Xi Jinping's "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" and prepare their knowledge for telling the

| | | | | group discussions are adopted to comprehensively assess students' speaking and critical thinking skills. | Chinese story. The competency is tested through online resource learning, assignments, quizzes, presentations, discussions and final presentations.

Ability training aims to develop students' ability to think, speak, research, and make the voice of China heard through presentations, discussions, assignments, and a final speech.

Patriotism and global vision are required on the quality level. While enhancing our Four-sphere Confidence in the path, theory, system and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics and promoting identity in politics, ideology, theory and emotion, students are able to understand contemporary China and tell Chinese stories in English. Students' qualities are assessed mainly through homework, quizzes, presentations, discussions and a final speech. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secon d year | Society and Culture in English-speaking Countries | Non-test Subject | Daily performance accounts for 70%, including: tourism exhibition (exhibition of culture and geography) of English-speaking | The assessment content and methods of the subject mainly take reference from the National Standard for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018. Case study, cross-cultural scenario | According to the National Standards for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018, the subject aims to introduce the politics, economy, history, geography, cultural and social conditions of |

		countries 20%, history exhibition of English-speaking countries 20%, virtual United Nations Political Forum of English-speaking countries 10%, test for English-speaking countries knowledge 10%; reports on the culture of English-speaking countries 10%. The final exam for the culture video of English village accounts for 30%.	exhibition, cross-cultural film analysis and other assessment forms are set to evaluate students' cross-cultural awareness and ability. The students' cross-cultural theoretical level and practical skills are expected to be evaluated with formative and summative evaluation, and their logical thinking and critical ability are improved.	English-speaking countries to help students understand the ideas, lifestyles and values of English-speaking countries to lay a cultural foundation for learning Western culture and English major subjects in senior level; To enhance students' sensitivity, tolerance and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences, to cultivate students' cross-cultural communicative competence and to expand their knowledge of culture, to promote English learning and to further enhance cultural awareness. Through formative and summative evaluation, the subject aims to increase students' cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries, promote their cultural awareness and expand their global perspective.
Introduction to Chinese Culture	Non-test Subject	Daily performance accounts for 50%, including homework and quizzes, group presentations, after-class tasks in MOOC, four experimental projects in the Global Village and class performance. Mid-term exam is a video recording that accounts for 30%.	This subject's assessment content and methods mainly refer to the Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020 - Teaching Guidelines for Teaching English Majors. The assessments include the MOOC tasks, oral presentation of Chinese culture, recitation of classical sentences of traditional Chinese thoughts, and performances to promote	The subject mainly refers to the National Standard for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018 and the Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020 - Teaching Guidelines for Teaching English Majors. The subject aims to enhance students' awareness of Chinese culture and their ability to spread Chinese culture in English, to

				Chinese culture in cross-cultural settings. These assessments and experimental projects are designed to evaluate the student's understanding of Chinese culture, their ability to introduce Chinese culture in English and their cross-cultural communication ability. Assessment includes formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative assessment mainly includes group presentation, Practice in Global Village, interpretation and translation test, while summative evaluation examines students' application of Chinese culture by translation task or paper writing.	enhance their sense of national pride, to enhance their awareness of Chinese culture, to enhance their interest and capability to spread Chinese culture to the world, to carry the responsibility of spreading Chinese culture. Formative and summative evaluations are used to examine students' Chinese cultural literacy and their ability to spread Chinese culture and participate in international cultural exchanges.
	Introduction to English Literature	Non-test Subject	Daily performance accounts for 70%, including tests for literature of English-speaking countries 20%, homework and reading 20%, class participation 20%, and online discussion during and after class 10%. The final written exam paper accounts for 30%. Scoring criteria for the paper: clear logical structure 20%, in-text citations 20%,	With reference to the Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020 - Teaching Guidelines for Teaching English Majors", this subject formulates assessment plan and content in accordance with XISU's talent cultivation plan for English majors and teaching outline. The "Guidelines" clearly indicate that the subject aims to help students master the basic knowledge of English literature and improve their ability to understand, appreciate and	According to the teaching outline, the subject aims to introduce the history of literature, the specific elements of the three major genres in literature, and analyze the relevant texts, to help students understand English works and the writing features of various genres. After the subject, students can better understand the cultural differences between China and Western countries, and set up the values and outlook on life with patriotism and international perspective. 1. To help students master the basic knowledge of literature, develop

The first row also contains in its fourth column:

Final exam is a translation task or written paper that accounts for 20%.

			language accuracy 25%, original ideas 25%, neat writing 10%.	evaluate English literature. After the subject, students should be able to understand the basic elements of English literature, be familiar with British and American Literature Traditions, and understand the literature of other English-speaking countries and the diversified development of post-colonial English literature. To understand the language, social condition, culture and history of English-speaking countries through literary works, to master the basic theories and methods of literary research, and to analyze and comment on English literary works. The assessment mainly includes the history of literary development, the characteristics of each stage, representative works and knowledge of literary works, features of different literary genres, the appreciation and analysis of Representative Writers' works (including an understanding of the background, the main content, the analysis of the characters, the theme and writing technique).	basic language skills, and improve literary reading ability through homework, reading tasks and tests. 2. To assess students' ability to appreciate literary works, language skills, teamwork, and establishment of correct outlook on life and values through class participation, group discussions and presentations, and analysis on related topics. 3. To examine students' comprehensive language application, literature analysis, critical thinking, patriotism and international perspective through paper writing.
English - Chinese and Chinese - English Translation	Exam	The non-exam evaluation score accounts for 50%, of which the translation assignment after class accounts for 10%, quizzes 10%, daily	This subject's evaluation content and methods mainly take reference from the relevant policies and standards of the school. In terms of assessment content, we highlight improving students' knowledge application	The teaching requirements of this subject are based on relevant school policies and standards, combined with talent cultivation plans to develop an outline and determine requirements. The knowledge-level objectives

| | | | performance 10%, group translation 10% and practical translation 10%. Sick leave (1 point deducted each time), absenteeism (2 points deducted each time from the formative evaluation score), and the final examination accounts for 50% of the total score. The form is a formal test. | ability, translation practice ability, and professional literacy. Therefore, in terms of evaluation methods, it is necessary to cultivate independent thinking ability through homework, identify problems and weak links through tests, grasp students' knowledge mastery and ability development through classroom Q&A, cultivate students' collaborative ability and teamwork spirit through group translation, meet the actual needs of translation ability cultivation through practical translation, and understand the achievement of students' comprehensive translation ability cultivation through exams. | mainly involve understanding how to test daily performance through quizzes, discussions, and feedback, and continuously consolidating it through training sessions such as exercises, tests, and group tasks. This meets the requirements of professional training objectives to learn translation knowledge, processes, and general methods. At the level of ability, as all tasks focus on practice, each task link aims to cultivate translation practice ability. The presentation and Q&A are not only to solve problems but to serve as a platform for communication between teachers and students. The translation task includes English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation tasks (sentence translation and paragraph translation) to further enhance students' translation abilities (comprehension, conversion, and expression), which is in line with the requirements of cultivating translation skills, independent thinking, bilingual application, two-way translation, and cross-cultural literacy. At the quality level, it explains general translation requirements, shares personal experience, cultivates professionalism, and corrects individual or common |

					ideological problems and bad behavior tendencies reflected in translation, such as similarities in independent work, machine translation, poor quality of group work, lack of coordination and other problems, to correct on the three levels and establish professional ethics of translation. This meets the needs of comprehensive quality and professional ethics cultivation.
Third Year	Intercultural Communication	Non-exam	Daily performance accounts for 30% (including 5% for tests, 5% for problem discussions, 10% for presentations, 10% for assignments, and 10% for oral tests); The Final examination accounts for 60%, including vocabulary 20%, cultural knowledge selection 10%, cloze 10%, reading comprehension 20%, translation 20%, composition 20%)	The evaluation content and methods of the subject mainly take reference from the National Standard for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018. In terms of assessment content, vocabulary, reading comprehension, translation, writing and other forms of assessment are set up to evaluate students' vocabulary application, reading, translation and writing. In terms of subject evaluation methods, this subject adopts various forms such as presentations, discussions, group work, writing, and oral tests to comprehensively evaluate students' language expression, communication, and critical thinking.	The teaching objectives of this subject mainly take reference from the National Standard for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018. The main aim of this subject is to help students understand and master strategies and skills on how to solve conflicts caused by cultural differences in cross-cultural communications and cultivate students' sensitivity, tolerance, and flexibility in handling cultural differences. At the same time, it is also aimed at boosting the confidence of Chinese college students in their home country's culture and cultivating their Chinese cultural awareness, treating multiculturalism with an open attitude, critical thinking, and inclusive mind, thereby enhancing their critical thinking, and ultimately establish correct worldviews, values, and outlook

					on life in the new era. This subject adopts a combination of formative evaluation and summative evaluation, focusing on testing students' cross-cultural theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and improving their cross-cultural awareness and abilities.
	Introduction to General Linguistics	Exam	Regular grades account for 50%. (Including daily performance 10%, homework and quiz 20%, discussion and presentation 10%, and self-directed learning 10%). The Final examination accounts for 50% (including 10% for single Multiple choice questions, 10% for cloze, 10% of judgment questions, 10% of terminology translation questions, 10% of phonics analysis, 20% of short answer, 20% of term explanation questions, and 10% of argument).	The subject mainly references the "Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020 - Teaching Guidelines for Teaching English Majors" and combines the school's English major talent training plan and curriculum syllabus. The subject combines formative and summative evaluation on the knowledge and ability level. The examination combines contents of chapters of micro linguistics and macro linguistics and examines students' comprehensive language application ability. In terms of assessment content: selection, cloze, judgment, and terminology translation mainly assess students' mastery of basic linguistic knowledge, Speech analysis questions test students' comprehensive ability in analyzing and applying speech analysis; Short answer and term explanation examine whether	The teaching objectives of this subject mainly take reference from the teaching objectives of the National Standard for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018 subject, and the outline of "Introduction to English Linguistics" is formulated in conjunction with the talent cultivation plan. This subject is an introduction to language research, aiming to lay a foundation for students to learn and study language in college. Through this subject, students can understand the basic knowledge of linguistics (basic concepts, basic theories) develop interest in English linguistics, cultivate language awareness (sensitivity to language itself and language use) improve English language proficiency. This subject has set subject objectives specifically at three levels: knowledge, ability, and quality. On the knowledge level: to understand the basic concepts in

				students can use specific examples to apply and analyze problems; discussion questions test students' ability to apply linguistic theories for evaluation.	the field of linguistics, master basic theoretical knowledge in the traditional branch of linguistics and the fundamental analysis method of linguistics; on the ability level: to be able to apply the knowledge and theories learned to describe, explain, and analyze common language phenomena, and understand the cultural connotations behind the language, be able to distinguish language differences and summarize language patterns, to use linguistic theories to write papers on English linguistics. On the quality level: to improve students' language literacy, humanistic literacy and information literacy and improve language awareness and sensitivity.

More importantly, it is worth to be emphasizing that all the above subject evaluation systems are designed in accordance with the provisions and requirements of the following five documents, which include,

1. The National Standard for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Colleges and Universities 2018 (National Standards for Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English majors 2018);

2. The Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020 - Teaching Guidelines for Teaching English Majors;

3. The Talent Training Program and Syllabus for English Majors;

4. University document: the Guidance on Strengthening the Formative Evaluation of Undergraduate Course Teaching 2022;

5. University document: Principles and Requirements of Final Examinations.

Alongside this, it can be seen from Table 11 that the "final exam" accounts for 50% ~ 60% of the grade. To illustrate, the researcher listed below some key information in the XISU Guideline document "Principles and Requirements for Final Examinations."

Basic Principles of Exam Sheet Content

The subject assessment questions are based on the course syllabus and should take into account the actual level of students and with good validity, reliability and differentiation. In principle, the final examination requires the separation of teaching and examination, and the questions should follow the "full set of talent training specifications and programs," which can cover the main contents of the syllabus and fully reflect the teaching objectives and basic requirements of the subject. The content should focus on examining students' comprehensive application ability, highlighting the key points, and paying attention to diversity. The test questions should be of reasonable weight, moderate difficulty, and proper amount of questions, and should be roughly normally distributed according to degree of difficulty.

Specific Requirements

1) Two sets of test papers, A and B, are required, and one set of test papers for the final examination shall be randomly selected by the Academic Affairs Office. The repetition rate of test papers A and B shall not exceed 20%, and the textbook content shall not exceed 50%. The types of test questions should be designed reasonably with moderate difficulty. In principle, there should be no fewer than five types. The question types include objective and subjective questions; the proportion of subjective questions should be no less than 60% in principle.

2) 2. First- and second-year undergraduate students from the Graduate School of Translation and Interpreting, School of English, and Bilingual School will conduct a unified examination. The questions will be presented by members of the course preparation team, reviewed by the course team leader, and arranged by each school at the same time through coordination.

3) Unified test paper, answer sheet, and answer sheet templates shall be used in Word format, printed horizontally on B4 paper, with the title in Times New Roman bold and 12pt and the test content in Times New Roman 10.5pt, with a fixed space of 18pts. Exam papers with "answer sheets" only have score boxes on the left side of each major question on the "answer sheet" but do not include words such as "score" or "positive score;" exam papers without an "answer sheet" should have a score box on the left side of each major question on the "test sheet." Exam papers with "answer sheets" do not leave blank lines under each question on the "test sheet."

4) The test purpose should be accurate, and the symbols should be standardized. The total score for each set of test papers is 100 points. Each major question should indicate the number of sub-questions and corresponding points, and the total score of each major question with a unified 14pt font highlighted in black, such as 选择填空（共 10 小题，每题 1 分，满分 10 分）or I. Multiple Choice (10 × 1%=10%).

5) Two sets of reference answers and scoring criteria should be attached when submitting the test paper. The headings of the test paper should adopt the unified format, and the items should be filled out completely. For cross-college exams, each college and exam class should be clearly indicated. The course name of the exam subject should be consistent with the course name of the talent cultivation plan; clearly indicate on the test paper if the exam is an open-book

test and special requirements (such as bringing calculators, e-dictionary, dictionaries, or other items.)

In short, the document outlines comprehensive standards for the creation and administration of exams. The guidelines emphasize validity, reliability, differentiation, and a close adherence to course syllabi. Test content should evaluate students' comprehensive application ability, emphasize key points, and have a diverse set of questions. There are specific criteria for generating two distinct versions of the exam, with only a maximum overlap of 20%. Unified exams are mandated for specific student groups, with structured protocols for paper presentation, formatting, and scoring. Test papers should adhere to specific design specifications, including font sizes and styles, and standardized symbols. It's mandatory to indicate scoring for each section, and additional requirements for reference answers, scoring criteria, and other exam details are meticulously prescribed. The guidelines are thorough, ensuring that the examinations are consistent, equitable, and properly aligned with teaching objectives.

6.3 University Document: the "Guiding Opinions on Improving the Formative Evaluation of Undergraduate Course" 2022

At the same time, in order to improve the entire undergraduate course evaluation system of XISU, the university issued the important guiding document "Guiding Opinions on Improving the Formative Evaluation of Undergraduate Course" in March 2022 in a bid to further strengthen the formative evaluation of undergraduate courses, improve the academic evaluation system, enhance student learning effectiveness, establish a good teaching and learning atmosphere, and further improve the quality of undergraduate teaching in line with the actual situation of the school. Its guiding principle is to follow the educational and teaching philosophy of "student-centeredness, result-orientation, and continuous improvement," with the goal of establishing a diversified formative evaluation system with dual emphasis on both ability and knowledge assessment. Through formative evaluation reform, the document strengthens the management of students' learning process, guides students to pay attention to the learning process,

focuses on learning ability cultivation, and comprehensively improves the level of classroom teaching and the quality of talent cultivation. This document has two basic principles: 1) Diversity - a diversity formative evaluation form should be designed based on the teaching syllabus and course characteristics to guide and strengthen ability development, with attention given to the training of basic knowledge and skills with moderate difficulty; 2) Inspiration - in content design, attention should be paid to examining students' innovative thinking and ability to comprehensively analyze and solve problems. Strive to create room for students to play an active role and inspire and guide them to engage in active thinking and innovation. The document emphasizes that the seven basic forms should be included in its evaluation system are:

I. Attendance. In principle, attendance is not included in the formative evaluation. However, teachers should strengthen the management of students' learning status in class and avoid passive learning (hearing but not listening).

II. Homework. Homework should be carefully designed in moderate amounts. Teachers should review the homework promptly and provide feedback, strictly control the quality of homework, and ensure the accuracy of homework grades.

III. Quizzes: include midterm exams, unit or chapter tests, in-class quizzes, etc.

IV. Major assignment. A comprehensive assignment should be explicitly designed based on the course content and objectives, and released during the course teaching process. According to the nature of the course, major assignments can take various forms, such as extracurricular reading, specialized academic papers, specialized research reports, literature reviews, and case studies.

V. Daily performance: Organize students to engage in teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions on the course's key, difficult, or partial topics of the course through in-class discussions or Q&A sessions. Teachers can give grades based on their performance.

VI. Practice activities: organize students to conduct practical activities in and out of class based on teaching content to deepen their understanding and application of theoretical knowledge. Teachers can give grades based on their comprehensive performance, mastery of knowledge, knowledge application, and hands-on ability.

VII. Others. Teachers can design other effective formative evaluation content and assessment forms based on the features of the course, such as study notes, team assignments, etc.

In addition, the assessment requirements proposed in the document include the following aspects:

I. The formative evaluation and assessment methods should follow evaluation standards, evaluation metrics should be scientifically and reasonably designed, points should be given fairly, and deductions should be justified.

II. The total score is comprehensively evaluated based on their daily performance (i.e., formative evaluation) and final score. The proportion of their daily performance should be no less than 30% of the total score, and the specific proportion should match the assessment process and number of assessments and be clearly stated in the course syllabus. In principle, all types of subjects require formative evaluation.

III. Formative evaluation should adopt multiple methods based on the characteristics of the course and teaching objectives, comprehensively assessing the students' attainment of course objectives during the learning process. In principle, there should be no fewer than five forms of formative evaluation for each subject. Implementing a score reduction system for students' attendance in class is recommended.

IV. Each subject should develop a formative evaluation plan based on the curriculum outline, course nature, and level of students and include its core content in the teaching calendar. The plan should be announced in the first class of the course to ensure that they understand the arrangement of the course teaching formative evaluation plan, the proportion and composition of the total course evaluation scores, etc., to summarize and complete the students' formative evaluation scores before final evaluation.

V. The formative evaluation of the course must retain written or electronic materials that can be verified, with detailed records, sufficient basis, and unified standards. The supporting materials for the formative evaluation (including assessment content, evaluation standards, and student assignments or test papers

with correction marks) are bound together with the formative evaluation plan into a volume and are filed as teaching materials along with the final evaluation materials at the end of the term for archives and future reference.

It is also mentioned in the document that each teaching unit is the main body of course formative evaluation management. Before the start of the course, the teaching unit should organize the course team or teacher to develop a formative evaluation plan based on the teaching outline and subject characteristics. The formative evaluation plan for the same course should be consistent. The teachers should strictly follow the formative evaluation plan once it is finalized. If there are any adjustments during the implementation, the course team or teachers shall file an application, and after approval by the department (teaching and research department) and the college, they shall report to the Academic Affairs Office for filing.

The content of the XISU Teaching Program for English Majors fully meets the syllabus requirements at the national level and maintains a fundamental consistency. At the same time, new requirements are put forward according to the changes in the international and domestic situation as well as the demand of China's socialist market economy for English professionals. As mentioned above, the English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities divides the curriculum of English majors into three categories: English professional skills, English knowledge and relevant professional knowledge. It provides a clear and reasonable framework for students' knowledge structure and a scientific basis for a curriculum conducive to cultivating interdisciplinary talents. Similarly, XISU's syllabus for English majors also divides the curriculum into general subjects, professional subjects and practical teaching subjects. Among them, professional subjects contain subjects of the national-level syllabus of English professional skills and English knowledge, general subjects include those of relevant professional knowledge and new subjects. General education includes not only compulsory subjects such as ideological and political subjects, ideological and moral cultivation and fundamentals of law, second foreign language, but also optional subjects

such as Chinese civilization and cultural heritage, multicultural and global vision, scientific literacy and information technology, social science and economic development, and aesthetic education, which dovetail with the requirements of the times for foreign language talents.

Generally speaking, XISU's syllabus for English majors is more detailed compared with the national syllabuses and standards, mainly reflected in the following aspects. At first, the national syllabus only proposes the number of credit hours per week and the total credit hours per school year. The allocation of credit hours for English majors is quite generalized. However, the XISU Syllabus for English Majors provides a detailed description of credit hours and credits for each semester and each subject respectively. Among them, the allocation of credit hours is detailed to the total credit hours, credit hours for lectures, and credit hours for practice, which motivates teachers to attach greater importance to English teaching practice.

Secondly, The English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities 2000 provides the general outline of all subjects for English majors, but no specific syllabus for each individual subject has been designed. XISU's Syllabus for English Majors is divided into two levels. The level 1 syllabus, referred to as the XISU Training program for English Majors, sets the general outline of the curriculum for English majors. Its structure and layout are similar to those of the national-level syllabus. The Level 2 syllabus is used for each subject of English majors. It specifies the course objectives, teaching contents, key and difficult points and credit hour distribution, teaching methods, learning process design, course evaluation, evaluation methods, and learning resources. The content of "key and difficult points and class hour allocation" integrates ideological and political points and the class hour allocation of each teaching segment (including application).

In terms of training objectives about intercultural competence, the National English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities only requires that English majors in colleges and universities should cultivate "inter-disciplinary English speaking talents who can skillfully use foreign languages to engage in translation, teaching, management, research and other work in relevant departments." However, intercultural competence training was not directly proposed. XISU's teaching syllabus for English majors, on the other hand, directly states in the training objectives that "our students should have ... strong intercultural communicative competence," and in the specific training objectives that "Our students should have extensive knowledge of humanities, the ability to process various information and knowledge inter-disciplinarily, inter-culturally and with multiple angles. They should grasp the development frontier of international education and communication, and strong skills of international and cross-cultural communication." In terms of teaching requirements, the Syllabus For English Majors in Colleges and Universities requires that for cultural awareness, students should "have a certain understanding of Chinese culture, good mastery of Chinese language, a certain understanding of geography, history and development status of English-speaking countries such as the UK and the US, and master basic mathematical, physical and chemical knowledge." XISU's syllabus for English majors (Level 1) set the subjects of "Chinese Civilization and Cultural Heritage" and "Multicultural and Global Vision" in the curriculum, and implemented the idea of cross-cultural communication into 39 Level-2 Syllabus.

Nevertheless, although the XISU's syllabus for English majors is more detailed than the national documents, the two syllabus levels are sufficient to guide the design of teaching content. However, after conducting research, the researcher believes that the syllabus is still not a completely effective guideline for the teaching and training of

intercultural competence in each subject. Its shortcomings, reasons, and proposed methods for improvement will be discussed in the later chapters.

Chapter 7:

Major Findings from Interviews

In the previous chapters, the researcher examined national curriculums and standards and discussed how they are localized, the objectives and criteria of the XISU English major and two of its main subjects. In this chapter, I will present major findings from interviews with English major teachers and students, assessing their understanding of intercultural competence and how it has been developed and evaluated. In the following discussion, teacher interviewees are represented by the code Tn, where T represents teacher, and *n* is the interview number. Student interviewees are represented by Sn, where S represents student, and *n* is the interview number.

7.1 Overall Teaching Objectives and Contents of Main Core Subjects for English Majors

The 20 teachers interviewed in this study teach several core subjects for English majors, including Comprehensive English, English Audio-Visual Speaking, Spoken English, English Reading, English Writing, Chinese-English Translation and Intercultural Communication.

According to interviewed teachers who teach **Comprehensive English,** including T3, T14, T15 and 16, the overall teaching goal of Comprehensive English is to cultivate students' competence to use English language knowledge and skills comprehensively

for language communication and enable students to identify and use standardized English pronunciation and intonation correctly, and adapt to and master the major varieties of English. As T3 stated, students should be able to recognize various parts of speech and their grammatical forms and skillfully master the usage of common word formation and basic sentence structure.[20] T14 also reported that "the subject aims to teach students to identify different styles so they can skillfully use various cohesive devices, common rhetorical devices, writing skills of different styles, as well as the conversion, interpretation and translation methods of long and complicated sentences. The subject is designed to teach students to use their knowledge and skills for critical thinking, discuss and express their views in combination with practical problems or hot topics in real life, and cultivate students' critical thinking skills. In terms of teaching content, according to the introduction to the interviewed teachers, the teaching units are mainly organized based on themes."[21] According to T3 and T14, the teaching content needs to reflect the "comprehensive" characteristics of the subject, integrate language, literature, translation and cultural knowledge, and promote the comprehensive application and all-round development of students' listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills through language communication tasks as far as possible. T15 and T16 also indicated that in this subject, language knowledge teaching is divided into specialized training in pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and discourse while integrating language and knowledge teaching and literature and cultural knowledge teaching to reflect the humanistic characteristics of the discipline. Most teachers use classic themes to learn the history and culture of English-speaking countries and choose some hot topics to reflect the current situation of civilization and the progress of contemporary society.[22] Additionally, they all think it should be acknowledged that the language skill training in the Comprehensive English subject must be cognizant of different grades and learning stages.

---

[20] Interview with T3 on 18 June 2020.
[21] Interview with T14 on 27 June 2020.
[22] Interviews with T15 (on 26 June 2020) and T16 (on 23 June 2020).

As stated by T11 and T12[23], who teach **English Audio-Visual Speaking**, the subject mainly cultivates students' competence to understand English audio and video materials and express their opinions on relevant content. Through studying the subject, students should have been able to correctly distinguish between the pronunciation of standard English and its common variants, identify the main meaning and details, identify inference and implied meanings and summarize the main idea. The interviewed teachers also state that the subject is designed to train students to quickly record multiple points as abbreviations and outlines, and use notes to paraphrase, retell, summarize and evaluate the audio-visual content. Students are asked to discuss the audio-visual content around the unit's theme, make an oral summary and report the results of the discussion. In terms of teaching content, it mainly includes three aspects: audio-visual understanding and oral expression strategies, language knowledge and related social and cultural knowledge, and language application and thinking skills. It tries to highlight the overall system, integrate language and knowledge teaching as much as possible, and take into account prior knowledge, interest and educational significance. According to the interviewees, the audio-visual materials teachers select are closely related to students' learning and social life as much as possible, and they try to have a wide range of topics and rich materials. As indicated by the teachers, they usually prepare the subject content according to the theme and unit and mainly select topics familiar to students, such as personal and life experience, social and cultural life, education, and scientific and technological development. Also, the selected materials are generally daily oral materials with standard speaking speed, including situational dialogue, special speech, academic lectures, speeches and debates, TV and radio programs, film clips and other language materials.

---

[23] Interviews with T11 (on 25 June 2020) and T12 (on 19 June 2020).

As stated by T4 and T17, the main teaching goal of **English Reading** is to cultivate students' English reading and thinking skills so that students can master the basic knowledge of the English language and develop social and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries through the subject, and skillfully use common English reading strategies to distinguish facts and opinions, the competence to infer the meaning and implied meaning of new words according to the context, and summarize the general idea of paragraphs and the main idea of chapters. T4 also indicated that students should also analyze the text's style, genre, structure, rhetoric and writing techniques as much as possible, analyze and evaluate the researcher's emotion, attitude and intention, and make a comparative analysis of different chapters on the same or related topics.[24] As T17 reported, the subject also focuses on three aspects: strategy training, knowledge learning and competence training. Regarding strategy, students should be trained in reading comprehension skills and methods such as skimming, searching and evaluation reading. Also, the knowledge content mainly includes English language knowledge in vocabulary, syntax and text, as well as social and cultural background knowledge related to reading text.[25] Its competence training mainly includes comprehension of text structure analysis and inferential competence. In the words of the interviewed teachers, their teaching content will be organized according to the theme, and the selected theme should involve different fields such as society, culture and education, science and technology, economy and trade. However, fourth-year advanced English reading subjects train students in more aspects. For example, teacher T18, who teaches third-year English reading subjects, said that third-year English reading subjects need to train students in knowledge, competence and quality as much as possible. Based on teacher T19's interview, in terms of knowledge, there are high requirements for students' vocabulary; in terms of competence, it is necessary to cultivate students' competence to access data with the help of reference books and cultivate students' competence in data analysis and sorting. T18 also said that the competencies mentioned above "are the

---

24 Interview with T4 on 8 July 2020.
25 Interview with T17 on 31 June 2020.

most basic competencies that third-year students need to master. It is also necessary to cultivate students' self-study competence. We should focus on cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence, critical thinking skills and all-round quality."

According to the three teachers of the **English Writing** subject, including T3, T17 and T20, the subject is designed mainly to cultivate students' competence to express themselves in English writing. Students should master the basic knowledge and skills of English writing, be able to write short essays in various genres and understand the basic norms and methods of academic writing. It is desirable that students should be able to write short research reports and papers independently, cultivate and develop good writing habits, and be competent in critical writing.[26]

As per the responses of the interviewed teachers (T3, T17 and T20), the subject content mainly includes three teaching components: writing knowledge, writing strategies and writing competence. Writing knowledge mainly includes skills such as word selection and sentence formation, punctuation, text structure, stylistic features, and article modification. Regarding writing strategies, emphasis is placed on using sentence patterns, paragraph organization, text layout, model imitation and other writing skills and methods. The cultivation of writing competence mainly includes brainstorming and concept creation, viewpoint demonstration, revision and review, and referential competence. As noted by the interviewed teachers, the teaching content will be about sentence and then paragraph writing, multi-genre writing and primary academic writing according to the task's difficulty. Topics will gradually transition from character scenes, family life and campus activities to scientific and technological inventions, life philosophy and social problems. In the interviewed teachers' opinions, students' competence in problem analysis, logical reasoning and effective expression should also be improved as much as possible.

---

[26] Interviews with T3 (18 June 2020), T17 (31 June 2020) and T20 (24 June 2020).

In the case of interviewees, including T7, T9 and T10, who teach **Chinese-English Translation**, the subject is mainly designed to cultivate students' translation competence between English and Chinese. Specifically, it is to teach students theories, methods and quality standards of translation so that they can understand the text characteristics and differences between English and Chinese and translate articles in English and Chinese newspapers, magazines and books with difficulties, as well as excerpts from novels, prose, drama and other literary originals. The target speed for translation is 300-350 words per hour. [27]As stated by T7, T9 and T10, the subject is designed to enable students to perform general English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation tasks independently. According to T6, the teaching content is mainly through example analysis and translation training so that students can skillfully use various translation methods, skills and strategies according to the translation standards and the similarities and differences between English and Chinese vocabulary, syntax, text and social culture, to cultivate students' translation competence. T10 also stated that the translation materials teachers select will consider knowledge, interest and ideology. From the perspectives of T2, generally, teachers select formal texts such as literature, science and technology, tourism, news, advertising, business, law and instructions.

According to the interviewed teachers, including T2, T15, and T18, who teach **Intercultural Communication**, the main goal of the subject is to help students understand cultural phenomena, adapt to cultural differences, improve intercultural competence, enhance their international vision, and enable them to master the basic concepts, theories and methods of intercultural communication through subject learning. If students know how to respect the diversity of world culture, enhance critical cultural awareness, explain and evaluate different cultural phenomena, appropriately and

---

[27] Interviews with T7 (6 July 2020), T9 (29 June 2020) and T10 (29 June 2020).

effectively carry out intercultural communication, and help people with various cultural backgrounds conduct intercultural communications.[28] As T15 and T18 outlined, the content of this subject comprises two parts: theory and practice related to intercultural communication. The theoretical part focuses on the basic concepts of culture, communication and intercultural communication, the main theories and methods of intercultural communication research, language differences, nonverbal differences and social customs in communication. The practice part focuses on using relevant intercultural theoretical knowledge to overcome the obstacles in intercultural communication, such as analyzing the main obstacles in intercultural communication in the fields of business, education and medical treatment and proposing effective solutions.

7.2 Students' Understanding of Intercultural Competence and Self-evaluation of Intercultural Competence

In reality, the vast majority of students interviewed believe that the cultivation of intercultural competence is very important for foreign language students, and the reasons given by each student are similar on the whole. They all believe that students studying foreign languages will communicate and exchange with people from different cultures or nationalities. Some of the interviewed students, such as S4, S6, S28, and S29, also noted that when communicating with some foreigners, they need intercultural competence to avoid saying rude or misleading words or offending others, express their respect for each other's culture, and avoid ineffective communication and various problems caused by cultural conflict.[29] However, all the students interviewed do not have a very systematic understanding of intercultural competence.

---

[28] Interviews with T2 (10 July 2020), T15 (26 June 2020) and T18 (2 July 2020).
[29] Interviews with S4 (17 July 2020), S6(20 July 2020), S28(27 June 2020) and S29(28 June 2020).

Generally, the students only have some basic understanding of the concept of intercultural competence, and most of them believe that intercultural competence is the key competence to effectively communicate with people from different countries or nationalities, while a few interviewed students have a unique understanding of intercultural competence. For example, S25, a third-year English major, said, "I think intercultural competence gives me the feeling that when you enter a new country, you will do as the Romans do, that is, you will not be surprised by their culture. When you come into contact with some people you have not met before, what you encounter will exceed your imagination, destroy your cognition and make you feel unacceptable. In other words, after you enter a new country, you feel that you can understand others."[30] With an inclusive attitude, students are willing to learn and accept these different things. S21 has a similar understanding and thought that "intercultural competence means when you are in a foreign country, you can live freely, and you can understand their culture. Then, they are more open-minded and do not hold any discriminatory attitude towards foreigners from other countries or different skin color."[31]

In fact, most of the third-year students interviewed said that after two years, their vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, spoken English and English-Chinese translation had improved by studying the above main core subjects. Some third-year or fourth-year interviewed students expressed that among all the core subjects, the Comprehensive English subject was the one that helped them to improve and gain the most. For example, S10 said, "I feel that Comprehensive English is the most basic and core subject. It enables me to enlarge my vocabulary, improve my reading skills quickly, and accumulate knowledge and thus lay a foundation for language learning."[32] Also, S22, a third-year English major, said, "After more than two years of study, I feel that I am better at listening, speaking, reading and writing than other students who are not English

---

[30] Interview with S25 on 26 July 2020.
[31] Interview with S21 on 15 July 2020.
[32] Interview with S10 (on 3 July 2020).

majors. Especially in listening, I could hardly understand anything at first, but now, I can feel that my listening has improved significantly. However, I still feel that I can't speak very good English, but at least I dare to speak, and I can have some simple communication with others in English; that is to say, in many cases, I can understand what others are saying, but it is difficult to express, but on the whole, my listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities have been greatly improved through taking the core subjects."[33]

At the same time, more than half of the students interviewed responded positively to the core subject of Intercultural Communication for third-year English majors. They thought they had an unprecedented understanding of intercultural communication through this subject and gained useful knowledge and skills for communicating with native English speakers. S16 and S22 both said they liked this subject very much and understood that different cultural backgrounds would bring different values to this subject. They believe that communication barriers will inevitably appear in the intercultural background, and they need to learn how to overcome these barriers in intercultural communication and examine the differences between different cultures.[34] S16 also said, "We need to seek common ground while reserving differences, maintain an objective position, and we can get the answer in this subject." S22 said, "Because we are faced with different countries and cultures, people whose way of thinking, living habits and behavior are very different to ours, we will inevitably have cultural conflicts when communicating with them. At this time, what we learned in the Intercultural Communication class will play a great role." S23 and S29 also indicated that studying this subject enriched their knowledge of intercultural communication. As S29 stated, "Communication between different cultures and societies has become an unavoidable reality, so intercultural communication is playing a more and more important role in

---

[33] Interview with S22 (on 25 July 2020).
[34] Interviews with S16 (on 29 July 2020)and S22 (on 25 July 2020)

society." [35]   Besides, S23 said, "Through the study of the subject Intercultural Communication, I had an opportunity to combine my theoretical and practical knowledge. In the past, I always thought that translation was very easy and that as long as I accumulated enough words, it would be very easy to do translation. However, when we did it, it was full of mistakes. Translation is not to simply convey words. We need to be faithful to the original text. What is more, the translation tasks we did paid attention to appropriateness and accuracy. They can't create what others don't have. "[36]

Also, S27 indicated, "Through the subject of Intercultural Communication, I learned that only by fully understanding the cultural customs, taboos and communication etiquette of other countries can I better realize communication. In the case of intercultural questions, the answers are diverse, and everyone has his or her own ideas. At the same time, the subject has cultivated my competence to think independently, look at problems, consider and analyze."[37] S19 stated, "Through this subject, I learn about the cultures of different countries and how they communicate with others. I have learned to look at the problem from multiple perspectives. Although the perspective of the problem is still very narrow now, I have made more progress compared with before. Also, I have learned that the most important thing is having one's own opinions rather than being influenced by others. Just like the 'Values' topic that I learned, I should have my own values, express my own opinions and treat foreign cultures objectively."[38]

Furthermore, most of the students interviewed said they realized through the Intercultural Communication subject that they learned that different religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, customs and so on may lead to communication barriers. S16 said,

[35] Interview with S29 on 28 June 2020.
[36] Interview with S23 on 25 July 2020.
[37] Interview with S27 on 21 June 2020.
[38] Interview with S19 on 31 July 2020.

"The greater significance of this subject, I think, is eliminating cultural centralism. As the teacher said, we can't always live in our own cultural kingdom in this era of globalization. For me, the biggest emotional change brought about by this change of understanding is to learn to be tolerant. The world is changing and developing rapidly. The more knowledge we learn, the more humble we will become."[39]

However, only a few third and fourth-year students interviewed thought that in addition to the five basic skills of "listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation," they also improved their intercultural competence through the study of the core subjects, including Comprehensive English, English Reading, English-Chinese Translation and Intercultural Communication. For instance, S15, a third-year student, believed that through the study of several core subjects, she had a better understanding of some historical and cultural background knowledge of British and American countries, which could better help her understand the differences between the two languages, and master the historical and cultural knowledge and language differences that could play a significant role in the process of English-Chinese translation.[40] Alongside this, however, most of the interviewed students think their mastery of cultural knowledge related to English-speaking countries is far from adequate. For example, S26, S27 and S30 indicated that after completing the compulsory core subjects, they still felt that they lacked understanding of etiquette, expression and code of conduct of native English speakers. They felt unable to understand each other accurately and express their ideas and thought they would encounter obstacles and difficulties in communicating with native English speakers in their daily lives.[41] S30 also said, "After learning several subjects, I feel that I have learned a lot of written knowledge, but I have a concern, which is, if I live in an English-speaking country, I don't know if I can solve the

---

[39] Interview with S16 on 29 July 2020.
[40] Interview with S15 (on 28 July 2020).
[41] Interviews with S26 (on 20 June 2020), S27 (on 21 June 2020) and S30 (on 28 June 2020).

problems in daily life, or whether I can keep up with the teaching style there and adapt to the learning environment."

Some third and fourth-year students also expressed that the improvement in their oral expression and communication skills was not obvious compared with other aspects after completing their core subjects. For example, S26 stated that "after three years of study, it is still urgent to improve my oral expression and intercultural communication skills, including pronunciation and intonation, etiquette and customs of native English speakers, and some authentic English expression." She wants to accurately express her thoughts and thus avoid misunderstandings when communicating with native speakers.[42] S24 said that "at present, in most of my daily conversations with native English speakers or with other English speakers, I just understand the superficial meaning of words."[43] S25 noted, "the deeper meaning of the words are not very clear. For example, the superficial words in the daily life dialogue can be handled. However, when it comes to some serious topics, or topics in a professional field, such as religion, medical treatment, politics, law, people's livelihood, and other historical and cultural knowledge, including explaining and elaborating on your own national culture, we may not be able to express the differences between the culture of our own country and the culture of the other country."[44]

Similarly, both third-year students, S14 and S18, reported that their English expression competence was very poor. They also think that the reason was that they did not have a deep understanding of English culture, and they only had a superficial and subjective understanding of it. In oral expression, when they want to express their ideas in English, they only use some simple sentences, and sometimes, they cannot express their actual

---

[42] Interview with S26 (on 24 July 2020).
[43] Interview with S24 (on 17 July 2020).
[44] Interview with S25 (on 18 July 2020).

meaning clearly and accurately. They also feel that their logic and words are not in place and attribute this to their lack of deep understanding of the background culture of native English speakers.[45] Some other students also pointed out that their knowledge could not give them a deep understanding of the similarities and differences between the mother tongue culture and the target language culture, and they did not master the thinking mode of native English speakers by learning English, resulting in their incompetent communication with native English speakers. S24 also said that they hoped to have a high level of competence to adapt to and accept cultures other than their mother tongue through study and cultivate their tolerance and attitude towards foreign cultures through the subject contents and activities, thus achieving genuine mutual respect as well as equal and authentic communication with others in the future.[46]

To sum up, a majority of the interviewed students recognize the significance of intercultural competence for foreign language learners. They emphasized its role in preventing misunderstandings, respecting different cultures, and communicating effectively. Despite the acknowledged importance, many students admit to having a basic or limited understanding of the term. In addition, third and fourth-year English majors felt that their English skills, from vocabulary to translation, had improved after studying core subjects like Comprehensive English. They cited improvements in reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. Despite these advancements, many students still felt challenged in their oral expression and intercultural communication skills, attributing it to a superficial understanding of English culture. Moreover, the course on Intercultural Communication stood out, with many students expressing a deep appreciation for the insights and knowledge gained about communicating with native English speakers. They acknowledged the importance of understanding cultural nuances, taboos, and etiquettes in effective intercultural communication.

---

[45] Interviews with S14 (on 28 July 2020) and S18 (on 30 July 2020).
[46] Interview with S24 on 26 July 2020.

However, there was a prevailing sentiment that while core subjects enriched their language skills, their grasp of cultural knowledge about English-speaking countries was inadequate. Some students felt uncertain about their ability to effectively navigate daily life in English-speaking environments, citing potential challenges in understanding etiquette, expressions, and behavior norms. The desire for deeper cultural immersion and understanding was prevalent, with students expressing a need for more profound cultural knowledge to achieve genuine, respectful, and effective communication with native English speakers.

7.3 English Teachers' Understanding and Self-evaluation of Intercultural Competence

On the other hand, the interviewed teachers' understanding of intercultural competence differs from that of the interviewed students. In this part, the researcher will explore how teachers understand intercultural competence, assess their own intercultural competence and evaluate the significance of intercultural competence in their teaching.

Firstly, some of the teachers interviewed believe that they knew the concept of intercultural competence well and indeed have been trained in it well. For example, T18 believed that "intercultural competence mainly includes intercultural awareness, world cultural knowledge or background knowledge of the target language," and "through reading, teaching activities, scientific research process and teacher training" (including attending some meetings, forums, or lectures) to master intercultural competence.[47] T9 claims to have "acquired the concept of intercultural competence and its mastery from

---

[47] Interview with T18 on 2 July 2020.

multiple perspectives, such as from the research perspective, from the teaching perspective, from the management perspective, and from the academic perspective, including the process of communicating with people in different academic groups, as well as the guidance and discussion of our own school for cultivating intercultural competence, through which we can have a thorough understanding of what intercultural competence is and what aspects of competence it contains."[48]

T15, who teaches second-year Comprehensive English, and T11, who teaches English Audio-visual Speaking, have a similar understanding of intercultural competence. They believe that to have intercultural competence, one first needs to know how to communicate effectively with people from different cultures and clearly and quickly perceive the presence of cultural differences during communication.[49] Similarly, T13 also stated, "On the one hand, we understand each other. On the other hand, we should also understand our mother tongue culture, have the competence to find our own national cultural status among the cultural differences, fully understand and respect each other's culture, effectively go beyond cultural differences, obstacles and cultural taboos, avoid cultural conflicts and realize effective communication as much as possible."[50]

Both T15, who teaches second-year Comprehensive English, and T7, who teaches English Writing, said that they learned about the concept of intercultural competence through the subject of Intercultural Communication in college. However, they felt this improvement was achieved through communication with colleagues, foreign teachers or foreign friends, and visiting foreign cooperative colleges and universities after they stepped into society and started working. In the process of communication and

---

[48] Interview with T9 (on 29 June 2020).
[49] Interviews with T15 (on 26 June 2020) and T11 (on 25 June 2020).
[50] Interview with T3 (on 18 June 2020).

expression, they have gained a deeper understanding of intercultural competence. After these experiences, they could feel the change and improvement in this aspect.[51]

At the same time, all the teachers interviewed believe that cultivating intercultural competence is essential for foreign language majors. For example, T2, a teacher of the Intercultural Communication subject, T10 of Chinese-English Translation, and T13 of Comprehensive English all said that intercultural competence should be a basic competence that all foreign language majors need to have through learning.

T13, who teaches Intercultural Communication, noted that "the concepts and theories of intercultural communication and competence were essential to students."[52] T6 also said, "For example, in the early days, when teachers or students are engaged in foreign affairs reception and did not have relevant theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication and had no concept of intercultural competence, they could only receive foreign guests or other foreign visitors based on experience or ask experienced colleagues to pay attention to the differences in etiquette between people from different countries and how to avoid ineffective communication, such as table manners, use of tableware and taste preferences. In this era, the teacher feels that experience alone is not enough. We also need the guidance of certain theory."[53] From the perspectives of T13, the relevant theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication and intercultural competence could improve students' intercultural awareness, enable them to solve more profound or complex problems through these theories, and use appropriate strategies in intercultural communication to reduce cultural conflict or

---

[51] Interviews with T15 (on 26 June 2020) and T17 (on 31 June 2020).
[52] Interview with T13 (on 30 June 2020).
[53] Interview with T6 (on 23 June 2020).

complete effective communication. Moreover, both teachers believe that studying some theories in the subject Intercultural Communication is essential.

T14, who also teaches Comprehensive English, said, "The cultivation of intercultural competence is very important in foreign language teaching because, to a large extent, the final test standard of language learning is whether students can authentically use the language on a specific occasion. As long as it involves the use of the real scenarios of the language, students need to have intercultural communication competence." [54] However, T17, who teaches English Writing, also said, "I think intercultural competence may be more reflected in communication. Therefore, it is more important in subjects involving more communication, such as Comprehensive English, English Audio-Visual Speaking, and Intercultural communication, but it is less important in subjects such as writing and translation."[55]

Meanwhile, as the interviewed teachers, including T1, T3 and T4 reported, from the syllabus and talent training program for foreign language majors promulgated at the national and school levels, they could clearly feel that the government attaches great importance to the cultivation of intercultural competence of foreign language students.[56] T1 also said, "The official curriculum for English majors is also targeted. This can be clearly seen from the policy documents such as the Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and Universities 2020 (Part I) - Teaching Guidelines for English Majors."

---

[54] Interview with T4 (on 8 July 2020).
[55] Interview with T17 (on 31 June 2020).
[56] Interviews with T1 (on 18 June 2020), T3 (18 June 2020) and T4 (8 July 2020).

Meanwhile, in the interview, the Dean of the School of English indicated, "China's higher education policy emphasizes the importance of global vision and intercultural competence, and holds that students can have better intercultural communication skills and international understanding in the context of globalization. Such guidelines, in turn, will drive universities to take measures to develop students' intercultural competence in terms of curriculum design and teaching methods. Some Chinese universities and educational institutions have responded positively to the policy by launching various subjects and programs to develop students' intercultural competence. For example, they offer special subjects on intercultural communication, set up overseas study and internship programs, or invite foreign scholars for lectures and exchanges. However, it is worth noting that despite these positive policies and practices, there may be some practical challenges. For example, teachers may lack appropriate training and resources, or students may not have sufficient opportunities to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real scenarios. In general, China's educational policy and guidance documents have contributed to improving the intercultural competence of undergraduates majoring in foreign languages, but the implementation and effectiveness need to be evaluated in light of the actual situation." [57]

Nonetheless, approximately half of the interviewed teachers remain uncertain about their successful acquisition of intercultural competence. Moreover, not all interviewed teachers fully comprehend the concept and significance of intercultural competence. As highlighted by interviewees T7 and T9, a potential influencer discouraging teachers from focusing on intercultural competence could be the lack of student enthusiasm towards this concept and cultural learning in general, as some students may not deem it critical, perceiving it as not pertinent to their language learning trajectory. Another significant determinant gleaned from the interviews is the teachers' perception of a time

---

[57] Interview with the Dean of the School of English (on 17 June 2020);

constraint that prevents adequate focus on intercultural competence.[58] The data also reveal that some teachers either believe that intercultural competence is best acquired in authentic situations, or they simply do not consider it a vital skill for language learning.

In summary, while educators generally view intercultural competence as crucial in foreign language instruction, they exhibit varying perspectives and experiences in understanding, evaluating, and applying this competence. As shown in the discussion, a majority of the interviewed educators believe that cultivating intercultural competence is vital for foreign language students. However, around half of them expressed uncertainty about their successful acquisition of intercultural competence. These educators did not possess a definitive grasp of the concept and significance of intercultural competence. Some perceived potential barriers preventing educators from emphasizing intercultural competence include a lack of student interest in the concept and cultural learning in general. Students might not see it as critical and consider it irrelevant to their language learning journey.

On the other hand, looking at China's educational policies and instructional guidelines, although they contribute to enhancing the intercultural competence of undergraduate foreign language students, the implementation and efficacy still require assessment in real-world settings. Additionally, according to the interviewed educators, while China's higher education policy emphasizes the importance of a global perspective and intercultural competence, urging universities to foster students' intercultural skills through the core subjects and their curriculum designs and teaching methodologies, there may still be challenges in practical application. This suggests that when designing

---

[58] Interviews with T11 (on 25 June 2020) and T14 (on 27 June 2020).

and implementing related courses and training, a more nuanced and comprehensive approach considering educators᾽ needs and viewpoints is essential.

7.4 Teacher Feedback on the Core Subjects of English Majors

The three Comprehensive English teachers said that the biggest problem encountered in the teaching process is the enormous gap between classroom teaching outcomes and their personal expectations. At first, T2 stated that the teacher-student interaction in her classroom teaching process was insufficient because she was not well prepared.[59] In addition, according to T4, because most of the teaching materials contained in the whole set of teaching materials were mainly communicative, there would be ineffective teacher-student interaction in implementing teaching activities, including code-switching. Therefore, she said, "If it is a high-standard classroom, the content that students usually receive is not enough."[60] T2 also reported that "Judging by *turn[61]* that I calculated before, there was not much effective teacher-student interaction in the classroom, which affected the effect of classroom teaching." Similarly, T4 also believes that the interaction between teachers and students in the teaching process is very important. However, she points out that, "poor mastery of the effectiveness of each turn will lead to poor learning results in the classroom, and the atmosphere of the whole classroom will have some impact. How to make the last lesson more harmonious, coherent and smooth before and after close connection requires a lot of design, so I think it is difficult to meet in the teaching process. The biggest difficulty is mainly reflected in effective teaching interaction."

---

[59] Interview with T2 on 10 July 2020.
[60] Interview with T4 on 8 July 2020.
[61] Turn - A theoretical concept to express two meanings: One is the opportunity to become a speaker at a certain time in the conversation. The other is what a person says when he is a speaker.

T8, who once taught first-year students and is currently teaching second-year Comprehensive English, noted that after completing the teaching task of one academic year, she was most worried about the teaching outcomes. She also said, "I am concerned whether students can really improve their basic English skills, including five basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, based on such teaching activities and teaching materials. Whether all aspects can meet the standard of TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-Band 4) in colleges and universities is a test of students' basic skills and a test of teachers' teaching success. Whether the foundation of first-year and second-year students is solid is something that our first-year and second-year teachers care about."[62]

As a matter of fact, as English majors, apart from passing the CET-4 and CET-6 exams during their school years, they should also try to get a TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-Band 4) certificate by the end of their second year and a TEM-8 (Test for English Majors-Band 8) certificate before graduation. As the interviewed teachers indicated, TEM-4, a test for English majors in comprehensive universities nationwide, was launched by the Ministry of Education in China in 1991. It assesses the competence of second-year students in English majors in university to apply basic skills and students' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and so on. The test is conducted by the Ministry of Education of China. It is usually held in April every year, that is, in the fourth semester, to test second-year students of English majors competence to apply basic skills and students' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and so on. In addition, the interviewees also remark that TEM-4 consists of six parts, namely dictation, listening comprehension, language knowledge, cloze, reading comprehension and writing. The whole test takes 130 minutes. As per the responses of the interviewed teachers and students, the TEM-4 test sets 60 points as the passing score. The scores are rated at three levels: 60-69 points, pass; 70-79 points, good; and above 80 points, excellent. As

---

[62] Interview with T8 on 7 July 2020.

T2 mentioned, its difficulty is slightly higher than that of CET-6. If the examinee passes the examination, he or she can obtain the TEM-4 certificate issued by the Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of Colleges and Universities.[63]

The interviewed teachers (including T9, T6 and T18) noted that the Test for English Majors-Band 8 (TEM-8) is designed for fourth-year English and related majors and includes questions on listening, reading, error correction, translation, and writing. Those who pass TEM-8 will be issued a transcript by the Steering Committee for Teaching Foreign Languages in Colleges and Universities. There are three grade descriptors: Pass (60-69), Good (70-79), and Excellent (80 and above). The certificate has a life validity. According to T9, only English majors in general types of universities are eligible to take the exam, and no other majors are eligible (not even those who pass CET-6 with distinction). As described by various interviewed teachers, including T6, T9 and T18, TEM-4 and TEM-8 are important English proficiency tests for English majors in the Chinese higher education system. The importance of these two certificates is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

Academic requirements: At many higher education institutions, passing TEM-4 and TEM-8 is a prerequisite for English majors to graduate. These exams test not only students' English language skills but also their knowledge about culture, vocabulary, and their major.

Employment advantages: For many employers, TEM-4 and TEM-8 are important criteria for assessing a candidate's English language proficiency. Students who pass these two exams may have a greater competitive advantage in the job market.

---

[63] Interview with T2 on 10 July 2020.

Postgraduate entrance exam: For English majors aspiring to pursue further study, passing TEM-8 may be necessary for graduate school admission.

Improvement of English: TEM-4 and TEM-8 help encourage students to polish their English skills. In order to pass these exams, students need to systematically study and improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

International exchange: Students who pass these exams may have more opportunities to participate in international exchange programs, such as studying abroad and attending international conferences.[64]

Thus, the importance of the TEM-4 and TEM-8 certificates for English majors mainly manifests in their academic development, career advantage, and personal skills enhancement. According to T2, T9 and T18, there is a strong connection between TEM-4 and TEM-8 and the English major subjects and grades. First, T2 indicated that TEM-4 and TEM-8 usually cover core content in English major subjects, such as listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing skills, vocabulary knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and some cultural background knowledge. A high score in the course usually means that the student has mastered the key skills and knowledge needed for the exam. Interviewee T6 reported that, in many cases, English major subjects will have sessions specifically designed to help students prepare for the TEM-4 and TEM-8. For example, there may be practice exams or special review sessions. At the same time, T9 also noted that while TEM-4 and TEM-8 are scored independently of their course grades, a student's performance in the course will affect how they fare on the exams. However, it is very difficult to get a TEM-4 or TEM-8 certificate. According to T18, "the difficulty of TEM-4 is basically already above that of CET-6, and the difficulty of TEM-8 is comparable to GRE, and it has also added the sections of

---

[64] Interviews with T6 (on 23 June 2020), T9 (29 June 2020) and T18 (on 2 July 2020).

English-Chinese and Chinese-English and the memory test of listening first and then filling in the blanks." T6 also stated that the recognition of the CET-4 or CET-6 certificate in university English is relatively widespread, but it is also an indisputable fact that the "deterrent effect" of the TEM-4 and TEM-8 certificates is much higher than that of the CET-4 or CET-6. In terms of proving English proficiency, the highest-level certificate within the scope of China's examinations is the TEM-8 certificate. If a student has such a certificate, then he or she may enjoy a significant advantage in the future job hunt, salary increase, job hopping, and professional title evaluation.

In general, TEM-4 and TEM-8 are an essential part of the English major curriculum and are closely linked. The design of the curriculum and teaching methods affect students' performance on these exams, which, in turn, affects their course performance and academic development. The interviewed teachers also stated that many English Majors in colleges and universities in China need to obtain the TEM-4 and TEM-8 certificates to meet the conditions for graduation and award of a bachelor's degree. For this reason, many English majors and teachers integrate their teaching and learning objectives with the TEM-4 and TEM-8 exam requirements.

However, as mentioned before, although these exams (CET-4, CET-6, TEM-4, TEM-8) may cover some cross-cultural knowledge (e.g., through the essay topics in the reading comprehension section), their primary focus is not on measuring or assessing students' intercultural competence. Assessing students' intercultural competence often requires a more complex, holistic approach, which may include self-reflection, critical thinking, and interactions in actual intercultural settings. Thus, the test scores of TEM-4 and TEM-8 can reflect all aspects of a student's language proficiency, but they cannot provide a comprehensive picture of a student's intercultural competence.

Considering the current situation of intercultural competence training through the core subjects, take the compulsory subject Intercultural Communication for English majors as an example; T8 indicated that students were not clear about the purpose and significance of the textbook, "when designing teaching activities, many teaching activities cannot be realized, and certain practical links are not in place. Many classroom teaching materials and the contents involved in case analysis are not first-hand experiences for the students, so it is difficult for them to apply what they learn in real life."[65]

The four teachers interviewed also agreed that their students' oral English expression competence could be improved through teaching. Although this competence referred to students' pronunciation, intonation and grammar, it also referred to whether students could genuinely master intercultural competence and establish effective communication with native English speakers after learning to avoid failed or ineffective communication. Some teachers stated that it was relatively difficult to cultivate such abilities; however, it was an aspect that foreign language students need to focus on improving because accurately understanding others and expressing or explaining their ideas demonstrated the embodiment of language proficiency.

Meanwhile, the interviewed teachers also mentioned a phenomenon that, after students had learned a foreign language and its culture, some students would inexplicably favor and thoughtlessly identify with the target language culture and often thought that their own culture was bad. T15 said, "They will have bias and misunderstanding about their

---

[65] Interview with T8 on 7 July 2020.

own culture and lack an objective understanding of the two cultures."[66] T19 also gave an example in the interview of one of the views he heard when participating in the defence of a student's graduation thesis, which was, "When comparing the views of Chinese and American family education, this student firmly believed that American family education was more successful because their education was relatively free, democratic and open, but the way of Chinese family education was not good because there was a hierarchical view in Chinese family education, but I was surprised at that time. I thought it was biased and not objective. This kind of situation does not happen to only one student; other students share the same idea. After giving the student advice, he reflected and realized that only in the feudal period of ancient China there may have been a serious concept of family hierarchy, but it is extremely rare now."[67] Furthermore, both of them believed that this phenomenon had something to do with paying too much attention to the popularization and publicity of target language cultural knowledge in the culture teaching of foreign language courses in Chinese colleges and universities.

Moreover, T15 asserted that as foreign language teachers introduce and comprehend foreign cultural knowledge, they should also impart and grasp pertinent knowledge of their own culture. T20, expressing a similar viewpoint, mentioned, "Some educators, myself included, occasionally adhere strictly to teaching objectives based on the curriculum outline and educational materials. Given that their students were born and raised in China, teachers often assume certain knowledge to be self-evident, thus overlooking the introduction of some indigenous cultural background information. Take, for instance, a book section about the four inventions, featuring papermaking and a detailed account of the papermaking process. I believe there should be a certain level of ideological and political awareness incorporated here. For example, disseminating Chinese culture through the lens and portrayal of foreign authors while providing

---

[66] Interview with T15 on 26 June 2020.
[67] Interview with T19 on 22 June 2020.

objective comparisons and analyses with Western culture. If both these elements are simultaneously present, I believe it could possibly enable students to deepen their comprehension of their own culture and acknowledge that China is also a remarkable country that we should take pride in."[68]

Some of the interviewed teachers believe that there are some problems in the current curriculum of English majors, and the root of the problem is that foreign language students lack "discipline" or "discipline nature." As T14 said, "Foreign language discipline is not like politics, history, law and other majors, which have professional knowledge. Where is the knowledge of foreign language discipline? In fact, it can be combined with a professional specialty. In order to reflect the discipline of foreign language, the curriculum should be structured in combination with literature, linguistics, culture and international relations."[69] From this point of view, if the foreign language discipline is framed accordingly, then intercultural competence is attributed with appropriate importance because most foreign languages are used in dealing with foreign cultures, and the language users themselves still have their own national culture. When the two cultures meet, how will the speaker choose the way and content of language expression to achieve effective two-way communication? Subject consciousness is an ability that language learners need to cultivate and possess. However, only a few interviewed teachers think of the problems from this perspective when reviewing and reflecting on the curriculum and teaching content of the whole specialty.

From the perspectives of the interviewed teachers of Comprehensive English, English Reading, English Writing and Intercultural Communication, the cultivation of intercultural competence must be reflected in the syllabus, classroom teaching contents

---

[68] Interview with T20 on 24 June 2020.
[69] Interview with T14 on 27 June 2020.

and teaching materials of the above English subjects. For example, T3 said that taking the second unit, *Two Kinds,* in the textbook **Intensive Reading 5** for the third-year English Reading subject as an example, this article was written by Tan Amy, a famous Chinese-American writer, about the life of the first and second generations of immigrants in the United States. The content reflects the cultural differences between China and the United States as viewed by people living in the United States. Especially in family education, for example, Chinese immigrant families care more about their children's achievements in various subjects at school, while American family education has different manifestations. Through comparison, students can analyze and understand the similarities and differences between their own culture and foreign cultures and the reasons behind the cultural differences.[70]

T1 believes that the cultivation of intercultural competence is reflected in students' thought, connotations and emotions. Take the unit *Gold Rush* with the background of the American gold rush explained to students as an example; first, "the novel tells about a boy who was born in a Roaring Camp of more than 100 people. After his birth, his mother died, and he was raised by others in the camp. Originally, all the men in this group were very rough and wild. At first, it was a very unfavorable environment for the boy, but as he grew up, people were no longer noisy, and their behavior and language became disciplined. In the article, the word 'decent' appears. The students discuss why they changed from such a rough lifestyle to this decent lifestyle. How do students view this problem and the gold rush in the United States in the context of that time? How do they view the overall situation of Chinese society at the time because many Chinese people were involved in smuggling activities? Then how do students view these problems? Later, the teachers will guide students to think deeply and analyze the social situation at home and abroad reflected by the gold rush from multiple angles. However, the problem is that there is no way to provide students with enough opportunities to

---

[70] Interview with T3 on 18 June 2020.

discuss and communicate with other students and teachers who are native English speakers (such as foreign teachers)."[71] T2, who teaches Intercultural Communication, and T7, who teaches comprehensive English, also expressed that the compulsory content of each core subject of the English major took up a large portion of their time. Consequently, many initially planned discussions and practical activities were often unable to be implemented.[72]

As previously stated, at least half of the teachers interviewed said that Intercultural Communication, a core subject of English majors, had great value. As T5 pointed out, for example, "this subject has also changed the practice that English majors pay one-sided attention to language knowledge and skills and ignore content learning. At the same time, the teaching materials and classroom teaching contents selected by teachers cover much essential theoretical knowledge, which lays a strong foundation for students' real intercultural communication in the future."[73] According to teachers T9 and T10, the textbook used in this subject Intercultural Communication published by the Dalian Institute of Foreign Languages[74] in 2010; the book is divided into 15 units: the first unit is the introduction, which introduces the basic knowledge of intercultural communication; units 2 to 7 mainly focus on communication, including how to understand communication, verbal communication, nonverbal communication and cross-gender communication; units 8 to 11 mainly focus on culture, including how to understand culture, cultural diversity, the impact of culture on cognition and cultural conflict; units 12 to 14 discuss intercultural communication in the context of education, etiquette and business negotiation; and, unit 15 puts forward some specific suggestions

---

[71] Interview with T1 on 18 June 2020.
[72] Interviews with T2 (on 10 July 2020) and T7 (on 6 July 2020).
[73] Interview with T5 on 3 July 2020.
[74] Dalian Institute of Foreign Languages is a specialized higher education institution located in Dalian, a major city and seaport in the Liaoning Province of northeastern China. Known for its focus on foreign language education, the institute offers a range of language programs and is recognized for its contribution to language training and cultural exchange. The institute's academic status is characterized by its emphasis on language studies, particularly in preparing students for international communication and careers in global contexts.

and opinions on how to improve intercultural communication. According to T5, the textbook contains a large number of authentic language materials to combine theory and practice. T5 said, "We still need to apply and analyze the intercultural communication theory through case analysis. I think this may better reflect its practice competence."

Therefore, T3 pointed out that she and some other teachers of Intercultural Communication would use the book 'Intercultural Business Communication: Cases and Analysis' in addition to the prescribed textbook. They lead students through relevant case studies, analyze authentic classic events, identify problems or difficult situations, analyze the cases, find reasons, and formulate a problem-solving plan. T3, T15 and T20 agreed that from students' usual homework or examination papers, they could see that some students would also master some theories after self-study or studying core subjects such as Intercultural Communication. For example, T15 mentioned in the interview, "I remember, in the process of correcting a paper, I saw that the students mentioned the relevant theories of intercultural communication, including high context, low context and communication distance. However, when they used these theories to analyze discourse or communication situations from another perspective, they did not combine the theory and analysis well. In fact, even if they did not use this theory, some theoretical guidance can also help students make this matter clear."[75]

In addition, T13 mentioned that the original intention of the Intercultural Communication subject was to rely on the content of intercultural communication that students pay close attention to, combine intercultural communication knowledge to guide students to carry out as many language communication activities as possible and

---

[75] Interview with T15 on 26 June 2020.

learn meaningful knowledge in language communication. This not only polishes language skills but also enriches required knowledge. [76] However, there are few opportunities for students to express themselves in class. "Students also say they need more practical opportunities and training to polish their language expression competence and intercultural competence. However, the practical opportunities offered in the classroom are still very limited," T18 said. [77]

7.5 Problems and Challenges Identified by the Interviewees

The majority of the interviewed teachers expressed the view that most present-day foreign language teachers, educational administrators, and curriculum developers possess only a cursory understanding of the development of intercultural competence. The respondents also reported that only a select few in the university's teaching staff thoroughly contemplate how to incorporate materials when devising classroom teaching content, which pedagogical methods to employ, or how to foster students' intercultural competence. This is also a significant factor contributing to the incomplete development and lack of serious focus on students' intercultural competence.

As mentioned before, the core subjects for English majors have been perceived as lacking clarity in purpose and application. Students struggle to relate the contents of the textbook to real-life scenarios. A critical aspect highlighted is the need to improve students' oral English expression competence, not just in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and intonation, but in their ability to genuinely master intercultural competence. A phenomenon observed is that students tend to favor and identify uncritically with the target language culture, sometimes even perceiving their own culture negatively. Teachers interviewed believe this bias might stem from an

---

[76] Interview with T13 on 30 June 2020.
[77] Interview with T18 on 2 July 2020.

overemphasis on popularizing the target language's culture without providing a balanced perspective of their own culture. T15 and T20 emphasize that while imparting foreign cultural knowledge, teachers should also ensure students understand their own cultural background. This would help foster a balanced understanding and pride in their own culture. Also, a significant concern raised by some teachers is the perceived lack of "discipline" in the English major curriculum. T14 suggests integrating elements of literature, linguistics, culture, and international relations to provide more depth to the discipline. This would, in turn, place appropriate emphasis on intercultural competence, crucial for meaningful interactions between different cultures.

Although most teachers acknowledge the significance of the Intercultural Communication subject, the challenge of intercultural competence development remains in its practical application. According to T16 and T18, Intercultural Communication as a core course for English majors indeed provides students with fundamental knowledge and understanding of intercultural competence. They also stated that studying this course helps students recognize similarities and differences among cultures, fostering their cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills. However, fully cultivating intercultural competence through just one course is limited.[78] Both teachers also listed and explained the limitations of the subject. As T16 and T18 stated, the course might explore cultural misunderstandings and biases, helping students develop critical cultural awareness and avoid stereotypes. Students can acquire basic strategies and techniques for intercultural communication, such as how to ask questions and give feedback. Also, the students can learn about basic features, values, and communication habits of different cultures, laying the groundwork for practical intercultural interactions. Although students gain much theoretical knowledge in class, they might lack ample opportunities to apply it, leaving them lacking genuine intercultural communication experiences. T16 expressed that "the timeframe and

---

[78] Interviews with T16 (on 23 June 2020) and T18 (on 2 July 2020).

content of a single course are limited, possibly only covering major or common cultural phenomena. A deeper understanding of each culture might still be lacking." T18 also said that "each student's learning attitude, interests, and abilities differ. Even within the same course, the knowledge and skills they acquire might vary. Cultivating intercultural competence requires prolonged learning and practice; a single course might not suffice."

The interviewed teachers also expressed that despite the rich content in textbooks, students often find it difficult to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations. Furthermore, the limited opportunities for students to interact and express themselves, particularly with native English speakers, further hinder their ability to hone their intercultural communication skills. In essence, while the Intercultural Communication subject is deemed valuable, there is a pressing need to enhance its practical relevance, provide more opportunities for interaction, and ensure a balanced understanding of both foreign and native cultures.

S21, who held the same view, also stated in the interview that much of the knowledge they have learned is not practical in real life, or some of the teaching materials and teaching content used by the teacher are outdated. For example, she and other students usually watch some variety shows in English-speaking countries that tell about recent events in English-speaking countries and the relatively new views and understanding of individuals from different cultures. It was revealed that the case materials selected by teachers in class and the content of the text were all about things from many years ago, which were somewhat outdated. Taking the Intercultural Communication subject as an example, S21 believes that knowledge of body language and sign language in non-verbal communication learned in the subject is almost entirely useless in daily life. As S21 stated, "On the one hand, they [the students] have little contact with native

English speakers. On the other hand, in the whole dialogue scene, the everyday language communication between speakers can achieve the purpose of effective communication without too much non-verbal communication."[79]

In addition, interviewees such as T3, T13, and T18 pointed out a deficiency in testing procedures for students' intercultural competence in the core subjects for English majors that they are acquainted with. They are unsure about the precise tools and methods that should be employed to assess students' intercultural competence or to evaluate the progress in nurturing students' intercultural competence.

Insights from the teachers interviewed also suggest that the significance of intercultural competence training is underappreciated in subjects beyond Intercultural Communication. The diminished value attributed to intercultural competence also corresponds to the curriculum, assignments, and examination material outlined by the educators. T3 explained this by using the final paper of Comprehensive English (Intensive Reading) as an example:

Part 1 generally features multiple-choice questions, contributing 15% of the overall score, and is broken down into three sections: Section A tests understanding and paraphrasing skills, where students select appropriate explanations for specified parts of the text ($5 \times 1\%=5\%$); Section B evaluates students' ability to identify rhetorical techniques like alliteration, exaggeration, personification, quotation, and euphemism ($5 \times 1\%=5\%$); and Section C concentrates on vocabulary, asking students to pick synonyms for underlined words or phrases ($5 \times 1\%=5\%$), as described by T3.[80]

[79] Interview with S21 on 15 July 2020.
[80] Interview with T3 on 18 June 2020.

The second segment of the exam, Part 2, typically requires students to define specific terms in English. As illustrated by a previous year's final exam papers shared by T13, this part could ask students to explain terms like The Cuban Revolution, Ed Sullivan, Virginia Adeline Woolf, Frankenstein, and Yellowstone. This section gauges the students' command over foreign cultural knowledge embedded in the textbook and texts.

Part 3 usually assesses reading comprehension, presenting four passages followed by multiple-choice questions. These encompass inference and attitude queries, and understanding of the author's perspectives, attitudes, or the objective facts outlined in the piece.

Part 4 typically focuses on translation, as exemplified by the materials provided by T3. Accounting for 30% of the total marks, it is divided into two subsections: Section A, translating a paragraph into Chinese (10%), and Section B, translating subsequent paragraphs into English (20%).

The final section, Part 5, is usually a writing exercise, accounting for 20% of the total marks. The specific requirements are as follows,

Write a composition of about 300 words on the following topic,

Using Tomorrow's Money

You are to write in three parts,

In the first part, state clearly what your view is.

In the second part, support your view with appropriate reasons.

In the last part, bring what you have written to a natural conclusion or a summary.

Marks are awarded for content, structure, grammar and number of words. Failure to follow the above instructions may result in a loss of marks.[81]

Some interviewed teachers, including T6, T9, and T17, who taught Comprehensive English, pointed out a similarity in the exam papers of Comprehensive English across different academic levels and years. It is clear that such exams predominantly feature objective questions. Except for essay writing in Part 5, all other exam questions have definitive answers, primarily concentrating on students' vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and written expression skills. As per the teachers' insights, the final grades for each core subject are largely determined by the final examination. Hence, a significant portion of the learning goals set by both students and teachers revolve around excelling in these final exams. As a result, most subjects do not prioritize the development of students' intercultural competence, critical thinking skills, and practical abilities called for in the talent training program.[82]

According to the interviewed teachers and students, TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-Band 4) and TEM-8 (Test for English Majors-Band 8) are critical English proficiency tests for English majors in China. The testing contents, categories and types of questions they involve have become a logical reference for the core curriculum of English majors. As noted above, the TEM-4 assesses second-year English major students' abilities in basic English skills, while TEM-8 is tailored for fourth-year students. Achieving these certificates offers students academic and career advantages. However, the exams predominantly test language skills and do not comprehensively assess intercultural competence. While the importance of these tests, especially TEM-4 and TEM-8, is recognized, they are challenging, with TEM-8's difficulty being likened to the GRE.

---

[81] Interview with T13 on 30 June 2020.
[82] Interviews with T6 (on 23 June 2020), T9 (on 29 June 2020) and T17 (on 31 June 2020).

The correlation between these tests and English major courses is strong. Nevertheless, despite their focus on language proficiency, the exams of the core subjects for English majors do not seem like they will offer a holistic measure of a student's intercultural competence.

More importantly, approximately 50% of the third- and fourth-year students interviewed believed that their biggest concern was the lack of vocabulary after learning several core subjects. On the one hand, they needed to increase their vocabulary to get better results in the final exam and TEM-4 and TEM-8, but on the other hand, they felt that the obstacles they encountered in the expression process had something to do with their lack of vocabulary. In reality, most of the interviewed students prioritize improving traditional language skills over intercultural competence, likely influenced by the syllabus and exam structure. Their focus remains on vocabulary, reading, listening, and translation rather than genuine intercultural interactions. Some also consider intercultural competence as an "extra bonus" in language learning, rather than a necessity. For instance, some students such as S14 and S17[83] believe that as long as they can speak English fluently, they can live and work in any English-speaking country without needing to delve deeply into the local culture and customs.

Several teachers interviewed, including T14 and T20, expressed that although intercultural competence is addressed during the teaching process of various core subjects for English majors, its impact on cultivating students' critical thinking skills, understanding of foreign and native cultures, and guidance on life and value outlook is not significantly evident.[84] T14 and T20 speculated that one reason could be the lack of explicit representation of intercultural competence in the syllabus, which is a primary

---

[83] Interview with S17 on 25 June 2020.
[84] Interviews with T14 (on 27 June 2020) andT20 (on 24 June 2020).

focus for students. T20 also stated, "In the course descriptions for English majors across various syllabi and guidance documents, I don't see clear guidelines on fostering students' intercultural competence through specific subjects and content. If guideline documents could delve deeper into a select group of subjects, framework subjects, and core subjects, they could allow teachers, university leaders, and curriculum designers to comprehend these subject connotations fully."

Correspondingly, most of the teachers interviewed share a common view that all components of subjects in the English majors, including writing, listening, intensive reading, extensive reading and so on, should involve the exercise and cultivation of intercultural competence. T20 also said, "In fact, each subject should include intercultural competence training, and the only difference may be to what degree it is implemented. It is impossible to completely solve this problem by relying on the Intercultural Communication subject alone. In the university, each subject involves different knowledge, but the learning outcomes are the same."[85]

Furthermore, most of the teachers interviewed believed that the acceptance of intercultural competence should also be reflected in the examination and homework. However, among the teachers interviewed, only T20 explored and experimented with how to test and cultivate students' intercultural competence through homework and assessment tasks. For example, she said, "I once asked students to read several articles and understand and think about the writing styles of these famous British and American writers. For example, Hemingway's style is very concise, and some writers' styles are ironic. Then, I would ask students to think and do research to find Chinese writers with the same writing style, then identify similarities and differences, analyze, elaborate on

---

[85] Interview with T20 on 24 June 2020.

and compare the writing styles of these Chinese and Western writers. Students were also asked to identify reasons for the formation of their respective styles, and summarize and think about how their commonness and individuality are reflected. I tend to reflect on attitude training or to think in intercultural competence through this process, so students can see the different styles of scholars in various countries and feel their national value and identity."[86] However, T20 believes that this assessment method can not effectively evaluate students' intercultural competence because it is too static and not multidimensional or three-dimensional and thus has substantial limitations.

Nevertheless, except for T20, almost none of the other interviewed teachers has assessed students' intercultural competence through an intercultural competence assessment tool or any other way. Among the teachers interviewed, only T3, an Intercultural Communication teacher, is spontaneously preparing scales and questionnaires to evaluate students' intercultural competence through various studies. As she reported, "I think my competence is still limited. This questionnaire and scale are formulated with reference to the achievements of some scholars at home and abroad. They have just started to do it and are not so targeted. Moreover, their research on the means and tools for evaluating intercultural competence is also very superficial but not extensive."[87] At the same time, among the teachers interviewed, T6 and T20, who participate in teaching management and several other teachers with more than ten years experience believe that they urgently need a standard, means or method to evaluate their students' intercultural competence and help them evaluate and reflect on their teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, the above teachers also noted that the teaching objectives related to cultivating intercultural competence in various subjects of English majors needed to be refined to lay a solid foundation and create conditions for front-line teachers to effectively cultivate students' intercultural competence.

---

[86] Interview with T20 on 24 June 2020.
[87] Interview with T3 on 18 June 2020.

To sum up, the data obtained from the interviewees suggest several key findings. Firstly, most of the interviewed teachers and students either lack a clear understanding of intercultural competence or have not received adequate training. Despite the emphasis placed on fostering intercultural competence for foreign language majors in China's national policy documents and guidelines, they lack explicit instructions, methods, and resources for implementing this cultivation. Furthermore, most teachers interviewed assert that the majority of educators on the front lines, including teachers, instructional managers, and curriculum designers, lack in-depth knowledge of assessing intercultural competence. There is an urgent need for a standard means or method to assess students' intercultural competence and to help these educators evaluate and reflect upon their teaching efficacy.

In addition, most students interviewed in this study responded positively to the core subject of Intercultural Communication for English majors. They felt that it offered them new insights into intercultural communication and equipped them with practical knowledge and skills for interacting with native English speakers. However, this subject also has some limitations. While the Intercultural Communication subject offers foundational knowledge and understanding of intercultural competence for students, to genuinely develop outstanding intercultural skills, students also need continuous learning and practice in other courses, practical activities, and daily life. Some interviewed teachers also reported that other subjects do not value intercultural competence training to the same extent as the Intercultural Communication subject.

Moreover, the interviewees believe that intercultural competence is not explicitly represented in the syllabus, contributing to its de-emphasis on homework assignments,

tests, and exam content. Findings also show that teachers believe they lack the time and motivation to focus on intercultural competence training due to students' lack of enthusiasm towards this area. This is because most students prioritize improving their vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, and English-Chinese translation skills, which they view as more urgent than cultivating intercultural competence. This perspective is likely influenced by intercultural competence not being overtly required or reflected in homework assignments, assessments, and exam tasks.

Furthermore, the interviewed teachers also acknowledged that various factors influence the practical effectiveness of implementing students' intercultural competence training. These factors include teacher preparedness, instructional materials, school resources, and the broader social and cultural environment.

In the subsequent chapter, a thorough review and discussion of the findings from this chapter and the preceding ones will be undertaken. This will primarily involve pinpointing the significant hurdles, issues, and challenges confronted by front-line educators. After this analysis, the researcher will provide potential solutions and propose strategies to address these challenges.

Chapter Eight:

Discussion and Conclusion

In the previous chapters, this research first presents an overview of the history of FLT in China since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The period from 1978 to the present day, the reform and opening-up period, is emphasized due to the significant developments in higher education during this time. In addition, the researcher highlights the critical role of foreign language education after 1978, often regarded as a "political task." The role of intercultural competence in FLT, especially in the era of globalization, is also discussed extensively. As the winds of globalization swept across the world, a new layer was added to the narrative - the importance of intercultural competence development in FLT. Chinese people found themselves amidst an increasingly diverse range of cultures, fostering interactions with global communities. The emergence of China's "Belt and Road" initiative in 2013 further fueled the necessity of intercultural competence development in FLT. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, the researcher observed a dilemma: intercultural competence teaching and assessment outcomes were not as satisfactory as they should have been. This marked a crucial turning point in the story, signifying an urgent need to identify the obstacles in teaching and assessing intercultural competence in China's FLT.

Comprehending these challenges inspired the author to explore the relationships among culture, language, and communication. This exploration led to a voyage through a rich body of literature that delved into the concepts and assessment strategies of intercultural competence. One model in particular, developed by Byram in 1997, stood out among

the rest. Comprehensive and detailed, this model was chosen as the compass to guide the current research study. However, the literature revealed a daunting task. How could intercultural competence development be effectively and systematically integrated into the FLT agenda in China? In other words, the narrative shifted to the challenges of effectively integrating intercultural competence development into China's FLT agenda. The researcher noted that previous studies had predominantly focused on the difficulties of teaching intercultural competence but had largely overlooked the analysis of national policies, guidelines, and syllabuses implemented by the Chinese government. This observation marked an important point, prompting the researcher to conduct a comprehensive examination of these overlooked aspects. To solve this puzzle, the researcher meticulously crafted a detailed plan employing qualitative research methods, identifying four policy-making communities: national policymakers, tertiary educational institutions, teaching staff, and students.

As mentioned before, X International Studies University (XISU) was chosen as the study's stage, and data collection involved gathering documentary evidence and conducting interviews. So, one aspect of this exploration led to the analysis of national policies on foreign language education that had evolved since 1978, focusing on the latest curriculum standards of tertiary English education. Another part of the quest was an analysis of the locally developed curriculum and syllabuses of the English major at XISU, which are based on the national guidelines and requirements. Meanwhile, voices from the teachers and students of the English major at XISU echoed through the halls. These interviews provided valuable insights into their understanding and perception of intercultural competence, marking an important milestone towards enhancing intercultural competence teaching in China's FLT framework. The interview findings revealed the perceptions of intercultural competence, leading to an insightful analysis and discussion of FLT policies, guidelines, and curricula formulated by China's national education authorities. The narrative culminated with a set of research questions aiming

to uncover the understanding and evolution of intercultural competence, its teaching and learning objectives, assessment framework, and criteria.

The research questions crafted in the context of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. How do education authorities define intercultural competence? Is their understanding of intercultural competence clear and evident in official documents?

2. How has the understanding of intercultural competence by policymakers and curriculum designers evolved, particularly since China opened up to the world in 1978?

3. What teaching and learning objectives, assessment framework, and criteria related to intercultural competence are required by the education authorities? How do these differ from Byram's model, and what are the reasons for such differences?

4. How do frontline educators perceive intercultural competence? Where do they acquire their knowledge about it, and how do they appraise their own intercultural competence?

5. How do frontline educators view the practicality of the guidelines and curriculum implemented by the education authorities?

6. How do they apply the intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives in their teaching activities?

7. How do they design assessments to evaluate students' intercultural competence, and how closely aligned are these assessments with national guidelines?

8. How do educators evaluate the outcomes of their intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives, and to what extent do they believe students achieve the learning goals of intercultural competence?

9. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the assessment methods or frameworks in use, and what reasons underlie these perceptions?

In this chapter, therefore, as the final act of this research saga, the researcher aims to seek answers to these questions, hoping to pinpoint the challenges in FLT within Chinese tertiary education. The goal is to propose potential improvements and recommendations for policy, pedagogy, and assessment to address these issues, thereby enriching the field of FLT in China.

8.1 Major Problems and Challenges of Cultivating Students' Intercultural Competence

To commence, upon reviewing national policy documents, it becomes apparent that key educational authorities in China, such as the Ministry of Education (MOE), acknowledge the significance of intercultural competence in the realm of language education. The term "intercultural competence" was first mentioned in the College English Curriculum Requirements (2007), which serves as the official guideline for college English instruction in the country. Despite this, the document emphasizes that the objective of English education in China should be to "develop students' comprehensive English utilization skills, particularly in listening and speaking, to satisfy the nation's social, economic, and cultural exchange needs while fostering students' capacity to engage in cross-cultural communication."

By reviewing the other national policies, the researcher found that it can be inferred that intercultural competence, including understanding, respect for, and ability to interact effectively with different cultures, is a desired outcome of college Foreign

language education in China. As can be seen, however, there is less detail about the specific components of intercultural competence and no information about how to teach and assess it from the national policy documents.

However, it is important to highlight that the emphasis on intercultural competence within language education in China is on the rise, with education authorities striving to incorporate it into foreign language curricula. In the foreign language education domain, the model put forward by Michael Byram (2014) stands out as one of the most recognized and universally adopted frameworks. As described earlier, Byram's model includes the following five components:

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

Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and others' countries and of the general processes of societal and individual interactions.

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

Skills of discovery and interaction: the ability to acquire new knowledge of culture and cultural practices and the ability to use one's knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

Critical cultural awareness: the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

The specifics of how intercultural competence is defined and operationalized in Chinese higher education would be best answered through a detailed review of official Chinese educational policies and guidelines. However, it was initially and formally defined quite recently in the Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020. This document provided more explicit and clearly delineated competence requirements for English majors compared to earlier policy guiding documents, as follows:

Respect the world's cultural diversity, have intercultural empathy and critical cultural awareness;

Master the basic theoretical knowledge and analytical methods of intercultural research and understand the basic characteristics, similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures;

Be able to interpret and evaluate different cultural phenomena, texts and works and can carry out effective and appropriate intercultural communication;

Be able to help people from different cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively across cultures.

As can be seen, Chinese foreign language education shares some similar components compared with Byram's model but potentially differs in its emphasis or implementation process. Furthermore, Chinese terms tend to be broader and elusive. As a result, it is likely that Chinese policymakers and curriculum developers may not have a clear grasp of the concept of intercultural competence, which could explain why it was not explicitly represented in the official discourse, especially before the release of the "Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020." Several reasons could contribute to this.

For instance, China's high-stakes, exam-centric educational culture may lean more towards linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) than intercultural competence, regardless of its prominence in official curricula. Consider the TEM-4 and TEM-8, for example. Organized and executed by the National Steering Committee for Teaching Foreign Languages, the National Steering Committee for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Universities, and Beijing Foreign Studies University under the supervision of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, PRC, these exams set the national standard for English proficiency among college students. The primary objectives include ensuring quality standards, measuring and providing guidance, motivating students, and assessing students' English skills, including their ability to use language in various aspects like listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Consequently, for many English majors, passing these exams may be a prerequisite for graduation.

Simultaneously, as discussed in the previous chapter, TEM-4 and TEM-8 are significant components of the English major curriculum, creating a reciprocal relationship where curriculum design affects exam performance and exam performance affects academic progress. As per the interviewees, many English majors and teachers align their teaching and learning objectives with the TEM-4 and TEM-8 exam requirements.

However, it is important to note that despite covering some aspects of cross-cultural knowledge, these exams (CET-4, CET-6, TEM-4, TEM-8) primarily do not aim to measure or assess students' intercultural competence. Evaluating intercultural competence requires a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach, including self-reflection, critical thinking, and interaction in real-world intercultural settings. While CET-4, CET-6, TEM-4, and TEM-8 scores can reflect a student's language proficiency, they do not fully capture their intercultural competence.

As described above, the teaching objectives of all subjects of English majors at a local level, as the researcher stated, are mainly based on the teaching objectives of those documents, including the National Standards for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English Majors 2018, and combines the school's English major talent training plan and curriculum syllabus. Nevertheless, the school's English major talent training plan and curriculum syllabus and the course evaluation systems, as shown in the previous chapter, are designed in accordance with all the provisions and requirements for the following five documents, which include the National Standard for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Colleges and Universities 2018 (National Standards for Quality of Undergraduate Teaching in English majors 2018), the Teaching Guidelines for Foreign Languages and Literature Undergraduate Majors of General Tertiary Universities 2020 - Teaching Guidelines for Teaching English Majors, Talent Training Program and Syllabus for English Majors required in the Major Catalogue and Introduction of Undergraduate Courses of Common Colleges and Universities 2012. These documents, however, as shown in the research, do not play a crucial role in cultivating the intercultural competence of foreign language undergraduates.

Overall, existing national-level policy and guidance documents only provide a framework and goals for developing intercultural competence in foreign language students and ensure the education system can meet the goals. Currently, policy documents at the national level do articulate expectations for intercultural competence and indicate the level of competence that students should achieve, helping to ensure educational coherence and provide overall teaching objectives for both students and teachers. However, such policy and guidance documents did not provide any methods and resources to guide teachers on how to teach and assess intercultural competence,

including suggestions on curriculum design, demonstrations of teaching methods, and assessment tools and techniques. Although these documents emphasize, through official means, the importance of intercultural competence for modern society and a globalized world, they lack specific requirements and implementation approaches. Therefore, if national policy documents and guidelines do not provide relevant information and references on intercultural competence, it becomes challenging for school-level curriculum designers and policymakers to prioritize its training. They would struggle to establish clear teaching objectives, programs, and talent training plans related to defining, cultivating, and assessing students' intercultural competence. As a result, some major problems and challenges of cultivating students' intercultural competence faced by front-line educators came to light.

Firstly, the majority of educators on the front lines are not thoroughly acquainted with the concept of intercultural competence and have not received comprehensive training in this area, even though some teachers clearly understand its concept and importance. For instance, more than half of the teachers interviewed in this study admitted their uncertainty about having successfully acquired intercultural competence. Additionally, some teaching staff learned about the concept of intercultural competence only through their college subject, Intercultural Communication. According to a few interviewees, their enhancement of intercultural competence primarily came from communicating with colleagues, foreign teachers, or international friends and from visiting foreign affiliated colleges and universities after entering the professional world, rather than during their four-year undergraduate English major course. After those kinds of experiences, they felt the difference and improvement in this aspect of the process of communication and expression, they felt that they had gained a deeper understanding of intercultural competence.

Secondly, the findings reveal that a large number of present foreign language teachers, educational managers, and curriculum designers have only a basic understanding of assessing intercultural competence. Among the respondents, merely a handful of university teachers thoughtfully contemplate how to incorporate relevant materials into their teaching content, which pedagogical methods to employ, or how to nurture students' intercultural competence. This is one of the main reasons why students' intercultural competence is not fully developed and fails to receive the necessary attention.

Simultaneously, it was found that there is a lack of evaluation methods for students' intercultural competence in the core subjects of English majors that they are familiar with. These educators are uncertain about the specific tools and methods to assess students' intercultural competence or evaluate its cultivation. However, most teachers interviewed in this study believed that acceptance of intercultural competence should be mirrored in exams and assignments. Among the interviewed teachers, only one member of the teaching staff, who also holds the position of Vice Dean of the School of English, explored and experimented with ways to evaluate and cultivate students' intercultural competence through assignments and assessment tasks. Nevertheless, her efforts did not bear much fruit as the assessment method failed to effectively evaluate students' intercultural competence, as it lacked multi-dimensionality, rendering it significantly limited.

Hence, most respondents in this study emphasize their urgent need for a standard tool or method to assess their students' intercultural competence and help them evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching. More importantly, teaching objectives related to cultivating intercultural competence in various subjects of English majors

need to be detailed to establish a solid foundation and provide conditions for frontline teachers to foster students' intercultural competence effectively.

Thirdly, most current students do not have a systematic understanding of intercultural competence. However, some students believe that cultivating intercultural competence is very important for foreign language learning as the purpose of studying foreign languages is to communicate and exchange with people from different cultures or nationalities. Generally, students who majored in English in China have gained some limited understanding of the meaning of intercultural communication and intercultural competence after they have completed the compulsory subject only for third-year students, namely, Intercultural Communication, and believe that intercultural competence is the ability to communicate with people from different countries or nationalities effectively. Also, more than half of the students interviewed in this study responded positively to the core subject of Intercultural Communication for English majors as they felt that they had an unprecedented understanding of intercultural communication through this subject and gained some useful knowledge and skills for communicating with native English speakers.

However, frontline educators cannot successfully cultivate students' intercultural competence by only offering a single third-year subject that incorporates the concept and knowledge of intercultural communication. As mentioned earlier, more than half of the students interviewed in this study stated that their current knowledge does not enable them to deeply understand the commonalities and disparities between their native culture and the culture of the target language. They also mentioned that their English learning has not enabled them to adopt the thought processes of native English speakers, which affects their ability to communicate effectively. Another contributing factor, as stated by the interviewed teachers, is the inability to offer students ample

opportunities for discussion and communication with peers from different countries and teachers who are native English speakers. Moreover, as noted by interviewed teaching staff, every subject should encompass training in intercultural competence, with the only variation being the degree of its implementation. The issue cannot be entirely resolved by solely relying on the Intercultural Communication subject. While each subject imparts different knowledge in the university setting, the learning outcomes should be consistent.

Furthermore, insights gathered from teacher interviews suggest that the emphasis on intercultural competence training in subjects outside of Intercultural Communication is insufficient. They posited that one potential explanation could be the absence of explicit inclusion of intercultural competence in the curriculum. They also linked insufficient recognition of intercultural competence to the content of homework, tests, and examinations set by educators. The findings related to assessments and examinations reveal a focus on objective questions with standardized answers, emphasizing students' vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and written expression skills during the design of final examinations. As per the interviewed teachers, the final grades for each core subject predominantly rely on these final examinations. Hence, a substantial part of the learning goals set by students for themselves and the teaching objectives established by teachers revolve around securing high scores in the final examinations. As a result, most subjects do not prioritize cultivating students' intercultural competence, critical thinking skills, and the practical abilities specified in the talent training program and syllabus.

Additionally, data drawn from this study reveal that teachers feel a lack of adequate time and motivation to concentrate on fostering students' intercultural competence. One contributing factor might be students' attitudes toward intercultural competence and

cultural instruction in general. Based on the student interviews, it appears that some students do not view intercultural competence as critical for their learning, as they fail to see its relevance in their language acquisition process. Interviewed students also expressed that although their vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, and English-Chinese translation skills had improved after two to three years of studying core subjects, these skills still required enhancement. Notably, many stated that their oral expression did not improve significantly compared to other areas. Around half of the interviewed students felt that their primary challenge was a deficiency in vocabulary after learning several core subjects.

On the one hand, the interviewed students needed to expand their vocabulary to perform better in final exams and the TEM-4 and TEM-8 examinations. On the other hand, they associated their communication barriers with their limited vocabulary. Consequently, teachers and students feel that intercultural competence should be learned in genuine situations or that it is not a crucial skill for language learning.

Moreover, the practical efficacy of implementing student intercultural competence training is impacted by various factors such as teacher preparedness, instructional materials, institutional resources, and the socio-cultural environment. For instance, some students interviewed for this study noted that a significant portion of the knowledge they acquired does not apply to real-world situations or that the instructional materials and content employed by the teacher are outdated. Students usually need to engage with contemporary English-speaking media content, including shows that report on recent events in English-speaking countries or present current perspectives from individuals across different cultures. However, the class discussions and textbook content shared by their teachers often referred to outdated material, primarily referencing events from years ago, and the teaching content about Western cultures was

exclusively relevant to the United States and the United Kingdom. Some interviewed students expressed their wish to develop a profound competence to embrace and adapt to cultures beyond their native one. They also hoped to foster a tolerant and accepting attitude towards foreign cultures through their coursework and activities, ultimately facilitating genuine mutual respect and equal, authentic communication with others in the future.

To sum up, based on research findings and related discussions, the researcher believes that, at present, the dilemmas facing the cultivation of intercultural competence in foreign language majors in Chinese universities mainly include the following aspects:

1. Lack of understanding of the term "intercultural competence" among foreign language teachers: Some teachers do not have an adequate understanding of intercultural competence, and thus fail to teach students about different cultures effectively and, as a result make it difficult for students to understand and communicate with people from other cultures. Intercultural competence involves not only the understanding of different cultures but also effective communication in different cultural settings. If teachers fail to teach this ability, students may encounter problems and may have misunderstandings or conflicts when communicating with people from different cultures. At the same time, teachers' lack of understanding of intercultural competence prevents them from designing intercultural subjects that are rich in depth and breadth. In addition, understanding and evaluating different cultures requires critical thinking. If teachers do not have an adequate understanding of intercultural competence, they may not be able to teach students how to view their own culture and other cultures with a critical perspective, thus limiting students' development of mindset and independent thinking.

2. Limitations in teaching resources: Although Chinese colleges and universities strive to provide English language teaching materials that cover a variety of cultural contexts,

these materials may not fully reflect the complexity and diversity of the target culture due to the inherent complexity of the language. Also, although some colleges and universities have begun introducing original teaching materials, it is still a challenge for students and teachers because the cultural content in these materials may require specialized knowledge to understand and explain.

3. One-sidedness of cultural understanding: Intercultural competence is a complex set of abilities that includes language proficiency, communicative skills, cultural knowledge and understanding, and the ability to adjust and adapt to different cultural contexts. For English education in Chinese colleges and universities, there are subjects on the cultures of British and American countries, but the extent to which intercultural education is truly achieved can vary with teachers and schools. Most teachers place too much emphasis on teaching the cultures of British and American countries and neglect the cultures of other English-using countries in a global context. For example, the cultures of countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India are also important, and English in each of these places is also distinctive.

4. Teacher training: Many teachers lack sufficient cultural sensitivity or practical experience in intercultural communication, which affects their ability to teach intercultural competence. For example, teachers with no firsthand experience in different cultural environments may have difficulty teaching students how to communicate effectively in authentic intercultural communication. In addition, it is difficult for teachers with a conventional mindset about teaching methods and philosophy to transition from teaching language to teaching intercultural competence.

5. Teaching methods and content: Teachers focus too much on teaching grammar and vocabulary at the expense of teaching context, pragmatics, and cultural background, which causes students to ignore cultural differences in their understanding and use of language.

6. Students' motivation and attitudes: Most students are more concerned with English grammar and vocabulary and other skills including reading, listening, writing, speaking and translation skills, and neglect the importance of intercultural competence. On the other hand, students feel uneasy or confused about exposure to and understanding different cultures, which creates obstacles to active participation in intercultural learning.

7. Assessment methods: No valid method exists to assess students' intercultural competence, making it difficult for teachers to know whether their instruction improves students' intercultural understanding and skills.

8. Limited opportunities for practice in intercultural communication: The most effective way to learn a new culture is through direct cultural immersion and hands-on experience. However, many students do not have opportunities to travel or study in English-speaking countries, limiting their chances of gaining authentic intercultural experience. At the same time, students also have difficulty understanding and mastering intercultural competence if schools or programs do not provide ample opportunities for intercultural communication to allow students to experience other cultures.

8.2 Proposed Solutions to Existing Problems and Challenges

In the researcher's opinion, to address the issues, the national policy documents and guidelines need to be updated by resetting the standards and expectations of developing and assessing intercultural competence in foreign language disciplines and majors, and elevating the understanding of the concept of intercultural competence among the teachers and students in Chinese universities. However, these require both diversified and sustained efforts.

The first thing is to clarify educational goals in the policies and guidelines at the national level. Guiding and policy documents at the national level need to set clear goals for intercultural education and require universities to explicitly include intercultural competence as one of the core goals of foreign language education and reflect it in curriculum design and teaching assessment. Take English majors as an example, most of the teachers interviewed in this study share a common view that all components of subjects in the English majors, including writing, listening, intensive reading, extensive reading and so on, should involve the exercise and cultivation of intercultural competence. Some of the teachers interviewed said that although the cultivation of intercultural competence would be involved in the teaching process of various core subjects of English majors, the cultivation of students' critical thinking, the understanding of foreign cultures and their mother tongue culture, as well as the correct guidance of students' outlook on life and values, its degree and effect were not obvious. As mentioned before, in the course descriptions of English Majors in various syllabuses and guidance documents, the front-line educators do not see how to cultivate students' intercultural competence through which subjects and content. Therefore, the national guiding documents are also expected to study and express a particular group of subjects, framework subjects and core subjects containing intercultural competence training at a deeper level, which can let teachers, school and college leaders, and curriculum designers clearly understand and be able to reach the teaching objectives and goals of the foreign language courses.

Second, the country's educational department needs to form policies requiring universities to train language teachers in intercultural teaching to enhance their intercultural understanding and teaching skills and provide students with suggestions, training opportunities and workshops on intercultural understanding and communication. In order to solve the fundamental problem, it is necessary to provide teachers with more systematic intercultural competence training with the support and

facilitation of the government and schools. Also, the goal of the training should be to help teachers understand different cultures and enhance their intercultural communication skills to provide an open, inclusive, and pluralistic learning environment for their students and effectively guide them to explore and understand different cultures. Combining the general principles and practices of intercultural teaching given by Byram (1997), Hofstede (1984), and Moran (2001), the researcher believes that the following are potentially effective strategies that national policymakers can adopt to instruct foreign language educational institutions to teach foreign language teachers how to develop students' intercultural competence. These strategies include:

1. Emphasizing teaching culture: emphasizing that language teaching is not just about teaching grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, but also including teaching culture. Teachers need to understand that different languages reflect different ways of thinking and cultural values.

2. Introducing intercultural communication theories: introducing relevant intercultural communication theories, such as Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and Edward T. Hall's high- and low-context theory, in training to help teachers understand how cultural differences affect communication.

3. Providing culturally diverse materials: encouraging teachers to use instructional materials from different cultural backgrounds, including movies, music, literature, and news. This not only exposes students to diverse cultures but also helps them to understand language use in different cultural contexts.

4. Role-playing activities: by simulating different intercultural communication scenarios, teachers can experience and understand the difficulties that cultural differences may bring, thus teaching students how to handle similar situations.

5. Exchange and reflection: encouraging teachers to share their teaching experience and reflect on the challenges they have encountered when teaching intercultural communication so as to learn from each other.

6. Providing cross-cultural teaching methods: introduce and provide training on different teaching methods, such as comparative methods (comparing two or more cultures), contextual simulation, and case study methods, to help teachers carry out intercultural teaching more effectively.

7. Guiding teachers to focus on global issues: encouraging teachers to incorporate global issues and themes into their teaching to help students develop a global perspective.

At the same time, to elevate students' intercultural competence, the national policy and guidance documents could also advise the school, faculty, curriculum designers and teachers to work together to develop scientific programs, content, methods, and assessment systems in conjunction with Micheal Byram's model. As mentioned earlier, Michael Byram, in his work Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997), pioneered a model for assessing and teaching intercultural communicative competence. Again, the model includes five key skills or elements: Knowledge, Skills of interpreting and relating, Skills of discovery and interaction, Attitudes, Critical cultural awareness, and Education. According to Byram (1997, 2014) and numerous other scholars, this model can be used not only for instructional design but also for assessing students' intercultural competence. Based on this model, teachers can design instructional activities that include culturally diverse elements and practices to assess students' understanding and critical thinking about different cultures and performance in intercultural interactions. Also, teachers can use the model to assess the effectiveness of their teaching in enhancing students' intercultural communicative competence.

Based on Michael Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, the following are some specific instructional methods that the researcher believes school-level guideline makers, teacher training providers, and curriculum designers could use to guide the implementation:

Knowledge: Introduce materials from the target language and culture, such as literature, movies, news, and music in the course to expose students to various aspects of the culture. At the same time, encourage students to learn about and reflect on their own culture.

Skills of interpreting and relating: Guide students to compare and contrast different cultural phenomena so that they can understand and explain cultural differences. This can be achieved through discussions, group projects, writing assignments, etc.

Skills of discovery and interaction: Design practical intercultural interaction activities that give students the opportunity to interact directly with people from other cultures. This may include language exchanges, study trips, cross-cultural projects, etc.

Attitudes: Critical cultural awareness: Encourage students to look at various cultural phenomena, including their own culture, with a critical point of view. This may require open discussions, reflective journals, essays, and other activities.

Education: Design activities or courses to give students the opportunity to apply their intercultural skills. For example, they may participate in a project that requires intercultural communication or go on a short-term study trip to a country where the target language is spoken.

Byram (1997) also noted that students' intercultural competence can be assessed through observations, tests, projects, and essays. Government departments as well as individual institutions in China can guide teachers to effectively assess students' intercultural competence through various training sessions and the introduction of relevant documents. Specifically, teachers can first evaluate whether students can establish effective communication with people from other cultural backgrounds based on understanding and accepting cultural differences by observing their performance in class discussions and group activities as well as in actual intercultural interactions.

Second, tests and questionnaires can also be used as an effective method to assess students' cultural knowledge. First, teachers can design multiple-choice, true/false questions or clozes to assess students' cultural knowledge. For example, a teacher might ask, "What is the etiquette in public places in Japanese culture?" Or "How do people in the United States usually express their job satisfaction?" Questions like these can help teachers assess students' knowledge of specific cultural facts and customs. Teachers can also design open-ended questions that allow students to describe and explain cultural phenomena in their own words. These types of questions can help teachers gain a deeper understanding of their student's knowledge of culture. For example, teachers might ask students to describe and explain the main differences between table manners in France and China. In addition, teachers can design a cultural knowledge questionnaire asking students about their perceptions and understandings of a particular culture. This questionnaire can include a number of statements about that culture, and students would need to choose whether they agree with those statements. For example, one statement might be, "In India, people generally believe that family is more important than one's career." Students' responses can help teachers understand their perceptions and understanding of this culture. These methods should be based on the instructional goals of the different courses and students' grade levels and abilities. Different types of tests

and questionnaires can provide different types of information, so teachers must use various methods to assess students' cultural knowledge holistically.

According to some previous studies, including those by Deardorff (2006), Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010), and Fraenkel et al. (2011), the Self-Report Questionnaire is also a common assessment tool that can be used to assess students' perceptions of their intercultural competence, including their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The following are some specific steps and suggestions:

1. Define the objectives: first, define what information the teacher wants to obtain from the questionnaire. Some teachers may be interested in specific knowledge of the students, such as their understanding of a particular culture, or maybe more interested in their skills and attitudes, such as their communicative competence in different cultural contexts or their attitudes toward cultural diversity.

2. Design questions: design the questionnaire questions based on objectives. The questions can be closed-ended (e.g., scale or multiple-choice) or open-ended (e.g., short answer). Scale questions allow students to self-assess their competence in a specific area, e.g., "On a five-point scale, how well do you think you understand Chinese culture?" Short-answer questions may allow students to describe their experiences and perspectives in detail, e.g., "Describe an experience in which you successfully interacted with someone from a different cultural background."

3. Deliver the questionnaire: distribute the questionnaire to students to fill out. This can be done in class or through an online survey tool.

4. Analyze results: collect and analyze students' answers. Quantitative answers (e.g., answers to scale questions) can be analyzed through statistical methods. Qualitative answers (e.g., answers to short-answer questions) require more in-depth reading and coding to understand students' perspectives and experiences.

5. Feedback on results: give feedback on results to students and others involved (e.g., other teachers or school administrators). This can help students understand their progress and help educators improve their teaching.

However, while self-report questionnaires can provide valuable information, they also have limitations. For example, students may overestimate or underestimate their abilities, or may give answers that they think teachers wish to hear rather than their true opinions. Therefore, it is better to use self-report questionnaires in conjunction with other assessment methods (e.g., observation or work assessment) to gain a broader picture.

Educators should utilize projects and papers to evaluate students' critical thinking abilities and intercultural competence. It is worth highlighting that there is a significant interconnection between critical thinking skills and intercultural competence, with both being essential attributes for Chinese college students. Simultaneously, developing critical thinking skills is instrumental in fostering intercultural competence. Essentially, critical thinking refers to the capability of logical and rational thought, encompassing skills such as analysis, evaluation, and problem-solving.

According to Paul and Elder (2010), an effectively developed critical thinker poses important questions and problems, defining them with clarity and precision; collects and evaluates pertinent data, utilizing abstract concepts for effective interpretation; arrives at logical conclusions and solutions, which are assessed against pertinent criteria and standards; maintains open-mindedness when considering alternative systems of thought, acknowledging and evaluating their assumptions, implications, and practical

outcomes as required; and communicates efficaciously with others to deduce solutions for complex issues. This definition is significant because critical thinking necessitates informed evaluation of data, arguments, and evidence while obliging the capacity to spot errors in thought processes and decision-making across various circumstances. It underlines comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and innovation and serves as the foundation for informed decision-making across multiple contexts, including cross-cultural ones. Therefore, critical thinking can assist in comprehending and analyzing data and viewpoints from diverse cultural backgrounds more profoundly, thereby facilitating more sensible decision-making in cross-cultural communication.

Likewise, having intercultural competence can help us better understand the thinking patterns and behavioral habits in different cultures and thus improve our critical thinking skills. We often need to face new challenges and problems in cross-cultural environments. Critical thinking skills can help us better analyze problems and develop innovative solutions. At the same time, having intercultural competence allows us to see problems from a broader perspective and thus solve them better. Critical thinking skills require us to evaluate different perspectives and evidence fairly and openly, which is an essential foundation for respect and understanding of others in cross-cultural communication. At the same time, developing intercultural competence requires us to think critically about our cultural perceptions and biases. Thus, critical thinking skills and intercultural competence are mutually reinforcing, and combining the two allows us to live and work more effectively in a diverse world. We can also say that developing critical thinking skills is an important means of enhancing intercultural competence.

Therefore, policymakers should constantly stress in various guidelines the importance of developing these two competencies along with specific strategies for developing them, such as requiring students to read and analyze texts, a process that includes not

only comprehending the content but also critically analyzing the researcher's point of view, writing style, and the underlying meaning of the text. Teachers can design presentation tasks, for example, asking students to give an oral presentation or participate in a debate; they can also design open-ended writing tasks and ask students to write an essay or report in which they present and support their views on a topic or issue; encourage students to understand and analyze different cultural phenomena from a critical perspective to compare the customs of different cultures or analyze a film or book depicting another culture; encourage students to reflect on their language learning process, how they solve problems they encounter in language learning, how they use language to express their thoughts and feelings, and so on. According to the researcher's personal language course teaching experiences in universities in Australia and China, such tasks help develop and polish students' critical reading and analytical skills. At the same time, it requires them to use critical thinking to form and express their own opinions, as well as to listen to and critically evaluate the opinions of others, and also help them better understand and refine their own learning methods, allowing them to think deeply, analyze problems, form their own points of view, and reflect on their own learning processes in the opportunity to enhance their critical thinking skills and thus advance their intercultural competence.

On top of this, and more importantly, the education authority should also form policies or guidelines to guide and help the course designers in universities to develop a systematic course evaluation system so that students can better develop and test their intercultural competence through scientific and reasonable assessments, tests and examinations. In order to achieve such an objective, the researcher believes that the following principles need to be taken into account by policymakers when formulating curricula, talent training programs and teaching requirements.

First and foremost, according to scholars such as Brown (2004), Fulcher & Davidson (2007), and Bachman & Palmer (2010), when formulating the evaluation system of the language major courses, the following principles should be taken into consideration.

1. Comprehensiveness: the evaluation system should cover all core language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as intercultural competence. Evaluation of language knowledge (including grammar, vocabulary, and so on.) and language application (e.g., communication and problem-solving skills) should also be considered.

2. Fairness: the assessment system must be fair and treat all students equally. It should be as minimally subjective as possible and fair to all students in its implementation.

3. Validity: the evaluation system should be able to accurately reflect students' language proficiency and their progress through the program. It needs to be properly tested and revised to ensure its validity.

4. Guidance: the assessment system should not only evaluate students' prior learning but also provide guidance for future learning. It should be able to give students feedback about their strengths and weaknesses and how they can improve.

5. Practicality: the evaluation system should consider realistic constraints, including time, resources, and feasibility. It needs to be implemented effectively in practice.

6. Transparency: the evaluation system and criteria should be clear to both students and teachers. They should be aware of the criteria and process of evaluation and how to improve their performance.

7. Consistency: the assessment system should be consistent with the course objectives and teaching methods. It should reflect the skills and knowledge in the curriculum.

All of the above principles should be considered in designing and implementing the assessment system as they will help create a system that can accurately, fairly, and practically assess students' language skills.

Designing an assessment package for foreign language majors in universities involves a thoughtful process, considering various dimensions of language learning. Below are some general steps to guide this process according to existing scholarship, including that by Fulcher & Davidson (2007), Bachman & Palmer (2010), and Suskie (2018):

1. Define Learning Objectives: Clear learning objectives must be established at the outset. This includes defining the linguistic (such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) and non-linguistic (cultural awareness, critical thinking, and so on.) skills students are expected to achieve.

2. Select Assessment Methods: Choose a range of assessment methods that accurately measure the defined learning objectives. This may include formal exams, essays, oral presentations, group projects, and participation in class discussions. Consider incorporating formative assessments (ongoing feedback to aid learning) and summative assessments (evaluating learner's mastery at the end of an instructional period).

3. Design Assessment Tasks: Develop specific tasks for each chosen method of assessment. For example, in an oral presentation, students could be asked to discuss cultural nuances in a foreign film. These tasks should be varied and engaging to maintain student interest and motivation.

4. Establish Grading Criteria: Define clear grading rubrics for each assessment task. These criteria should align with the learning objectives and be communicated to students in advance.

5. Ensure Reliability and Validity: The assessments should be reliable (consistently measuring learning outcomes) and valid (accurately measuring what they are intended

to measure). This may involve piloting assessments or using established assessments when available.

6. Provide Feedback: Constructive feedback should be provided to students, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. This supports their ongoing learning and development.

7. Review and Adjust: Regularly review the effectiveness of assessments. Seek student feedback and adjust the assessments regularly to ensure they align with course objectives and effectively measure student learning.

In light of the discourse on the principles and methodologies for designing an assessment system, it is paramount for educational authorities to spearhead the development of policies or guidelines for foreign language majors in universities. The crux lies in fostering a holistic course evaluation system that scientifically and judiciously assesses students' intercultural competence. Adherence to the principles of comprehensiveness, fairness, validity, guidance, practicality, transparency, and consistency is non-negotiable to ensure an accurate, equitable, and functional assessment of students' language skills.

Furthermore, the intricate task of curating an assessment package demands meticulous attention to every facet of language learning. This encompasses clear articulation of learning objectives, judicious selection of assessment methods, inventive design of tasks, establishment of transparent grading criteria, ensuring reliability and validity, providing constructive feedback, and continuous introspection and revision of the system. Drawing inspiration from seminal works by scholars like   Brown (2004), Fulcher & Davidson (2007), and Bachman & Palmer (2010) and Suskie (2018) , it is evident that the onus is on both educators and policymakers to collaborate and devise a

robust assessment system. Such a system should not only encapsulate the linguistic and cultural nuances of language learning but also empower students to navigate the dynamic landscape of intercultural communication with finesse.

In addition, the researcher also found something to learn from the new guiding document "Guiding Opinions on Improving the Formative Evaluation of Undergraduate Course" issued by XISU in 2022. Again, its guiding principle is to follow the educational and teaching philosophy of "student-centeredness, result-orientation, and continuous improvement" to establish a diversified formative evaluation system with dual emphasis on both ability and knowledge assessment. The document aims to strengthen the management of students' learning process, guide students to pay attention to the learning process, focus on learning ability cultivation, and comprehensively improve the level of classroom teaching and the quality of talent cultivation. The document emphasizes the seven basic forms that should be included in its evaluation system: attendance, quizzes, major assignments, daily performance, practice activities, and others. However, the score for each part still needs to be allocated reasonably. Furthermore, some assessment tasks, such as oral presentations and open-ended writing tasks, such as essays or reports in which they present and support their own views on a topic or issue, could help to better develop students' critical thinking skills and intercultural competence, should be adapted more.

To sum up, in order to address the problems and challenges of cultivating intercultural competence in foreign language majors in Chinese universities, the following proposed strategies can be considered by the makers of the guidelines and policy documents at both the national and school level.

1. The current national policies and guidelines for foreign language majors should be updated by redefining the concept of intercultural competence and providing effective methods and resources to guide teachers to teach and assess intercultural competence according to Byram's (1997) model, including suggestions on curriculum design, demonstrations of teaching methods, and assessment tools and techniques. It is necessary to note that relevant theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication and intercultural competence could improve students' intercultural awareness, enable them to solve complex problems through these theories, and use appropriate strategies in intercultural communication to reduce cultural conflict or complete effective communication. Also, some old policies, including the Talent Training Program and Syllabus for English Majors required in the "Major Catalogue and Introduction of Undergraduate Courses of Common Colleges and Universities 2012" and the "English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities 2000," need to be reviewed and updated urgently as they are still the major guidelines for English majors in all kinds of institutions of higher education across the country and the basis for organizing teaching, preparing teaching materials and checking teaching quality.

2. Clarify educational goals: Various guides and policies at the national level should set clear goals for intercultural education and require universities to explicitly include intercultural competence as one of the core goals of foreign language education and reflect it in curriculum design and teaching assessment.

3. Improve intercultural training for teachers: The educational authority is advised to make it compulsory for universities to train language teachers in intercultural teaching to enhance their intercultural understanding and teaching skills and provide students with guidance, training opportunities and workshops on intercultural understanding and communication.

4. Create rich teaching materials: The concerned educational authorities are advised to demand all foreign language majors in all universities to use teaching materials that contain rich cultural elements, such as literature, movies and news reports from the

target culture to provide students with the opportunities to come into direct contact with and understand the target culture.

5. Practice and experience: provide opportunities for students to engage in intercultural exchanges, such as exchange programs, study abroad, or interaction with international students and teachers. Hands-on experience and practice are an important way to improve intercultural competence.

6. Reflection and discussions: Encourage students and teachers to reflect on their cultural perceptions and prejudices and how these perceptions affect their language use and communication. This can be done through class discussions, writing assignments, or group activities.

7. Assessment and feedback: Design effective assessment tools to evaluate students' intercultural competence and provide feedback to students to help them understand where they need to improve. This assessment should include students' language skills and intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and communication skills. The education department should issue various documents to guide policymakers at the school level and curriculum designers of foreign language majors in universities to develop a scientific course evaluation system so that students can better develop and test their intercultural competence through scientific and reasonable assignments, tests and exams.

As intercultural competence is an ongoing process that takes time and practice, all these strategies require the positive and effective participation and engagement of schools, teachers, and students.

8.3 Conclusion

Historically, with China's Open Door Policy in the late 1970s, there was a shift towards greater emphasis on foreign language proficiency to facilitate international trade and relations. As China continues to open up and integrate with the global economy, the importance of intercultural competence has been further enhanced. With the deepening of globalization, international exchanges and cooperation are becoming more frequent, which requires more talents with intercultural communication capabilities. Policymakers and curriculum designers gradually acknowledged that language education should not only focus on linguistic competence but also on cultural competence to foster mutual understanding and respect. As foreign language major students, the educational training they receive and their language skills give them a natural advantage in this respect. Moreover, with the internationalization of higher education and increased student mobility, Chinese universities have been working to improve their students' intercultural competence, enabling them to be more competitive and successful in a globalized world.

Meanwhile, China's higher education policy also emphasizes the importance of global vision and intercultural competence, and holds that students can have better intercultural communication skills and international understanding in the context of globalization. Such guidelines, in turn, will drive universities to take measures to develop students' intercultural competence in terms of curriculum design and teaching methods. Some Chinese universities and educational institutions have responded positively to the policy by launching various courses and programs to develop students' intercultural competence. However, it is worth noting that despite these positive policies and practices, there are still some practical challenges. For example, explicit instruction and assessment of intercultural competence are not common in the foreign language teaching and learning process in tertiary educational contexts in China. There have been challenges in clearly defining and operationalizing intercultural competence in educational practices.

Through a comprehensive review and analysis of China's FLT policies, guidelines, and curricula set by national education authorities, this study also delves into localized curricula and syllabuses for foreign language majors at schools, all crafted based on national standards. This research pinpointed primary issues faced by national policymakers, tertiary institutions, educators, and students. The results emphasize the growing recognition of intercultural competence in Chinese language education. While national policies underscore its importance for college-level foreign language studies, they fall short in detailing its key components and methods of assessment. Moreover, the researcher has also discovered that national-level policy and guidance documents currently offer only a broad framework for developing intercultural competence, lacking specifics on implementation. Without clear directives in these national policy documents, the school-level curriculum designers and policymakers in China face challenges in creating detailed plans to cultivate and assess students' intercultural competence effectively.

At the same time, the researcher learned that many foreign language teachers lack a comprehensive understanding of "intercultural competence," which affects the depth and breadth of their teaching. Despite efforts to diversify teaching materials, they often fail to capture the intricacies of target cultures, and there is a pronounced bias towards British and American cultures, neglecting other English-speaking regions. Furthermore, many teachers, constrained by traditional methods and without firsthand cultural experiences, struggle to shift their teaching focus from mere language mechanics to genuine intercultural nuances. Students, on the other hand, prioritize traditional language skills and often express unease when exposed to unfamiliar cultures. Moreover, the researcher ascertains that the absence of reliable assessment methods and

limited real-world intercultural interaction opportunities further hinder the effective cultivation of intercultural competence.

Traditional teaching methodologies, exam-centric education, and a lack of resources and training in China obstruct the deployment of a curriculum centered on intercultural competence. While China's educational policies and directives have helped to enhance the intercultural competence of undergraduate students majoring in foreign languages, the implementation and effectiveness are inadequate due to the lack of a comprehensive conception of intercultural competence and guidelines for teachers on its teaching and assessment. This leads to teachers lacking knowledge of intercultural competence, necessary training and resources, and limits students' opportunities to apply classroom learnings to real-world situations.

However, in this globalized era, the importance of intercultural competence is rapidly escalating. A failure to effectively foster this competency in students puts them at a global competitive disadvantage. The cultivation of intercultural competence holds special significance for language major students. Teachers should facilitate students' language learning by providing insights into the corresponding culture, including its history, art, customs, religion, values, and social systems. Deep cultural understanding can enhance students' grasp of the language and their communicative efficiency.

Based on the identified problems and challenges, the research proposed suggestions for policy, pedagogical and especially assessment improvement, as described and discussed in this chapter, to bolster intercultural competence in foreign language majors at Chinese universities. This entails revising national policies, aligning them with

Byram's (1997, 2014) model and updating cornerstone documents to emphasize intercultural competence. In the researcher's opinion, a clear and precise educational aim centered on intercultural proficiency should be articulated at the national level, underpinning curriculum design and assessment. Meanwhile, teachers should undergo mandatory intercultural training complemented by enriched teaching materials that offer genuine cultural experiences. Students should also be given opportunities for real-world cultural exposure through exchange programs and interactions with foreign counterparts. The researcher also believes that students should be encouraged to utilize the target language extensively in intercultural communication activities, which will improve their language skills and help them better understand and adapt to the target culture. This approach not only nurtures students' intercultural competence but also enhances their language skills, global awareness, and citizenship. For instance, schools could offer some real cross-cultural opportunities for learning and practice, such as exchange programs, brief study-abroad tenures, field trips, and so on. Hands-on experiences like these allow students to encounter and understand diverse cultures directly, thereby improving their intercultural competence. Furthermore, a culture of introspection on cultural biases should be cultivated using mediums like group discussions.

Meanwhile, teachers should exhibit strong intercultural competence, serving as guides and role models to help students comprehend and adapt to varied cultures. They should employ diverse teaching methods, such as role-play, group discussions, case studies, and film analysis, to facilitate students' learning and practice of intercultural communication. In addition, teachers should educate students on understanding and critiquing their own cultural perceptions and biases, and those of others, using critical thinking to help them view different cultures fairly and openly.

More importantly, a holistic assessment approach should be established, not just gauging language skills but also critical thinking and intercultural awareness, paired with constructive feedback mechanisms. Successful execution of this strategy hinges on the collective efforts of educational bodies, teachers, and students.

Finally, to achieve these objectives, both teachers and students require clear and detailed guidelines from authorities at both the national and school levels. They need specific requirements and suggestions to develop teaching plans and syllabi, improve teaching activities and content, and drive teaching reforms. These guidelines are necessary to achieve the vital goal of successfully cultivating intercultural competence among foreign language majors throughout their four years of undergraduate study.

Overall, despite the existing issues in foreign language education at higher institutions, China's higher education in various fields has made significant strides within a short span of 45 years since the onset of the reform and opening-up policy, including advancements in foreign language specialties. As China ascends and its global influence steadily amplifies, there is a clear trend toward internationalization in foreign language majors. This is evident in the curriculum updates and collaborations with top global institutions, exchange programs, and international cooperative research. In the past, English dominated the foreign language majors in universities. However, in the future, with the push of national strategies like the Belt and Road Initiative, non-traditional foreign languages such as Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian will also garner increased attention and emphasis. Concurrently, China's higher education in foreign languages will undergo broader and deeper transformations and developments in the future, aligning with global, technological, and practical trends that cultivate high-quality foreign language professionals fit for the 21st century.

References

Adler, N. (1997). International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior. 3rd ed. Ohio: South-Western College Publishing.

ACTFL. (2018). American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language: World-Readiness Standards for Learning. Retrieved from: https://www.actfl.org/publications/all/world-readiness-standards-learning-languages.

Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture and Conflict Resolution.* Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2010). Language assessment in practice: Developing language assessments and justifying their use in the real world. Oxford University Press.

Bai, J. H. (白解红) (2008). On the Duality of English Major Learning (Lun Ying Yu Zhuan Ye Xue Xi De Shuang Chong Xing 论英语专业学习的双重性) [J]. *Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching (Wai Yu Yu Wai Yu Jiao Xue 外语与外语教学)*, (12): 20-23.

Bennett, M. J. (1993) "Towards Ethnorelativism: A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity," in R.M. Paige (ed.) Education for the Intercultural Experience , Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, pp. 21–71.

Bennett, M. J., & Allen, W. (2003). "Developing Intercultural Competence in the Language Classroom." In Culture as the Core: Perspectives on Culture in Second Language Learning, eds. D. Lange and R. Michael Paige, 237–70. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Bennet, M. J., & Bennet, J. M. (2005) Developing Intercultural Sensitivity: an integrative approach to global and domestic diversity. In Handbook of Intercultural Training. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bhatia, S., & Ram, A. (2009, in press). Theorizing identity in transnational and diaspora cultures: A critical approach to acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.009.

Bhawuk, D.P.S., & Brislin, R.W. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *The International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16(4), 413-436.

Bhawuk, D. P. S., & Sakuda, K. H. (2009). Intercultural sensitivity for global managers. In M. A. Moodian (Ed.), *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Exploring cross-cultural dynamics within organizations* (pp. 255–267). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Blasco, M. (2009). Teaching the Hard Stuff. In M. Blasco & M. Zolner (Eds.), *Teaching Cultural Skills － Adding Culture in Higher Education*. Narayana Press.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: an introduction in theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Brislin, R. (1993). Understanding culture's influence on behavior. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.

Brown, H. D. (2004). Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. Clevedon.* UK: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2014). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence.* Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press.

Chinese English Proficiency Scale and IELTS general thinking test results released. Chinese government website. 2019-01-15[Citation: 2021-01-17]

Chen, S. （陈申） (1999). *Cultural Teaching in Foreign Language Education （Wai YuJiao Yu Zhong De Wen Hua Jiao Xue 《外语教育中的文化教学》）*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press (北京语言文化大学出版社）.

Chen, G. M.（陈国明） (2009). *Study of Cross-Cultural Communication （Kua Wen Hua Jiao Ji Xue《跨文化交际学》） [M]*. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press （上海华东师范大学出版社）.

Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (1996). Intercultural communication competence: A synthesis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cheng, C. (2007). *The Influence of EFL Teachers' Understanding of Intercultural Competence on Their Self -reported Pedagogical Practices in Higher Education*

Institutes of Technology in Taiwan. (Doctoral Thesis).University of Minnesota, MN.

Constantin, E. C., Cohen-Vida, M.-I., & Popescu, A. V. (2015). Developing Cultural Awareness. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 151, 696–699. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.228.

Council of Europe (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Corbett, J. (2003). *An intercultural approach to English language teaching*. Clevedon, GBR: Multilingual Matters Limited.

Cox, T. L., Malone, M. E., & Winke, P. (2018). Future Directions in Assessment: Influences of standards and implications for language learning. Foreign Language Annals, 51(1), 104–115. doi:10.1111/flan.12326

Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dai, W. D. (戴炜栋) (2008). *Report on the Development of Foreign Language Education in Colleges and Universities (1978-2008) (Gao Xiao Wai Yu Zhuan Ye Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Bao Gao (1978-2008)《高校外语专业教育发展报告(1978-2008)》)*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press (上海外语教育出版社).

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education 10*(3): 241-266.

Deardorff, D. K. (2009). The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence, Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Deardorff, D. K., & Arasaratnam- Smith, L. A. （2017）. Intercultural Competence in Higher Education International Approaches, Assessment and Application. New York, New York: Routledge.

Dervin, F. (2008). *Métamorphoses identitaires en situation de mobilité*. Turku:Presses Universitaires de Turku.

Dervin, F. (2009). The solidification of Chineseness in academic mobility: Critical reviews of 'intercultural' research articles on Chinese students, *CAFIC Conference Paper*, 12-14.

Dervin, F. (2011). A plea for change in research on intercultural discourses: A 'liquid' approach to the study of the acculturation of Chinese students, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses,* 6(1), 37-52.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Díez-Bedmar, M. B., & Byram, M. (2018). The current influence of the CEFR in secondary education: Teachers' perceptions. *Language, Culture and Curriculum,* 1–15. doi:10.1080/07908318.2018.1493492.

Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing. Routledge.

Fan, W. W.（樊葳葳）, Wu, W. P.（吴卫平）, & Peng, R. Z.（彭仁忠）. (2013). A

survey on Self-evaluation of Chinese College Students' intercultural competence（Zhong Guo Da Xue Sheng Kua Wen Hua Neng Li Zi Wo Ping Jia Fen Xi 中国大学生跨文化能力自我评价分析）. *Foreign Languages in China* （*Zhong Guo Wai Yu* 《中国外语》）, 11, 53-59.

Fantini, A. E., & Tirmizi, A. (2006). Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence: Final Report, Brattleboro, VT: Federation of the Experiment in International Living.

Fantini, A. E. (2009). Developing Intercultural Competencies: An Education Imperative for the 21st Century, *Studies in language and literature,* 28(2), 193-213.

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2011). How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education. McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages.

Fu, K. (付克) (1986). *History of China's Foreign Language Education (Zhong Guo Wai Yu Jiao YuShi 《中国外语教育史》)[M]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press (上海外语教育出版社).

Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). Language testing and assessment: An advanced resource book. London: Routledge.

Galanes G.J., & Leeds-Hurwitz W. (2009). *Socially Constructing Communication*. NY: Hampton Press.

Gardner, G. H. (1962). Cross-cultural communication. *Journal of Social Psychology, 58* (2), 24 1-56.

Garrido, C., & Alvarez, I. (2006). Language teacher education for intercultural understanding. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 29*(2), 163-179.

Göbel, K., & Helmke, A. (2010). Intercultural Learning in English as Foreign Language Instruction: The Importance of Teachers' Intercultural Experience and the Usefulness of Precise Instructional Directives. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1571-1582.

Gudykunst, W. B. (1997). Cultural variability in communication: An introduction. *Communication Research*, 24, 327-348.

Gudykunst, W. B. (2002). *Intercultural communication*. In W. B. Gudykunst, & B. Mody (Eds.), Handbook of international and intercultural communication (pp. 179–182). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gudykunst, W. & Kim. Y. (2003) *Communicating with Strangers. An approach to intercultural communication* (4th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.

Guilherme, M. (2002) *Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World: Foreign Language Education as Cultural Politics*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Gumperz, J. & Cook, J. (1982). *Introduction: Language and the communication of social identity [M]*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Guo, Y. J, (郭英剑) (2019). Seventy Years of English Major Education in New China - A Historical Examination and Reflection (新中国英语专业教育七十年——历史考查与反思), Language Education (语言教育), (4), 2-18.

Hall, E.T. (1959). The Silent Language, New York: Doubleday.

Hall, E. T. (976). *Beyond culture.* New York: Doubleday.

Hammer, M.R., Bennett, M.J. & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 421-443.

Hammer, M. R. (2008). The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI): An Approach for assessing and building intercultural competence. In M.A. Moodian (Ed.), Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Understanding and utilizing cultural diversity to build successful organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Han, X., & Song, L. (2011). Teacher cognition of intercultural communicative competence in the Chinese ELT context. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 20, 175-192.

Herbig, P. (1998) *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Marketing*, New York: The Haworth Press.

Hofstede, G. (1984). "Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values." SAGE.

Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning. *Intercultural Journal of Intercultural Relations.* 10, 301-320.

Hofstede, G. (1994). *Cultures and Organizations.* London: HarperCollins.

Honna, N. (2001). English as an international language and Japan's English language teaching, *Foreign language teaching and reseach (bimonthly)*. Vol. 33. No. 5.

Jackson, J. (2015). Intercultural L2 Teaching: Enhancing Intercultural Interactions at Home and Abroad, *English Teaching in China*, 6, 1-5.

Jackson, J. (2016). Global Citizenship and Intercultural Engagement: Insights from an Online Course for International Exchange Students, *The International Journal of Learning:Annual Review,* 23, 15-26.

Jackson, J. (2017). The personal, linguistic, and intercultural development of Chinese sojourners in an English-speaking country, *Study Abroad Research in Second Language Acquisition and International Education*, 1, 80-106.

Jin T., & Dervin F. (2017). *Interculturality in Chinese Language Education (Palgrave Studies on Chinese Education in a Global Perspective)*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2006). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education*. New York: Routledge.

Koester, J., & Olebe, M. (1988). The Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication Effectiveness. *International Journal for Intercultural Relations,* 12, 233-246.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing.* London: Sage Publications.

Lao, M. (2012). A brief analysis of the educational theory and practice of training foreign language talents, *English on campus (teaching and research edition)*, (6): 9-10.

Larzén, E. (2005). *In pursuit of an intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching: Exploring cognitions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers.* Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Larzen-Ostermark, E. (2008). The intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching: A study of conceptions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52(5), 527-547.

Leedy, P., & Ormrod, J. (2001). *Practical Research: Planning and Design.* 7th Edition, Merrill Prentice Hall and SAGE Publications, Upper Saddle River, NJ and Thousand Oaks, CA.

Li, X. (2019). Promoting Intercultural Competence in EFL Classroom. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 9 (4): 412-418.

Li, Y. (李扬), Liu, C. Feng. (刘翠凤), & Lv, W. (吕维忠) (2015). The Analysis of the Demand for Compound Foreign Language Talents under the Background of "Belt and Road" (Yi Dai Yi Lu Bei Jing Xia Fu He Xing Wai Yu Ren Cai De Xu Qiu Fen Xi "一带一路"背景下复合型外语人才的需求分析)[J]. *Journal of Higher Education (Gao Jiao Xue Kan 高教学刊)*, (11): 22-23.

Liddicoat, A J., Papademetre, L., Scarino, A., & Kohler, M. (2003). *Report on Intercultural Language Learning*, DEST, Canberra. Copyright Commonwealth of Australia. Reproduced by permission.

Lies, S. & Ku, L. (2004). Assessing intercultural competence: A framework for systematic test development in foreign language education and beyond, Intercultural Education, 15(1): 73-89.

Liu, B. Q. （刘宝权）(2008). Interfaces between Language Testing and Intercultural Communicative Competence （Yu Yan Ce Shi Yu Kua Wen Hua Jiao Ji Neng Li Yan Jiu De Jie Kou《语言测试与跨文化交际能力研究的接口》). Baoding: Hebei University Press （河北大学出版社）.

Lochtman, K., & Kappel, J. (2008). *The world a global village: Intercultural competence in English foreign language teaching.* Brussels, Belgium: Vubpress.

Lustig, M. & Koester, J. (1999). *Intercultural Competence. Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures*. New York: Longman,

Marsen, S. (2006). *Communication Studies (Palgrave Foundation series).*Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1989). Designing Qualitative Research. Newbury Park, CA Sage.

Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative Researching. London: Sage.

MCEETYA (2005). National statement for language education in Australian schools: National plan for language education in Australian schools 2005-2008. Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Adelaide: Department of Education and Children's Services.

Mei, D. M. （梅德明）, & Wang, Q. （王蔷）(2018). *Interpretation of the Ordinary High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition) [M]（Pu Tong Gao Zhong Ying Yu Ke Cheng Biao Zhun (2017 Nian Ban) Jie Du《普通高中英语课程标准（2017 年版）解读[M]》*）. Beijing: Higher Education Press （高等教

育出版社）.

Mei, D. M.（梅德明）, & Wang, Q. （王蔷） (2018a). What to Change? How to Teach? How to Test? - Analysis of the New High School English Curriculum Standards [M] （Gai Shen Me? Ru He Jiao? Zen Me kao？-- Gao Zhong Ying Yu Xin Ke Biao Jie Xi《改什么？如何教？怎样考？——高中英语新课标解析》）. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press （北京：外语教学与研究出版社）.

Menken, K., Hudson, T., & Leung, C. (2014). Symposium: Language assessment in standards-based education reform. TESOL Quarterly, 48(3), 586－614. doi:10.1002/ tesq.180.

Merriam, S. A. (1988). Conducting effective interview. In *Case study research in education* (1st ed., pp. 71-86). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Qualitative data analysis. London: Sage.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moran, P. R. (2001). "Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice." Heinle & Heinle.

MurPhy, H., HIldebrandt, H.&Thomas, J.P. (1997). *Effective business communication.* New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Njie, B., & Asimiran, S. (2014).Case Study as a Choice in Qualitative Methodology, *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 4(3), 35-40.

Olier, J. C. (1820). Prometheus Unbound. London.

Pan. Y. L.（潘亚玲） (2016). *Connotation and Cultivation of Intercultural Competence -- Taking College Students Majoring in Foreign Languages as an Example* （*Kua Wen Hua Neng Li Nei Han Yu Pei Yang: Yi Gao Xiao Wai Yu Zhuan Ye Da Xue Sheng Wei Li*《跨文化能力内涵与培养：以高校外语专业大学生为例》）. Beijing: University of International Business and Economics Press （北京：对外经济贸易大学出版社）.

Parker, B. (2005). *Introduction to globalization and business: Relationships and responsibilities*. London: Sage.

Parkinson, G., & Drislane, R. (2011). Qualitative research. In Online dictionary of the social sciences. Retrieved from http://bitbucket.icaap.org/dict.pl

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pearsall, J. & Trumble, B. (1996). *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary.* Oxford: Oxford University.

Paul, R. and Elder, L. (2010). *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools.* Dillon Beach: Foundation for Critical Thinking Press.

Qun, Y. (群懿) (1990). Review of the Decade of Reform and Opening-up of Foreign Language Education in China (Wo Guo Wai Yu Jiao Yu Gai Ge Kai Fang Shi Nian De Hui Gu 我国外语教育改革开放十年的回顾) [J]. *Journal of Sichuan Institute of Foreign Languages (Si Chuan Wai Yu Xue Yuan Xue Bao 四川外语学院学报)*, (4): 1-20.

Richards, J. C., & Sukwiwat, M. (1983). Language Transfer and Conventional competence. *Applied Linguistics,* 4, 2, 113-125.

Robertson, I. (1981).   *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers Inc.

Romanowski, P. & Bandura, E. (Eds.). (2019). Intercultural Foreign Language Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Contexts. IGI Global. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/10.4018/978-1-5225-8128-4.

Ruben, B. D. (1976). Assessing communication competency for intercultural adaptation. *Group and Organization Studies*, 1, 334-354.

Ruben, B. D. (1985). *Human communication and cross-cultural effectiveness. In L. Samovar & R. Porter (Eds.), Intercultural communication: A reader (4th ed.).* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Ruben. B. D., & Kealey, D. J. (1979). Behavioral assessment of communication competency and the prediction of cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercvltural Relations,* 3, 15-47.

Samovar, L. & Porter, R.E. (1994). *Intercultural Communication: a Reader.* Belmont: Wadsworth.

Sapir, E. (1949). *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech.* San Diego: A

Harvest/HBJ Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Sercu, L. (2006). The Foreign Language and Intercultural Competence Teacher: The Acquisition of a New Professional Identity. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 55–72.

Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheca, L., Laskaridou, C. Lundgren, U., Garcia, M. , & Ryan, P. (eds.) (2005) *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Sharifian, F. (2013). Globalization and developing metacultural competence in learning English as an international language. *Multilingual Education*, *3*(7), 1 - 11.

Shen, Q. （沈骑）& Bao, M. （鲍敏） (2018). China's Foreign Language Education Plan since the "Reform and Opening Up" （ Gai Ge Kai Fang Yi Lai De Zhong Guo Wai Yu Jiao Yu Gui Hua 改革开放以来的中国外语教育规划）, *Language Strategy Research* （《语言战略研究》）, 5 (17).

Shibata, A. M. (1998). Intercultural Communication Concepts and Implications for Teachers. *JALT Journal, 20*(2), 104–118.

Smith, L. (1976). English as an international auxiliary language. *ERLC Journal* 7/2: 38-443.

Smith, M. B. (1966). Explorations in competence: A study of Peace Crops teachers in Ghana. *American Psychologist, 21,* 555-66.

Solomon, A., & Steyn, R. (2017). Exploring cultural intelligence truths: A systematic review. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 15*. doi:10.4102ajhrm.v15i0.869.

Song, L. （宋莉）(2008). *Exploration of a Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Communicative English Language Teaching in China* （*Kua Wen Hua Jiao Ji Fa Zhong Guo Ying Yu Jiao Xue Mo Shi Tan Xi《跨文化交际法中国英语教学模式探析》*） *(Doctoral dissertation)*. Shanghai: Shanghai International Studies University （上海外国语大学）.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally Speaking. Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory. 2nd edition*. London: Continuum.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012). What is culture? A compilation of quotations. GlobalPAD Core Concepts.*In: GlobalPAD Core Concepts.* Available at GlobalPAD Open House.

Spitzberg, B. H. (1983). Communication competence as knowledge, skill and impression. *Communication Education, 32 ,* 323–329.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In D.K Deardoff (Ed), *The sage handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 2-53). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal Communication Competence.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Standards, (1996). *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century*. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press, Inc.

Stier, J. (2006). Internationalization, intercultural communication and intercultural competence. *Journal of Intercultural Communication,* 11, 2-12.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sun, Y. (孙有中) (2019). Revitalizing and Developing Undergraduate Majors in Foreign Languages and Literature: Achievements, Challenges and Solutions (Zhen Xing Fa Zhan Wai Guo Yu Yan Wen Xue Lei Ben Ke Zhuan Ye: Cheng Jiu、 Tiao Zhan Yu Dui Ce 振兴发展外国语言文学类本科专业:成就、挑战与对策). *Foreign Language World (Wai Yu Jie 外语界)*, (1).

Suskie, L. (2018). Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide. Jossey-Bass.

Thomas, D. C. (2008). *Cross-cultural management: Essential concepts* (2nd ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Thomas, G. (2009) *How to Do Your Research Project*. London: Sage.

Triandis, H. C. (1994). Culture and Social behaviour. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

UNESCO (2009). *World Report No. 2: Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2013). *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework.* Paris, UNESCO.

Varna, A., & Beamer, L. (2005). *Cross-Cultural Communication [M],* Beijing, China Machine Press.

Wang, D (王定华). (2018). A Retrospective of China＇s Foreign Language Education Policy in the Past 40 Years of Reform and Opening Up. Curriculum, Teaching

Materials and Methods (改革开放 40 年我国外语教育政策回眸.课程教材教法).
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/8XKxX1xLDjBlw8_ZSJuLZg accessed 20 July 2019.

Wang, H. （汪华），& Sun, X. （孙霄兵） (2019). 70 Years of Higher Education in China: Achievements and Policies （Zhong Guo Gao Deng Jiao Yu Qi Shi Nia: Cheng Jiu Yu Zheng Ce 中国高等教育７０年： 成就与政策）， [OL] ｈｔｔｐ：／／ｗｗｗ．ｊｙｂ．ｃｎ／ｒｍｔｚｃｇ／ｘｗｙ／ｗｚｘｗ／２０１９０７／ｔ２０１９０７１　ｌ＿２４　７３８６．ｈｔｍｌ，ａｃｃｅｓｓｅｄ　６／２０／２０１９．

Wang, S. (王守仁) (2006), Further Promote and Deepen College English Reaching Reform and Comprehensively Improve Teaching Quality (Jin Yi Bu Tui Jin He Shen Hua Da Xue Ying Yu Jiao Xue Gai Ge Qie Quan Mian Ti Gao Jiao Xue Zhi Liang 进一步推进和深化大学英语教学改革且全面提高教学质量), *China University Teaching (Zhong Guo Da Xue Jiao Xue 中国大学教学)*, (7).

Wang, S. (王守仁) (2017). Ways and Means to Promote the Development of College Foreign Language Teachers (Gao Xiao Wai Yu Jiao Shi Fa Zhan DeCu Jin Fang Shi Yu Tu Jing 高校外语教师发展的促进方式与途径) [J]. *Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Teaching (Wai Yu Jiao Xue Li Lun Yu Shi Jian 外语教学理论与实践)*, (2): 1-15.

Wang, Z. Y. （王振亚）(2000). *Language and Culture[M]* （*Yu Yan Yu Wen Hua《语言与文化》*）. Beijing：Higher Education Press （北京：高等教育出版社）.

Wei, G. Q.（魏光奇） (2000). *Between Heaven and Man - a Comparison of Chinese and Western Cultural Concepts [M]* （*Tian Ren Zhi Ji: Zhong Xi Wen Hua Guan Nian Bi Jiao《天人之际:中西文化观念比较》*）. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press （北京：首都师范大学出版社）.

Wiseman, R. L. (2003). Intercultural communication competence In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), Cross-cultural and intercultural communication (pp. 191–208). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wu, G. H. （吴国华） (1990). Cultural Interference in Foreign Language Teaching （WaiYu Jiao Xue Zhong De Wen Hua Gan Rao Wen Ti 外语教学中的文化干扰问题）. *Journal of Foreign Languages* （*Wai Yu Xue Kan《外语学刊》*）, (3) 41-57.

Wu, H. （吴华） (2005). "Educational Globalization" and China's Global Strategy for Educational Development（Jiao Yu Quan Qiu Hua Yu Zhong Guo Jiao Yu Fa Zhan De Quan Qiu Zhan Lue"教育全球化"与中国教育发展的全球战略）. *Educational Development Research* （*Jiao Yu Fa Zhan Yan Jiu《教育发展研究》*）, (98).

Xie, W. （谢雯）, & Zhang K. K. （张葵葵）(2008). *English Exercise Book* （*Ying Yu Lian Xi Ce《英语练习册》*）. Beijing: China Electric Power Press （北京：中国电力出版社）.

Xu, G. Z.（许国璋）(1978). On the Task of Foreign Language Teaching under the New Situation （ Tan Tan Xin Xing Shi Xia Wai Yu Jiao Xue De Ren Wu 谈谈新形势下外语教学的任务）. *People's Education*（*Ren Min Jiao Yu《人民教育》*）, (10), pp. 21-24.

Xu, G. Z.（许国璋）(1980). Culturally Loaded Words and English Language Teaching (Wen Hua FuZaiCi Yu Ying Yu Jiao Xue《文化负载词与英语教学》)[J]. *Modern Foreign Languages (Xian Dai Wai Yu 《现代外语》)*, (4): 19-24.

Xu, H. L., & Moloney, R. (2017). Moving between diverse cultural contexts: how important is intercultural learning to Chinese heritage language learners? In T. Jin , & F. Dervin (Eds.), Interculturality in Chinese language education (pp. 151-176). (Palgrave Studies on Chinese Education in a Global Perspective). London : Palgrave Macmillan.

Yin, R. K. (1994). "Evaluation: A Singular Craft," in Charles Richard and Sharon Rallis (eds.), *New Directions in Program Evaluation*, pp. 71-84.

Yin, R. K. (2003a). *Applications of Case Study Research.* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2nd edition.

Yin, R. K. (2003b). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 3rd edition.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research. Design and methods. 4. ed.* Thousand Oaks, California.

Young, T. J., & Sachdev, I. (2011). Intercultural Communicative Competence: Exploring English Language teachers' Beliefs and Practices. *Language Awareness*, 20(2), 81-98.

Zhang, H. L.（张红玲）(2006). *Intercultural Approach to Foreign Language Teaching （Kua Wen Hua Wai Yu Jiao Xue Fa《跨文化外语教学法》）*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press （上海：上海外语教育出版社）.

Zhang, S. J. (张绍杰) (2019). 40 Years of Reform and Opening-up: Achievements and Reflections (Gai Ge Kai Fang Si Shi Nian Wai Yu Ren Cai Pei Yang --Cheng Jiu Yu Fan Si 改革开放 40 年外语人才培养——成就与反思), *China Foreign*

Language (Zhong Guo Wai Yu 中国外语), 16(1).

Zhang, Z. G. (张治国) (2012). *A Comparative Study of Chinese and American Language Education Policies - In the Era of Globalization (Zhong Mei Yu Yan Jiao Yu Zheng Ce Bi Dui Yan Jiu - Yi Quan Qiu Hua Shi Dai Wei Bei Jing 《中美语言教育政策比对研究-以全球化时代为背景》)*. Beijing: Peking University Press （北京：北京大学出版社）.

Appendix I

Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Students

1. 请问您目前是读几年级的本科英语课程？

   Which grade are you in the English undergraduate program?

2. 您为什么选择这个专业？

   Why did you choose the course?

3. 您认为您从课程中学到了什么？您能举几个例子吗？

   What did you learn from the course? Could you give some examples?

4. 您认为此课程最主要的教学目标是什么？

   What do you think are the main teaching outcomes of the subject?

5. 您在学习中有什么困难吗?如果有，请举例说明在哪些方面。或者，到目前
   为止在教学过程中您最担忧的是什么？

   Is there any difficulty you have experienced during your course of study? In which
   aspect? Please provide examples? What is your major concern so far?

6. 您最希望自己通过学习在哪个方面等到提高？

Which aspect of the course would you like to improve the most during your study?

7. 您是怎样理解跨文化能力的？

What do you understand by the term 'intercultural competence'?

8. 您是否认为掌握跨文化能力在外语学习中十分重要？为什么？

Do you think it is important to develop your intercultural competence in foreign language learning? Why?

9. 您认为跨文化能力培养在此课程的教学大纲，教学内容，教学资料以及教学方法中是否各自有所体现？如果有，您认为它是如何体现的，您认为哪个方面体现是最明显的？您是否可以举例说明？

Do you think intercultural competence training is reflected in the syllabus, teaching content, teaching materials and teaching methods of this specialized course? If so, how does it manifest itself, and which aspect is most evident? Please provide examples?

10. 请问您是通过哪些教学活动来学习和掌握跨文化能力的？

How have your teachers implemented the intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives in their teaching activities?

11. 请问您的老师是通过哪些评估方法和内容来考核和评估您所掌握的跨文化能力的？

How do your teachers design concrete assessment to evaluate your intercultural competence?

12. 您自己如何评价您对于跨文化能力学习目标的完成情况？您认为在学习过程后，您在多大程度上完成了该学习目标?

How do you evaluate the outcomes of your intercultural competence learning objectives? To what extent do you think you have achieved the learning goals of intercultural competence after the learning process?

13.您认为在英语教学中跨文化能力培养过程中是否还有所不足？

Do you think there is a shortage of intercultural competence training in English teaching in this subject?

如果是，您认为不足在哪里？您有哪些建议？

If so, what are those failures? What suggestions would you like to provide for developing students' intercultural competence in English teaching?

Interview Questions for Teaching Staff

1. 请问您目前是教几年级的本科英语课程？

    Which grade are you teaching in the English undergraduate program?

2. 您认为此课程最主要的教学目标是什么？

    What do you think are the main teaching outcomes of the subject?

3. 您在教学过程中遇到过什么困难吗？如果有，请举例说明在哪个方面？或者到目前为止在教学过程中您最担忧的是什么？

    Is there any difficulty you find during your teaching? In which aspect? And examples? Or what is your major concern so far?

4. 您最希望自己的学生通过学习在哪个方面等到提高？

    Which aspect would you like your students to improve the most during your study?

5. 您是怎样理解跨文化能力的？

    What do you understand by the term 'intercultural competence'?

6. 您是否认为培养学生的跨文化能力在外语教学中十分重要？为什么？

    Do you think it is important to cultivate students' intercultural competence in foreign language teaching? Why?

7. 您认为跨文化能力培养在此专业课程的教学大纲，教学内容，教学资料以及教学方法中是否各自有所体现？如果有，它是如何体现的，那个方面体现是最明显的？请举例说明。

Do you think intercultural competence training is reflected in the syllabus, teaching content, teaching materials and teaching methods of this specialized course? If so, how does it manifest itself, and which aspect is most evident? Any examples?

8. 您认为本课程的政策制定者和课程设计人员是否清楚地了解跨文化能力的含义，并在官方话语中清楚地表达了他们的理解?

Do you think the policy makers and curriculum designers for this course have a clear idea of what intercultural competence means and clearly represent their understanding in the official discourse?

9. 请问教育部门针对跨文化能力的教学和学习目标、评估框架和标准有何要求?

What intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives and assessment framework and criteria are required by the education authorities?

10. 请问您是从什么途径获得跨文化能力的?

From what sources do you acquire knowledge of intercultural competence?

11. 请问您如何评价教育当局对于该专业跨文化能力培养实施的指导方针和课程的实用性?

How do you appraise the practicality of the guidelines and curriculum implemented by the education authorities?

12. 请问您是通过哪些教学活动来实现培养学生良好跨文化能力的教学目标的?

How do you implement intercultural competence teaching and learning objectives in your teaching activities?

13. 请问您是如何设计具体的评估方法和内容来考核学生所掌握的跨文化能力的? 具体评估方法和考核内容与国家教育部门指定的指导方针有多接近?

How do you design concrete assessment to evaluate students' intercultural competence? How close is the concrete assessment aligned with the national guidelines?

14. 您如何评估跨文化能力教学目标的完成情况？您认为您所运用的评估方法或内容框架反映学生跨文化能力水平的准确性如何？您认为在学习过程后，学生在多大程度上完成了学习目标？

How do you evaluate the outcomes of your intercultural competence teaching objectives? How accurately do you think the assessment methods or frameworks reflect the level of the student's intercultural competence? To what extent do you think the student has achieved the learning goals of intercultural competence after the learning process?

14. 您认为以上评估方法或框架的优点或缺点是什么？您认为其背后的原因是什么？

What do you think is good or bad about the assessment method or framework? In your opinion, what are the reasons behind?

15. 您认为在此课程的英语教学中跨文化能力培养过程中是否还有所不足？

Do you think there is a shortage of intercultural competence training in this subject?

如果是，您认为不足在哪里？您有哪些建议？

If so, what are the failures? What suggestions would you like to provide for developing students' intercultural competence in English teaching?

Appendix II

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
参与人信息表

Research Project Title: *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching in China: Policy, Interpretations and Practice*
HREC Number: xxxx
研究项目名称： 中国外语教学中跨文化能力的教学与评估：政策、解读与实践
HREC 编号: xxxx

You are invited to take part in the research project entitled *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching in China: Policy, Interpretations and Practice*. Before you decide whether you want to take part or not, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide.

邀请您参加题为"中国外语教学中跨文化能力的教学与评估：政策、解读与实践"的研究项目。在决定是否参加之前，您需要了解为什么要做这项研究，以及它会给您带来的收获。请仔细阅读以下信息。如有不清楚或欲了解更多信息，可垂询。请谨慎做决定。

WHO I AM

自我介绍

My name is Haocheng Zhao and I am a PhD student (PhD in international studies) from the School of International Studies and Education, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at University of Technology Sydney (UTS). I am conducting this study in collaboration with my supervisor: A/Prof Jingqing Yang, UTS.

我叫赵浩成，是悉尼科技大学文学与社会科学院国际研究与教育系的博士生（国际研究博士）。我同我的导师杨径青教授合作进行此项研究。

WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

研究介绍

This study seeks to understand how university language teachers and students interpret intercultural competence in their teaching and learning activities, and how their interpretations and teaching and learning activities converge with or diverge from the national language education policies and national curriculum standards. Based on identified problems and challenges in the teaching and learning processes, the research is intended to propose suggestions of policy, pedagogical and especially assessment improvement.

本研究旨在了解大学语言教师和学生在教学活动中如何解读跨文化能力，以及他们的解读和教学活动如何与国家语言教育政策和国家课程标准趋同或背离。基于教学过程中发现的问题和挑战，本研究旨在提出政策建议、教学建议，尤其是评估建议。

WHY THIS STUDY IS IMPORTANT

研究意义

The significance of the project lies in its use of a new theoretical framework--interpretive policy analysis--to examine intercultural competence construction in foreign language teaching. It will not only shed light on how front-line language educators in China construct meanings out of education policies and national

curriculum on the basis of local knowledge, but also enrich our understanding of Chinese language students' intercultural competence.

该项目的意义在于运用一种新的理论框架——解释性政策分析——来考察外语教学中的跨文化能力建设。这不仅有助于我们了解中国一线语言教育工作者如何在本土知识的基础上建构教育政策和国家课程的意义，也有助于我们加深对汉语言学生跨文化能力的理解。

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE IF I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?

如果我同意参加，会涉及什么内容？

- If you decide to participate, you will partake in an interview at a time and place on X International Studies University (XISU) that is convenient to you. Or you can nominate a place that you deem is convenient to you.

- 如果您决定参加面试，您将在 X 外国语大学指定的时间和地点参加面试。或者您可以指定一个方便的地点。

- This interview will be conducted face to face in Mandarin and last between 20 minutes to an hour.

- 面试将以普通话面对面进行，时间为 20 分钟至 1 小时。

- The researcher will ask you questions about how intercultural competence is understood, taught/learnt and assessed in your subject, including teaching contents and materials developed in line with the national syllabus and official textbooks, management of classes as well as the teaching methods and in-class activities, and the assessment and homework tasks the teaching staff will give the students.

- 研究者将向您提问关于在您的学科中如何理解、教授/学习和评估跨文化能力的问题，包括按照国家教学大纲和官方教科书制定的教学内容和教材、班级管理以及教学方法和课堂活动、考核和教师给学生布置的家庭作业。

- The interview will be held in a private meeting room to ensure the privacy and confidentiality.

- 为确保隐私和保密，面试将在私人会议室进行。

- The interview will be audio recorded to make sure your opinions will be accurately

represented. However, if you do not want your interview to be recorded, we will respect your decision and will not record the interview.

● 为确保您的意见被准确传达，面试内容将被录音。但是，如果您不希望您的面试被录音，我们将尊重您的决定，不对面试进行录音。

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

为什么邀请我参加？

This study invites participants from teachers or students of advanced English language and culture undergraduate subjects offered in English Department of XISU. These advanced subjects are required by national curriculum to be more focused on cultural contents and intercultural competence than lower-level subjects. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a teacher or a student of English language and culture subjects, who are likely to have developed mature and profound understanding of intercultural competence and be experienced in intercultural competence assessment.

本研究邀请了 X 外国语大学英语学院英语语言与文化本科专业的教师或学生参加。您之所以被邀请参加本研究，是因为您是英语语言和文化学科高水平的教师或学生，可能对跨文化能力有着成熟且深刻的理解，并具有跨文化能力评估的经验。

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

我必须参加吗？

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. You have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

参与这项研究完全是自愿的。是否参加完全由您决定。您有权拒绝参与，拒绝任何问题，并在任何时候退出，并且不产生任何后果。

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

参加有哪些风险和好处？

● Taking part in this research entails negligible risk. There will be no foreseeable

harms (including physical harms, psychological harms, devaluation of personal worth, social harms, economic harms, legal harms), discomforts or substantial inconvenience to research participants.

- 参与这项研究的风险可以忽略不计。不会对研究参与者造成可预见的伤害（包括身体伤害、心理伤害、个人价值贬值、社会伤害、经济伤害、法律伤害）、不适或重大不便。

- The only risk will be some minor inconveniences due to timing of interviews or flexibility. But such inconvenience will be minimized due to flexibility in the data collection timeline.

- 唯一的风险是由于面试时间或调整带来的一些小不便。但数据收集时间表灵活性，会将这种不便降到最小化。

- You can stop the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable to talk.

- 如果您感觉谈话不适，可随时停止面试。

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

参加会保密吗？

- Your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

- The interview will be held in an exclusive space to ensure the privacy and confidentiality.

- Only minimum demographic information and details related to work/study experience and scope will be collected from you. Direct identifiers such as address or student/staff identification number will not be collected.

- No one will be able to identify you from either the published or unpublished data.

- 您的隐私和保密将始终得到维护。

- 面试将在专属空间进行，以确保隐私和保密性。

- 仅从您处收集与工作/学习经验和范围相关的最少的个人信息。不收集地址或学生/员工识别号等直接标识信息。

- 任何人都无法从已发布或未发布的数据中识别您的身份。

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED ANDPROTECTED?

如何记录、存储和保护您提供的信息？

- All information that you provide will be stored in password-protected folders on the researcher' personal computer which is protected by a strong password. Only the researcher has access to the information.

- 您提供的所有信息将存储在研究人员个人计算机上的密码保护文件夹中，该文件夹受强密码保护。只有研究人员本人可以获得信息。

- All data collection and the storage device will be password protected with a strong password.

- 所有数据采集和存储设备都将使用强密码进行密码保护。

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

如果我拒绝会如何？

- Your participation in this research is absolutely voluntary.

- You are free to withdraw from the research at any time, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher, your university and University of Technology Sydney.

- If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Mr Haocheng Zhao:

- 您参与本研究是完全自愿的。

- 您可以随时退出研究，这不会影响您与研究人员、您所在大学和悉尼科技大学的关系。

- 如果您在研究开始后想退出，也可以随时退出，无需给出理由，请联系赵浩成先生：
  haocheng.zhao@student.uts.edu.au; phone   or

- You should be aware that data collected up to the time you withdraw will form part of the research results. Irrespective, no identifying details will be used in any research publications or reports relating to this project.

- 您应该意识到，在您退出之前收集的数据将构成研究结果的一部分。无论如何，任何与本项目有关的任何研究出版物或报告都不会使用识别信息。

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR ANY CONCERNS?

我应该联系谁以获得更多信息或任何问题？

- If you have any questions about this research please contact:

Mr Haocheng Zhao

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Technology Sydney (CB08.06.016)

City Campus | PO Box 123 Broadway | NSW 2007

Email Address: Haocheng.Zhao@student.uts.edu.au;

Phone: or

如果您对本研究有任何疑问，请联系：

赵浩成先生

文学与社会科学学院

悉尼科技大学（CB08.06.016）

市校区|新南威尔士州百老汇 123 号邮政信箱| 2007

电子邮件地址：Haocheng.Zhao@student.uts.edu.au；

电话：   或   。

OR

A/Prof Jingqing Yang

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Technology Sydney (CB08.06.016)

City Campus | PO Box 123 Broadway | NSW 2007

Email Address: Jingqing.Yang@uts.edu.au

Work Number: +61 2 95147969.

或联系

杨径青副教授

文学与社会科学学院

悉尼科技大学（CB08.06.016）

市校区|新南威尔士州百老汇 123 号邮政信箱| 2007

电子邮件地址：Jingqing.Yang@uts.edu.au

工作电话：+61 2 95147969。

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH.

感谢您考虑参加本研究。

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.
我们会提供您一份该表格的复印件。

NOTE:

特别提示：

This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC] guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au], and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

本研究已按照悉尼科技大学人类研究伦理委员会的指导方针获得批准。如果您对本研究的任何方面有任何担忧或不满，请联系伦理秘书处，电话：+61 2 9514 2478 或电子邮件：Research.Ethics＠uts.edu.au，并引用 UTS HREC 参考编号。提出的问题将被保密处理、调查，并将结果告知您。