

**Study abroad experience as a factor: Exploring English
language teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in
intercultural communicative competence in Chinese
universities**

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Für meine Eltern

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die globale Verwendung des Englischen in verschiedenen Bereichen, wie z. B. in der wirtschaftlichen, politischen und akademischen Zusammenarbeit, macht die Förderung der interkulturellen kommunikativen Kompetenz (*Intercultural Communicative Competence*, im Folgenden: ICC) im Englischunterricht unabdingbar. Dementsprechend wird ICC in den Lehrplänen und der Bildungspolitik nicht nur in europäischen und nordamerikanischen Staaten, sondern auch in Asien, z. B. in China, als Kernstück des Zweit- und Fremdsprachenunterrichts angesehen. Dennoch gibt es bis dato nur wenige empirische Untersuchungen aus der Bottom-up-Perspektive, d.h. zu den Überzeugungen von Zweit- oder Fremdsprachenlehrkräften, und noch weniger Studien, die einen nicht-westlichen Hintergrund berücksichtigen. Daher zielt diese Studie darauf ab, zu untersuchen, wie chinesische Englischlehrkräfte ICC wahrnehmen und ICC-bezogene Unterrichtspraktiken im universitären Kontext umsetzen.

Die Überzeugungen von Lehrkräften gelten als abstraktes und komplexes Konstrukt, das eine entscheidende Rolle bei der Kultivierung von ICC bei SchülerInnen spielt und eng mit den Unterrichtspraktiken von Lehrkräften im Fremdsprachenunterricht verbunden ist. Die Wahrnehmungen der Lehrkräfte als aktive Entscheidungsträgerinnen beeinflussen ihre Unterrichtspraxis. Auf der anderen Seite ist die entscheidende Rolle der früheren ausländischen Studierenerfahrung (*study abroad experience*) der Lehrkräfte als ein wichtiger Faktor identifiziert worden, der die Überzeugungen der Englischlehrkräfte und ihre kulturelle Unterrichtspraxis beeinflusst. Allerdings ist vergleichsweise wenig über Ähnlichkeiten oder Unterschiede in den Überzeugungen und der Unterrichtspraxis von Lehrern mit ausländischer Studierenerfahrungen und ihren Kollegen, die nicht im Ausland studierten (*non-study-abroad experience*), bekannt. Noch wichtiger ist, dass unklar bleibt, inwieweit der Faktor der ausländischen Studierenerfahrung die Überzeugungen der Lehrkräfte zu ICC und ihre diesbezüglichen Unterrichtspraktiken vorhersagen kann.

Um die oben genannten Forschungslücken zu schließen, zielt diese Studie darauf ab, zu verstehen, wie ICC von Englischlehrkräften in der chinesischen Hochschulbildung konzeptualisiert und umgesetzt wird. Darüber hinaus wird erforscht, ob Unterschiede in den Überzeugungen der Lehrkräfte und in den Unterrichtstechniken zur Förderung von ICC zwischen Lehrkräften mit ausländischen Studienerfahrungen und solchen ohne derartige Erfahrung erkennbar sind. Zudem wird die Vorhersagekraft von der ausländischen Studienerfahrung für die Überzeugungen und Unterrichtspraktiken von Lehrkräften im Englischunterricht eingehend untersucht. Nicht zuletzt beleuchtet diese Studie ein Spektrum von Hindernissen auf Makro-, Meso- und Mikroebene für die interkulturellen Unterrichtsentscheidungen chinesischer Englischlehrkräfte.

In Anbetracht der Bedeutung der ausländischen Studienerfahrungen der Lehrkräfte für die Ausgestaltung der Lehrerüberzeugungen untersucht diese Studie die Lehrerüberzeugungen über und die Praktiken von ICC für die Internationalisierung an zwei Universitäten in China. Unter Verwendung eines Mixed-Methods-Studiendesigns wurden in dieser Studie Daten von 163 chinesischen Englischlehrkräften in einer Onlinebefragung und halbstrukturierter Interviews mit zehn Lehrkräften gesammelt. Zur Beantwortung der Forschungsfragen der vorliegenden Studie wurden eine explorative Faktorenanalyse, eine deskriptive Datenanalyse, ein *t*-Test für unabhängige Stichproben, eine Korrelationsanalyse und hierarchische lineare Regressionsmodelle eingesetzt. Abbildung 12 in Kapitel 7 veranschaulicht die wesentlichen Ergebnisse der Studie, die auf einer Reihe von Datenanalysen basieren.

In der quantitativen Teilstudie zeigten die deskriptiven Ergebnisse eine gewisse Diskrepanz zwischen den erklärten Überzeugungen der Lehrkräfte über ICC und ihrer tatsächlichen Unterrichtspraxis. Zum Beispiel, während die Teilnehmenden der Vermittlung von kulturspezifischem Wissen eine untergeordnete Rolle beim Unterrichten von ICC einräumten, wählten sie weitgehend einseitige Übertragungs- und zweiseitige Interaktionsansätze, um sichtbare kulturelle Komponenten im

Klassenzimmer anzusprechen. Darüber hinaus zeigte die vergleichende Analyse keine signifikanten Unterschiede zwischen Teilnehmern mit ausländischer Studiererfahrungen und Teilnehmern ohne derartige Erfahrungen in Bezug auf die wahrgenommenen Lernziele des Englischunterrichts, die Bedeutung von ICC-Komponenten und die Einstellung der Lehrkräfte zu ICC. Dennoch setzten Lehrkräfte mit ausländischen Studiererfahrungen ICC-Unterrichtspraktiken, d.h. die Behandlung ICC-relevanter Themen und Unterrichtsansätze, signifikant häufiger ein als Lehrkräfte ohne derartige Erfahrung. Korrelationsanalysen zeigten, dass die Unterrichtspraxis zur Förderung von ICC bei den Lehrkräften ohne ausländischen Studiererfahrung, im Gegensatz zu den Lehrkräften mit ausländischen Studiererfahrungen, nicht überzeugungskonform war. Die Ergebnisse der multiplen hierarchischen linearen Regressionsanalyse zeigten schließlich, dass die vorherige ausländische Studiererfahrung der Lehrkräfte die erklärten Lernziele des Englischunterrichts und ICC-bezogenen Unterrichtspraktiken signifikant vorhersagen konnte.

Die Ergebnisse der halbstrukturierter Interviews zeigten ferner, dass zehn Faktoren auf der Makro-, Meso- und Mikroebene die kulturelle Umsetzung von ICC in den Klassenzimmern durch die Lehrkräfte einschränkten. Diese Ergebnisse bestätigten die soziokulturellen Einflüsse auf die Überzeugungen und kulturellen Unterrichtspraktiken der Lehrkräfte. Zu den Faktoren auf der Makroebene gehören die Diskrepanz zwischen der Top-down-Politik und den Bottom-up-Unterrichtszwängen sowie der Rückkopplungseffekt von Tests mit hohem Leistungsniveau. Zu den Faktoren auf der Mesoebene zählten der Mangel an Aus- und Fortbildung sowie starre institutionelle Vorgaben. Bei den Faktoren auf der Mikroebene sind große Klassengrößen, eine homogene Schülerschaft, eine professionelle Praxisgemeinschaft, Zeitmangel, die Verwirrung der Lehrkräfte über die ICC-Bewertung sowie das geringe Engagement der Schülerschaft im Unterricht zu nennen. Insgesamt lieferte diese Studie theoretische und praktische Implikationen, wie ICC besser in den Kontext von Englisch als Fremdsprache integriert werden kann. Abschließend wies die Studie auf einige

Einschränkungen hin und zeigte Vorschläge für zukünftige Forschung auf.

Abstract

The global use of English in diverse areas, such as economic, political, and academic collaborations, calls for the crucial methodology of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in English language teaching (ELT). Accordingly, there has been considerable recognition of treating ICC as the core of the second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) education in top-down curricula and educational policies not only in European and North American countries but also in Asia, such as China. Nevertheless, little empirical research has been conducted from the bottom-up perspective, such as in-service SL/FL teachers' beliefs, and even fewer studies incorporated a non-Western background. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how Chinese ELT teachers perceive ICC and implement ICC-related teaching practices in the university context.

Teacher beliefs are considered an abstract and complex construct, which plays a critical role in cultivating students' ICC and is intricately related to teachers' classroom practices in ELT. As active decision-makers, teachers' perceptions and views affect their teaching practices. On the other hand, the crucial role of teachers' prior study abroad (SA) experience has been acknowledged as a prominent factor in influencing ELT teacher beliefs and their cultural teaching enactments within the vibrant research scene of SA. However, comparatively little is known about similarities or differences in teacher beliefs and teaching practices in teaching ICC between SA teachers and their counterparts of non-study-abroad (NSA) teachers. More importantly, to what extent the factor of SA experience can predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their instructional behaviours remains unclear.

To address the above-mentioned research gaps, this study aims to understand how ICC is conceptualised and implemented by ELT teachers in Chinese higher education. In addition, it examines whether differences in teacher beliefs and instructional techniques of ICC are visible between teachers with SA experience and those who do not have SA

experience. Moreover, the predictive power of SA experience for teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in the ELT classroom is examined in-depth. Last but not least, this study explores a spectrum of hindrances at macro, meso, and micro levels for Chinese ELT teachers' intercultural teaching decisions.

Considering the significance of teachers' SA experience in shaping teachers' beliefs, this study examines teacher beliefs about ICC and intercultural teaching practices in two comprehensive universities in China. Using a mixed-method study design as the research method, this study collected data from 163 Chinese ELT teachers' responses to an online teacher survey and semi-structured interviews with ten teacher participants. Exploratory factor analysis, descriptive data analysis, independent samples *t*-test, correlational analysis and hierarchical linear regression models were adopted to answer the research questions of the present study. Figure 12 in chapter 7 visualises the significant findings of the study based on a range of data analyses.

In the quantitative phase, descriptive results showed a certain bias between stated teacher beliefs about ICC and teachers' actual teaching practices. For example, while the participants relegated teaching culture-specific knowledge to a subordinate position in teaching ICC, they largely adopted one-way transmission and two-way interaction approaches to address visible cultural components in the classroom. Furthermore, the comparative analysis indicated no significant differences in the perceived ELT objectives, the significance of ICC components, and teacher attitudes about ICC between SA and NSA participants. Nonetheless, SA teachers tended to implement ICC teaching practices, i.e., touching upon ICC-relevant topics and teaching approaches, more frequently than NSA teachers at a significant level. Compared with SA teachers, correlational analyses revealed that NSA teachers' beliefs about ICC were divergent from instructional practices in the classroom. Lastly, multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis results supported that teachers' prior SA experience could significantly predict teachers' reported ELT objectives and ICC-related classroom

practices.

Results from semi-structured interviews revealed that ten factors at macro, meso, and micro levels constrained teachers' cultural enactments of ICC in their classrooms. These findings confirmed sociocultural influences on teacher beliefs and cultural teaching practices. Macro-level factors include gaps between top-down policy and bottom-up teaching constraints and the washback effect of high-stakes tests. Meso-level factors involve the lack of pre-service training, in-service professional development, and rigid institutional policy requirements. Micro-level factors are large class sizes and the homogeneous student body, professional community of practice, time constraints, teachers' confusion about ICC assessment, as well as students' low level of classroom engagement. Accordingly, this study provided theoretical and practical implications concerning how to better incorporate ICC into an English as a foreign language (EFL) context. In the end, this study pointed out several limitations and further recommended suggestions for future research.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

CC	Communicative competence
EFL	English as a foreign language
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
EIL	English as an international language
ELT	English language teaching
FL	Foreign language
IC	Intercultural competence
ICC	Intercultural communicative competence
M	Mean scores
MOE	Ministry of education
NSA	Non-study-abroad
<i>r</i>	Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient
rho	Spearman Rank Order Correlation
SA	Study abroad
SD	Standard deviation
SL	Second language

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1. Introduction

The present study intends to explore English language teachers' beliefs and instructional practices in teaching intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and their relationships with study abroad (SA) experience in the context of Chinese higher education. To that end, this study is conducted to address three under-explored issues: (1) ICC teaching in English language teaching (ELT) from practising teachers' perspectives, i.e., teachers' beliefs and instructional practices; (2) comparisons between SA teachers and non-study-abroad (NSA) teachers in terms of teacher beliefs and teaching practices regarding ICC (3) the potential relationship between teachers' SA experience, teacher beliefs and teaching practices related to ICC. The findings of this study are theoretically significant for the current literature and provide practical implications for educational stakeholders and policymakers with respect to enhancing the ICC teaching quality in the second or foreign language (SL/FL) classroom.

This opening chapter describes how this study is raised from the very beginning. It starts with an explanation of the rationale of this study in section 1.1. Section 1.2 further explains the statement of research problems. Section 1.3 discusses the purpose of the present study. Furthermore, section 1.4 presents the significance of this study. Lastly, section 1.5 outlines the structure of this thesis.

1.1 The rationale of the study

The incorporation of ICC into ELT has emerged as a critical focus around the world (Göbel & Helmke 2010; Tolosa et al. 2018). Since the 21st century, ELT has gradually been reframed to integrate intercultural dimensions into language teaching classrooms. Accordingly, the goals of ELT have integrated the ICC development of learners who should be taught to interact successfully with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The concept of ICC involves one's capability to communicate appropriately and effectively with others from different linguacultural backgrounds (Byram 1997;

Deardorff 2006). One's ICC development is closely linked to attitudes, knowledge, skills, and language proficiency in intercultural encounters. To that end, SL/FL teachers are expected to not only improve language learners' skills but also develop their ICC through teaching pedagogies. Given ICC as a chief goal of English language education, ELT teachers should position themselves as not only English but also intercultural competence (IC) teachers, who should prepare their students for successful collaborations and communications with those from different linguacultural backgrounds (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson 2012; Longview Foundation 2008).

Nonetheless, it has been observed that ELT teachers across different educational contexts deprioritise ICC or merely consider teaching ICC as "specific knowledge and socio-pragmatic norms of mainstream English-speaking countries" (Gu 2016: 11). ELT teachers simply regard teaching ICC as a body of stable facts and cultural knowledge associated with the target culture. Thus, it has become increasingly crucial to develop teachers' conceptualisations of ICC, as teacher beliefs and reflections determine their attitudes towards teaching activities and students' learning outcomes (Gu 2016; Timperley et al. 2007; Wong 2013).

Numerous studies have made ongoing efforts to evaluate teacher beliefs and teaching approaches concerning ICC (e.g., Gu 2016; He et al. 2017; Sercu 2005; Saricoban & Oz 2014; Safa & Tofghi 2021; Young & Sachdev 2011) and explored influential factors for the disconnection between teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices (e.g., Phipps & Borg 2009; Resta & Laferrière 2015). According to Byram (2015), there is a distinct difference between educating teachers regarding intercultural language teaching and training them to develop their ICC. As argued by many researchers (e.g., Borg 2018; Cushner 2007; Czura 2018; Hadis 2005; Neff & Apple 2020; Stachowski & Sparks 2007), obtaining the first-hand SA experience could be the most effective way to broaden teachers' intercultural perspectives, develop teachers' pedagogical beliefs as well as enrich their ICC teaching approaches. However, to what extent SA experience can contribute to teacher beliefs and classroom actions regarding ICC remains relatively unknown. A scarcity of studies has been conducted to

compare differences in teacher beliefs and relevant cultural teaching practices between SA and NSA teachers. Consequently, there has been growing academic scepticism on the impact of SA on teachers' beliefs and classroom practices of interculturality (e.g., Dunn et al. 2014; Marx & Moss 2011; Smolcic & Katunich 2017; Wang et al. 2021; Yada et al. 2019).

1.2 The statement of research problems

Moving to mainland China (hereafter China), where the present study takes place, learning English is gaining prominence at an accelerated rate and represents a gatekeeping function of increased social status and economic gains. Since 2000, China's Ministry of Education (MOE) has emphasised the significance of ICC, with "growing awareness and pressure to keep up with the pace of globalization and international exchanges" (Wang et al. 2017: 95). From the top-down Chinese governmental perspective, economic development and maintenance require increasingly competent and bilingual workforces. At the same time, the teaching landscape of ELT has shifted drastically in China. According to Qi (2017), ELT teachers at all educational levels have to cope with the demands from the growing number of middle-class families for high-quality English language education. Specifically, well-educated Chinese parents from the upper middle classes expected their children to acquire English and prepare for overseas study and immigration opportunities. These policy and practical needs demand interculturally competent teachers to handle socio-economic diversity and meet students' different learning needs.

Nevertheless, the traditional teacher-centred, grammar-translation approach and an emphasis on English language knowledge are prevalent in China's ELT (Liu et al. 2016). Teachers still face unprecedented challenges in understanding ICC and applying intercultural techniques in the classroom. As documented by previous studies (e.g., Hu 2010; Han 2014; Wang et al. 2017), one notable reason is the lack of qualified intercultural training for in-service ELT teachers. Thus, few teachers have the skills, energy, and experience to design an intercultural teaching curriculum. This raises the

need to enhance teachers' ICC and address in-service teachers' readiness for conceptual and behavioural changes. On the other side, this questions in-service teachers' preparedness for fulfilling the goal of fostering Chinese students' engagement with intercultural issues.

Nowadays, an international environment is incremental in Chinese higher education, which has introduced strategic investment in order to catch up with top-tier universities in the world. In 2015, the Chinese government announced the “Double First-Class Initiative”, a major commitment made by the government to “build China into an international power in higher education” (Liu et al. 2019: 93). This initiative is a performance-based decision to construct a batch of high-level universities and develop disciplinary characteristics. Chinese universities strive to work closely with international partners as a strategic response to the national commitment. Inspired by the “going-out” and “bringing-in” attempts within the reform-based development initiative, teachers are encouraged to attend intercultural activities and conduct projects in collaboration with international partners. Moreover, Chinese universities have provided different SA programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers by exposing them to a new cultural context and advanced educational concepts focusing on enhancing teachers' professional competence and developing insights into ICC. This is especially the case for SL/FL education. With that said, ELT teachers can obtain more opportunities than ever to acquire authentic intercultural experience and qualifications for intercultural teaching. On the other hand, Chinese universities strengthened the recruitment of talented researchers from abroad universities and institutions because they are recognised for bringing intercultural perspectives and increasing China's human capital accumulation for international competitiveness.

Although teachers' SA experience has been acknowledged as a powerful source of fostering ICC-oriented teachers in previous studies (e.g., Chen & McConachy 2021; He et al. 20117; Walters et al. 2009), we know little about the extent to which SA experience can predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their implementation in the host communities (Moorhouse & Harfitt 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to use teachers'

SA experience as a valuable lens to inquire into ELT teachers' perceptions of ICC and relevant pedagogies, i.e., whether and to what extent teachers' SA experience impacts their views about ICC and pedagogical means to implement intercultural approaches. For a clear clarification, SA experience in this study is operationalised as a formal and academic experience through credit-bearing programmes or universities in a country other than the participants' own.

Therefore, this study aims to offer empirical evidence regarding teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC from Chinese ELT teachers' perspectives. Moreover, it unveils the complex relationship between teacher beliefs, teaching practices and teachers' SA experience in the Chinese context. Four research questions were formulated accordingly:

(1): What are Chinese ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices?

(2): Are there differences (or similarities) in ICC beliefs and teaching practices between NSA and SA teachers?

(3): To what extent does the SA experience predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their relevant teaching practices?

(4): What other factors may influence the (in)congruence between teacher beliefs and instructional practices in ICC?

It is expected that providing answers to the research questions mentioned above may contribute to a better understanding of teacher beliefs about ICC and Chinese ELT teachers' actual teaching practices. Further, delving into the relationship between teacher beliefs, teaching practices, and SA experience can provide rich insights into the role of SA experience in transforming teachers' ICC instructions. According to the data analysis, examining the factor of SA experience and other underlying forces that mediate the extent to which teachers act in accordance with their beliefs about ICC can enable teachers and other educational stakeholders to better understand the process of intercultural teaching in ELT.

1.3 Purpose of the study

SA research for educational purposes in applied linguistics has evolved rapidly over the past few decades due to the increased popularity of overseas immersion programmes (Räsänen 2019). Increasing attention has been targeted at ELT teachers' personal and intercultural development during or post the SA experience; for instance, how mobile teachers construct their personal and professional identity (e.g., Parmigiani et al. 2021; Rosenfeld et al. 2022) and how teachers produced professional and linguistic growth (e.g., Hauerwas et al. 2017; Helmchen & Melo-Pfeifer 2018).

Additionally, findings have revealed that ELT teachers' SA experience or other overseas immersion programmes play a crucial role in shaping teachers' beliefs about ICC and intercultural teaching practices (e.g., Mikulec 2019; He et al. 2017; Yu et al. 2020). However, there is relatively little empirical research against the backdrop of Chinese higher education. Moreover, limited research has investigated the explanatory power of teachers' prior SA experience in shaping teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC. Concerning any theoretical and practical model grounded in empirical investigation, the principal purpose of the present study is to explore ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices at two Chinese universities and examine to what extent teachers' prior SA experiences influence their beliefs and teaching practices. To that end, the present study specifies six primary objectives as follows:

1. to investigate teachers' opinions on ELT objectives;
2. to examine teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards ICC teaching;
3. to enquire about teachers' instructional practices in ICC teaching;
4. to examine similarities and differences between SA and NSA teacher groups' beliefs and teaching practices in ICC teaching, as well as intricate relationships between teacher beliefs and teaching practices in two sub-samples;
5. to probe into what and how teachers' SA experience impacts their ICC beliefs and intercultural teaching practices in the classroom context.
6. to delineate a comprehensive picture of underlying reasons behind tensions between what teachers think and behave regarding ICC.

1.4 Significance of the study

Understanding ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and teaching practices in the Chinese higher educational context and their dynamic relationships with teachers' prior SA experience are insightful at theoretical and practical levels. Its theoretical importance can be three-fold. Firstly, through examining ELT teachers' beliefs towards ICC and their instructional practices, this study endeavours to narrow down several research gaps of previous research on ICC teaching in ELT: insufficient attention paid to in-service ELT teachers' cognition about ICC, especially in a non-Western context and a lack of the mixed-method design. Secondly, the present study sheds light on our more profound understanding of the influence of teachers' intercultural exposure on their cognition about teaching ICC with empirical evidence. Through exploring the interplay between teacher beliefs, teaching practices in teaching ICC and SA experience, this study attempts to reveal the gap between ELT teachers' beliefs and actual teaching practices of in-service teachers, which calls intercultural education into question in the Chinese higher educational context. With that said, the present study is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of subsequent intercultural immersion programmes on the professional development of in-service teachers. Thirdly, probing teachers' beliefs and practices helps unveil favourable and unfavourable comments from in-service ELT teachers about various factors that may explain unfulfilled ICC teaching outcomes.

In addition, the present study has practical significance. Initially, this study presents a deep understanding of SA programmes for Chinese in-service ELT teachers. It gives directions and suggestions for designing and implementing effective international field programmes. Inquiring more about the nature of the experience from bottom-up in-service teachers' views will enhance the effectiveness of such mobility programmes. Secondly, it provides guidelines which may develop teachers' conceptualisations of ICC and design intercultural-oriented curricula and teaching materials and, therefore, illustrate the intercultural stance of ELT. At last, it offers implications for teacher educators, policymakers and university administrators to promote pre-service and in-service teachers' professional competence and personal

development.

1.5 The organisation of the study

This chapter has delineated the background of this thesis and pointed out the academic research problems to provide the rationale for this study. At the same time, this chapter describes the purpose of the present study and discusses the importance of this thesis. To sum up, the structure of this thesis is provided.

This thesis consists of nine chapters presented below.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of this study, including its background, primary research problems, purposes, and academic and practical significance. Chapter 2 provides explanations for critical terminologies conceptualised by previous studies. At the same time, this chapter reviews the literature on language, culture, intercultural education approaches, definitions of ICC, teacher beliefs, teaching practices and influential factors. In addition, ELT teachers' prior SA experience as a catalyst for their intercultural teaching has been illustrated in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 3 offers a deeper probe into the development of ICC in language education in China, teacher beliefs about ICC within Chinese ELT, theoretical ICC models drawn from Chinese sociocultural characteristics, and empirical studies rooted in China. Accordingly, four research questions are listed in this chapter. Next, chapter 4 provides the research design and methodology employed for conducting this study, including data collection, data analysis, research site selection, participants, and the pilot study process. This chapter also touches upon the ethical considerations, reliability, and validity of this study.

The findings of four research questions are described in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 presents the quantitative analysis results from the questionnaire regarding ELT teachers' beliefs and instructions regarding teaching ICC, to what extent NSA and SA teachers' beliefs and teaching practices differ, and to what extent the SA experience influences ELT teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC. This chapter also investigates the multifaceted relationship between teacher beliefs about ICC, teaching

practices, and SA experience. Chapter 6 is devoted to interpreting the qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews. The chapter thus claims how a multitude of factors at macro, meso, and micro levels in educational contexts significantly impact teachers' ICC-related teaching practices.

Chapter 7 interprets and discusses the main findings of this study and further compares them with results revealed from previous studies. Chapter 8 presents how this study contributes to intercultural education in ELT with theoretical and practical implications. Chapter 9 provides a summary of the present study based on earlier chapters. Accordingly, this chapter constructs a framework for the notable findings of the present study. Lastly, it points out several limitations of this study and further offers directions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

SL/FL education research has expanded to many sub-disciplines, including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and cognitive linguistics. It has gone through a developmental stage during the past decades. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) divided the trends of language teaching into three stages concerning dominant teaching approaches: the *environmentalist* approach, the *innatist* approach and the *interactionist* approach. To be specific, the *environmentalist* approach views language as consisting of different elements (e.g., phonemes, morphemes, words, and sentence types) related to each other in structured rules. It embraces the “stimuli-response-reinforcement chain” (ibid: 5), through which the more stimuli a learner receives, the better the learner will master a language (Lightbown & Spada 2006; Rivers 1983). This approach regards language teaching as static and passive and learners as passive knowledge receivers. Guided by this approach, parents and educators play an essential role in setting appropriate learning environments where learners can imitate and practice sufficiently.

By the 1960s, however, innatists argued against the *environmentalist* approach by contending that all human beings possess “an innate ability to process language and as actively participating in the learning process, using various mental strategies in order to sort out the language system to be learnt” (ibid: 7). With that said, learners are active rather than passive participants in the language acquisition process (Juffs 2010). The *innatist* approach goes beyond structural linguistics, which involves the mere description of surface forms of utterances in the *environmentalist* approach and emphasises the creative nature of human language.

By the 1970s, the *interactionist* approach began to replace the *innatist* approach due to its lack of considering the sociocultural background of the language use, which is crucial in the language learning process (Halliday 1975; Hymes 1972; Pica 2005; Tomasello 2003; Toohey & Norton 2010). This emergent approach advocated both structure and function of the language and emphasised the quality of interaction and

learners' cognitive capacity in the learning process, all of which are essential in developing learners' communicative competence (CC). In theory, Halliday's systemic grammar (1970, 1975) and Chomsky's grammatic competence (1957, 1965) represent this paradigm shift. When interactionalists focused on language learners' cognitive capacity in language acquisition, the communicative function was considered the critical goal in language learning and use. Therefore, developing CC in SL/FL teaching became the paramount concern among educators. In the 21st century, marked by increasing intercultural exchanges and the mobility of people around the globe, communication in a competent manner in intercultural environments has become the most significant goal, which has achieved consensus in SL/FL teaching.

Focusing on the ELT, this chapter reviews the relevant literature to this study and provides the theoretical underpinnings for this study design. This chapter is divided into four sections. Specifically, the first section examines the concept of culture in SL/FL teaching and unveils the relationship between culture and language in SL/FL education. The second section describes the deficiency of traditional cross-cultural approaches and explains the shift from cross-cultural to intercultural approaches in SL/FL education. Afterwards, the theoretical concept of ICC as a key objective of SL/FL teaching is presented in the third section. At the same time, the most widely used models with fundamental components involved in ICC are illustrated, followed by a specific focus on Byram's model and its critiques. In the fourth section, previous research on teacher beliefs and their practices in addressing culture in ELT is reviewed in detail, which is followed by a discussion of teachers' SA experience and its impacts on teachers' professional development regarding culture teaching in SL/FL classrooms. This chapter concludes with a summary of previous literature and critical concepts included in the present study.

2.2 Culture in language teaching and learning

Valdes (1986) indicated that SL/FL learning is intrinsically bound to learning its culture. As explained by Kramsch (1993), SL/FL learners should inevitably become

learners of the target culture. These perspectives resonate with the “competence view” of culture, which “contends that the knowledge of a language’s culture is thought essential to a full understanding of a language’s nuances of meaning” (Holme 2003: 20). With that said, SL/FL learning can be perceived as the best opportunity within the educational arena for learning about another culture and reflecting interrelationships between language and culture (Risager 2006).

As this study attempts to comprehend the current status of teaching ICC in China’s ELT from teachers’ perspectives, it is essential to conceptualise culture and its influence on English language education as the initial step. According to a chronological developmental conception of culture, the concept of culture in applied linguistics has shifted from a stable national or social group entity to portable representations, from products, beliefs, and behaviours to identity reconstruction and symbolic competence. Nonetheless, due to the multifaceted understanding of culture, this study is not meant to touch upon all definitions of culture. Instead, this study follows Kramsch’s (2006, 2013, 2015) conceptualisations of culture, which classifies culture into the modernist and the post-modernist view.

2.2.1 Approaching culture

2.2.1.1 The modernist view: culture as fixed and static

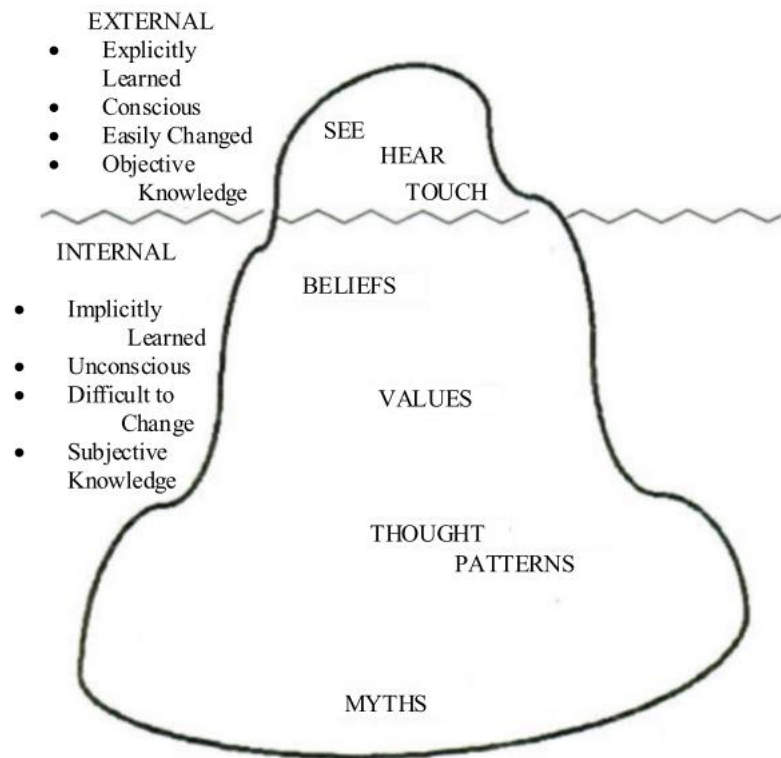
Despite numerous attempts to conceptualise culture, it seems challenging to achieve a consensus on its definition. From the modernist perspective, culture has been traditionally perceived as a structure or framework which consists of the knowledge, values, and practices shared by a group of members within a particular language community or a nation (e.g., Brooks 1969; Goodenough 1964; Liddicoat et al. 2003; Lustig et al. 2010; Richards & Schmidt 2002; Spencer-Oatey & Stadler 2009; Williams 1958). A modernist view regards culture as a national attribute (Holliday 2009). For example, culture was primarily defined by Williams as “a state or habit of the mind, or the body of intellectual and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life” (Williams 1958: xvi-xvii). It is the result of the interrelationship between language,

culture, and a social group that people consider the behaviour of members of one culture to be characteristic of the cultural characteristics of the group they belong to, particularly their nation (Baker 2020; Kramersch 2013). In this sense, acquiring native-speaker competence and following Anglophone speakers' communication practices has been the ultimate goal for English learners (Baker 2015a; Wang 2015). Accordingly, English learners are expected to be exposed to English-speaking cultures which are embraced as a guide for successful intercultural education (Decke-Cornill 2002).

The manifestations of culture mentioned above are a modernist view which sees culture as divided by geographic borders, speech communities or different nations. This perspective asks learners to compare verbal and non-verbal behaviours between their own and target cultures (Kramersch 2015). In addition, the modernist view can refer to big C Culture / small C culture (Weaver 1993) (see Figure 1) or objective/subjective culture (Bennett et al. 2003: 243), which are frequently taught by language teachers (Kramersch 2015). Big C or objective culture generally refers to creations of another culture, including institutions, artefacts, eating, shopping, and clothing. It seems “synonymous with a general knowledge of literature and the arts” and is “the hallmark of the cultivated middle-class” (Kramersch 2013: 65). This humanistic concept of culture equals cultural ways of life in the target language community. Thus, Big C culture is relatively easy for learners to pick up when learning the meanings of objective elements of culture. Therefore, the traditional ELT curriculum heavily focused on a literature study of the target culture as a signal of the hegemony of Anglophone countries.

On the other hand, little c culture encapsulates invisible and less tangible cultural elements (Cushner & Brislin 1996). It refers to “cultural values, beliefs, assumptions, or style” (Bennett et al. 2003: 243). These invisible aspects are consistent with what Hall claims “culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants” (Hall 1959: 39).

Figure 1. The Cultural Iceberg (Weaver 1993).



Nonetheless, the modernist view of culture as the fixed relationship between English and Anglophone cultures seems problematic. On the one hand, static cultural reifications are criticised by Streeck, who contends that “as soon as we take the convention by which nation-states are represented on maps as an equally valid representation of culture, we are deeply mired in stereotypical thinking” (Streeck 2002: 301). On the other hand, members from the same community do not simply interpret cultural meanings or engage in the same way (Risager 2007, 2012). Such a static view regards cultures as a finished product, removing the possibilities for contestation and creation as a feature of social life. Therefore, presenting elements of another culture as static and homogeneous will result in a biased standpoint of the target culture, especially in the teaching context where English as a foreign language (EFL) learners have limited access to intercultural interactions.

Additionally, although the modernist view has dominated SL/FL teaching approaches (Baker 2015b; Holliday 2010), it filters out the internal diversity within the single culture, deriving from the essentialist conceptions of culture (Elsen & St. John

2007; Feng 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino 2013). Thus, cultural groups within the nation become deprivileged and marginalised. As a consequence, culture becomes a problematised construct that is merely a label which is representative of political geography. This monolithic and unchangeable perception of culture can lead to “a bias of cultural differences as well as the premeditated fear of the other’s culture and cultural misunderstanding” (Pattaraworathum 2021: 35). Thus, the concept of culture in SL/FL education should go beyond the boundary of the speech community to a more complex network instead of focusing on fundamental target-language-and-target-culture relations.

2.2.1.2 The post-modernist view: culture as fluid and dynamic

In the early 21st century, the accelerated uses of computer-mediated technology (Risager 2006) and the global status of English as the Lingua Franca (Baker 2015b) have changed the nature of teaching culture in ELT. Many scholars (e.g., Baker 2009; 2015b; Barrett et al. 2014; Ehrenreich 2009; Kramsch 2013; Pölzl & Seidlhofer 2006) have challenged the essentialist characterisations of culture-nation-language correlations, especially the association between ELT and Anglophone cultures. They highlight the social diversity and heterogeneous multicultural groups, which may change over time within the same nation. As Barrett et al. maintained:

All cultures are dynamic and constantly change over time as a result of political, economic and historical events and developments, and as a result of interactions with and influences from other cultures. Cultures also change over time because of their members’ internal contestation of the meanings, norms, values and practices of the group (Barrett et al. 2014: 15).

Put differently, culture is dynamic and fluid in nature, indicating that the speaker’s cultural identities are flexible and negotiable instead of fixed and unchangeable (Holliday et al. 2010). Thus, the emphasis on understanding culture should be placed on “the procedural, social and conflictual aspects of the ascription of meaning” (Risager 2006: 49) and consider that cultural symbols can be created and recreated in an interactive process between interlocutors.

This post-modernist perspective sees different cultures echoing each other and

does not interpret the culture simply as behaviours and events. In this regard, culture can be constructed through discourse practice rather than being bound to the political territory. Accordingly, the speaker's identity and culture can be re-constructed in various ways when he/she engages in the discursive practice.

Following the post-modernist conception, culture can be conceptualised as “social systems that emerge through individuals’ participation in the world giving rise to sets of shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices” (Baker 2015b: 15). The appearance of these cultural norms and patterns are constructed through interactions between people. Equally important is that individual variation is recognised, with culture emerging from personal interactions but not being assigned to any individual (Taylor 2001). Compared to the modernist view, a postmodernist considers culture as identity and discourse. Understanding the dynamic and fluid nature of culture facilitates approaching other critical conceptions, including ICC and the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication. It will be conducive to broadening the cultural and intercultural dimensions of ELT (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1993, 1998a, 1998b).

2.2.2 Language and culture in SL/FL education

Culture and language seem intimately related since SL/FL learning incorporates social and cultural practices (Byram & Fleming 1998; McKay 2003; Risager 2007). Nevertheless, it was not until the 1960s that more recent culture pedagogy was formed regarding its aims and content of culture teaching. Afterwards, owing to the cross-national increase in mobility, tourism, and communication through digital media, intercultural communication has received attention and has become a crucial academic discipline. Since the 1990s, intercultural contact between people from different regions has rapidly grown due to the advancement of information and communication technology. Consequently, intercultural encounters between people have been an academic concern, and an intercultural dimension has thus emerged in SL/FL education (Risager 2007).

It has been widely accepted that language simultaneously manifests culture, and culture implicitly influences and shapes language (Crawford-Lange & Lange 1984). Valdes (1986) proposes that language learning is bound to cultural learning. Language and culture are closely interwoven and complementary; neither can survive without the other (Brown 1994; Fishman 1991). As Brown described: “a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (Brown 2000a: 165). With that said, SL/FL learning cannot be separate from learning the target language culture. In addition, many academic expressions have reflected the intricate relationship between language and culture, including *linguaculture* (Friedrich 1989), *culture-in-language* (Crozet & Liddicoat 2000), *language-and-culture* (Byram & Morgan 1994; Liddicoat et al. 2003), *linguaculture* (Risager 2007), *culturelanguage* (Papademetre & Scarino 2006), and in the German context “Kultur in der Sprache”, or “Sprachkultur”.

The relationship between language and culture has been a topic of discussion for several decades, giving rise to the most well-known theory Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Sapir 1949). The radical version of this hypothesis, *linguistic determinism*, points out that language determines human thought, while the weak version, *linguistic relativity*, claims that language influences thought. Nonetheless, the type of unbreakable association of a language and national perception of culture embedded in the hypothesis has been refuted by the critical postmodernist view, which conceptualises language and cultural practices “as part of a ‘global flow’ which is influenced by and in turn influences more localised linguistic practices” (Baker 2011: 199)

Although a number of scholars (e.g., Byram 1997; Kramersch 2002, 2004a) criticised an essentialised and reified understanding of the simplified identification of language and culture, language and culture are interwoven in many aspects. Since the end of the 20th century, an increasing number of works have turned to the inextricable relationship between language and culture and highlighted the significance of understanding language development regarding cultural identity construction and

culture models (Risager 2006). From the sociological perspective, English has become the bearer of cultures other than English-speaking countries. Accordingly, Risager (2006, 2007) provides a new approach to culture by placing it from a global stand. She distinguishes between the “generic” and the “differential” sense of culture (2006: 3-4). In the generic sense, which is directly related to the speaker’s first language use, language and culture are two inseparable concepts where language is the essential meaning system of humans whereby different cultural manifestations are embodied. However, the differential sense involves the social phenomena of language and culture that evolves around individuals’ social lives. It incorporates various languages, heterogeneity, differences between languages, and multiple forms of cultural practices and knowledge (ibid). This sense points to the visible separability of language and culture in the different modalities of migration and mobility. The concept of *languaculture* emphasises the “personal meaning resources and practices of the individual in shifting contexts” (Risager 2008: 2). Given the complexities of multilingual and multicultural societies where English serves as a global language, the differential sense of culture from Risager is reasonable for understanding the relationship between language and culture.

2.3 Intercultural approaches in ELT

Numerous studies (e.g., Kramsch 1993, 1995; Risager 2006, 2007) have re-examined the relationship between ELT and cultural teaching and continue incorporating an intercultural dimension into the current language teaching landscape. As a component of ELT, the intercultural approach towards teaching culture characterises attempts to understand cultural commonalities and particularity between cultures and to de-centre self and others with an aim to understand their terms from their own as well as the outsider’s perspective (Kramsch 1995). Instead of keeping language teaching within fixed and strict structural domains, English language teachers should equip learners with intercultural skills and attitudes towards different cultures (Byram 1997; Corbett 2003). These skills and attitudes embedded in the intercultural

approach are manifested in conceptualising terms such as *intercultural speaker* (Byram et al. 2002: 5), *intercultural awareness* (Chamberlin-Quinlisk 2005), *intercultural competence assessment* (Sercu 2004), *intercultural sensitivity* (Bhawuk & Brislin 1992; Bennett 1993; Chen & Starosta 1997) and *global education*¹ (Cates 1990; Lütge 2015). These concepts add to an understanding of intercultural approaches in SL/FL teaching and learning. This section describes the paradigm shift from traditional cross-cultural teaching approaches to intercultural approaches, which inform this study.

2.3.1 Cross-cultural approaches and limitations

The paradigm of cross-cultural communication focuses on different communication behaviours or patterns of diverse cultures. As Fries (2009) suggest, cross-cultural communication excludes any interaction between cultures and compares chosen aspects in more than one culture, e.g., different educational systems in China and Germany. In the language teaching context, Kramsch (1998) argues that cross-cultural communication research tries to understand the other by learning his/her national language. In this sense, traditional cross-cultural approaches position the role of culture as an add-on to linguistic content. Accordingly, language teachers are generally concerned about culture-specific knowledge and making comparisons of different cultural practices (Nguyen et al. 2016), and uphold English standard norms as teaching models so as to motivate SL/FL learners to comprehend various cultural dimensions of the target culture.

Due to the global spread of English, cross-cultural approaches have become problematic. These approaches recognised neither English varieties nor individuals' identities as the learning focus. In contrast, cross-cultural approaches simply emphasise

¹ Global education is a pedagogic concept based largely on contextual thinking and future-oriented learning, pursuing a holistic approach, and allowing continual changes of perspective. The aim is to enable people to reflect on their own position in the context of globalization. It offers students skills and attitudes that enable them to foster action and participation when it comes to important global themes such as interdependence, change, identity and diversity, rights and responsibilities, peace building, poverty and wealth, sustainability and global justice. With this approach, teachers lay an emphasis on the future, the dynamic nature of human society, and each person's capacity to choose and shape preferred futures (Hammer 2015: 165).

differences between learners' own culture and the target culture (Holliday 2012) while ignoring the current language-and-culture complexity since most people in the world acquire and use multiple languages in their daily interactions (Brumfit 2001; Kramersch 1998a). Tensions between ELT and authentic uses of English in real life are thus manifested. Therefore, such an essentialist perspective assuming that "learners aspire to a goal of something approaching idealised English native speaker competence" (Newton 2016: 161) is problematic and needs to be re-evaluated.

2.3.2 Applications of intercultural approaches

Although the terms intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication are interchangeably used, they are not entirely the same. Some scholars (e.g., Fries 2009; Gudykunst 2003) distinguish intercultural communication from cross-cultural communication since intercultural communication generally refers to the interaction between people affiliated with different cultural backgrounds across political boundaries. However, Kramersch (2001) points out that intercultural communication can be the communication process between people from various ethnic, social, and gendered cultures within the same nation. Therefore, intercultural communication primarily includes "an investigation of interpersonal interaction between individuals (or groups) from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Jackson 2014: 3).

The nature of intercultural communication focuses on the dynamic, interpersonal, dialogical and material exchange process between members of cultural groupings (Gudykunst & Kim 1984; Jack & Phipps 2005; Jackson 2014). It is in accordance with intercultural approaches in language education, based on the concept of "mediation between cultures", "personal engagement with diversity", and "interpersonal exchanges of meaning" (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013: 8).

The intercultural approach focuses on developing learners' social and linguistic skills to enable them to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (Kurylo 2013). It neither constrains teachers' and students' autonomy by adopting the

cultural practices, beliefs, or values of English-speaking countries nor abandoning students' cultural identifications or affiliations. Instead, an intercultural approach embraces openness, curiosity, interest in culturally-diverse people and the capacity to understand and interpret their beliefs, discourses, values, and practices (Barrett et al. 2014). Accordingly, teachers are required to emphasise interculturality in the interactive experiences available to English language learners (Newton 2016).

Additionally, an intercultural approach aims to develop students' ICC instead of the traditional structuralist goal of native speaker competence (Byram 1997; Guilherme 2002; Kramersch 1993). Put differently, it trains English learners to be critical intercultural speaker who "is aware of the multiple, ambivalent, resourceful, and elastic nature of cultural identities in an intercultural encounter" (Guilherme 2002: 125). Kramersch (1993, 2013) proposes the "third place" where English language learners can understand themselves from insider and outsider perspectives and build harmonious relationships with people in multilingual and multicultural circumstances. Thus, an intercultural speaker should develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that he/she can use to successfully participate in communication across cultural boundaries (Wilkinson 2011).

Lastly, the intercultural approach is learner-centred and encourages learners to investigate topics inside and outside the classroom (Furstenberg 2010; Kearney 2010; Lee 1998; Moore 2006). That is, learners take ownership of their learning by gathering valuable knowledge and information, thereby minimising bias about another culture. Thus, teachers should be responsible for guiding the learning process and actively involving learners to explore, discover and evaluate meaningful information (Byram et al. 2002). To undertake this role, teachers should prepare themselves for multilingual and multicultural environments and equip themselves with theoretical knowledge, linguistic and interactional competence, interpretative and relational competence, methodological competence, intercultural attitudes and beliefs, and a critical cultural stance (Kramersch 2004b).

Moeller and Nugent (2014) provided a comprehensive review of theoretical

bases for intercultural education, extracting significant contributions from Bennett (1993), Gudykunst (1993), Byram (1997), and Deardorff (2006) and listed four common themes, namely, *self-awareness and identity transformation*, *student as an inquirer*, and *process*. It is self-awareness and internal transformation of identity that should be the first step in the pursuit of ICC (Chappelle 2010; Furstenberg 2010; Green 1995; Kramsch 2004b). Only when one becomes open to different values and beliefs can he/she be interculturally competent. Thus, teachers should provide students with opportunities to view the world from other perspectives.

However, intercultural education in the classroom is a linear process that all learners must go through based on different educational backgrounds, life experiences and perspectives. As Deardorff (2006) illustrated, the development of IC is circular without a destination as the learner keeps learning, changing, and evolving. Out of the nature of IC, there seems to be no predefined goal for learners in the classroom; instead, each experience can become its goal in intercultural teaching and learning (Byram 1997).

2.4 The emergence and development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

Concerning the perspective mentioned earlier, ICC has become one of the main goals in ELT through which learners are required to develop knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes that allow them to be globally competent and interculturally sensible in local and transnational environments (Ananiadou & Claro 2009; Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2006). Moreover, a high level of ICC means more access to a better job market, cross-cultural exchanges, and international negotiations (Wilberschied 2015). However, the notion of ICC is not monolithic; instead, it is a cluster of abilities one needs to develop to negotiate effectively and appropriately as the world becomes more internationalised and connected.

2.4.1 Communicative competence (CC)

The notion of ICC originates from and builds on the concept of CC, which was introduced into ELT following the end of World War II (Fantini 2000). Initially, the term “competence” was associated with the early work on formal linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky, who separated it from “performance”. Specifically, Chomsky defined “competence” as the perfect, idealised knowledge of a language by “an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community”, whereas “performance” was described as “the actual use of language in concrete situations” (1965: 3-4). Nevertheless, Chomsky’s interpretation of the ideal hearer-speaker is problematic as it emphasises the abstract formal knowledge system of the speaker without considering the appropriateness of languages with regard to the contextual variables in effect (Cetinavci 2012). Despite subsequent criticisms, Chomsky’s conception laid the foundations for the communicative and intercultural shifts within the language acquisition process.

As a reaction to Chomsky’s concept of grammatical competence, Hymes criticised that Chomsky’s theoretical distinction between competence and performance did not involve references to language use in the social context and related issues regarding the appropriacy of an utterance to a particular situation. To address those shortcomings, Hymes developed the CC concept, which re-conceptualised Chomsky’s grammatical competence as not merely the mastery of formal knowledge but to understand the “knowledge of the rules of speaking” (Hymes, cited in Block 2003: 60), that is, the rules of language use in the social practice and the sociolinguistic appropriacy norms. Hyme’s communicative paradigm focuses on the speaker’s ability to produce situationally and socially acceptable language that “would normally be held to be part of a native speaker’s competence in a particular language” (Lyons 1996: 24). The theoretical framework of CC was dominated by the interactionist ideas which emphasised the role of linguistic environment and the learner’s innate predisposition to the language acquisition. This communicative teaching to SL/FL implies that the learning was “dynamic, social and communicative in nature” (Usó-Juan & Martínez-

Flor 2006: 10) and asks language teachers to develop learners' CC and cognitive capacity.

Hyme's view was further elaborated by Canale and Swain (1980) in the USA and Van Ek (1986) in Europe. The CC model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) consists of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and communication strategies or strategic competence. Subsequently, Canale (1983) expanded the model by adding discourse competence as a fourth component. Amongst the four components in the model, grammatical competence (e.g., knowledge of syntax, sounds, letters and morphology) and discourse competence (e.g., cohesion and coherence of texts) represent the linguistic system. Meanwhile, strategic competence (e.g., communication strategies for avoiding communication breakdowns) and sociolinguistic competence (e.g., sociocultural norms that influence acceptability) constitute functional aspects. This model has been a standard guide for ELT methodology, teacher education, syllabus design and teaching materials worldwide.

In Europe, Van Ek (1986) coined the framework of "communicative ability" for the Council of Europe. Based on Canale and Swain's CC model, Van Ek's framework comprises linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, social competence, and sociocultural competence. The socio-cultural and social competences consider the personal (values and beliefs) and the social development (attitudes and behaviours) of the learner as an individual. Specifically, sociocultural competence refers to the sociocultural context where a language is situated and denotes the use of a specific reference form that is partially dissimilar to that of the language learner. This competence requires an understanding and accepting attitude toward interlocutors' feelings, being open-minded to people with different social and ethnic backgrounds, and avoiding stereotypes (Van Ek 1986). Additionally, social competence includes not only personality features but also the social skills to interact with others. It contains incentives, attitudes, self-reliance, empathy, and the capacity to deal with complex social situations (Aguilar 2009).

However, as English is used as an international language (EIL) through which

one may interact with people from various lingua-cultural backgrounds, the validity of CC is questioned from the perspective of EIL. For example, Alptekin (2002) criticises the unrealistic view of CC and its rigid link to native speakership. Thus, the conventional CC is no longer valid in learning and using EIL in cross-cultural contexts. Matsuda points out that the cultural perspective embedded in English should not refer to any specific country or region but to the importance of “intercultural understanding” (Matsuda 2002: 436). Tam (2004) proposed that ELT should not be considered merely language teaching but “more importantly also as the teaching of global cultures, which will form the basis of intellectual education for the twenty-first century” (Tam 2004: 21). Regarding the assessment, Savignon (2007) stresses that the terms “native” or “native-like” are inappropriate in the assessment process because most English speakers in the world do not possess it as their mother tongue.

2.4.2 Symbolic competence

Despite several alternatives to CC and ICC, the notion of symbolic competence by Kramersch (2008, 2011) is particularly salient. After recognising the necessity of SL/FL speakers’ abilities except for linguistic competence in a bilingual/multilingual conversation, Kramersch proposes the term symbolic competence, which means:

The ability to shape the multilingual game in which one invests, i.e., the ability to manipulate the conventional categories and societal norms of truthfulness, legitimacy, seriousness, and originality, and the ability to reframe human thought and action (Kramersch 2008: 402).

Kramersch clarifies that symbolic competence does not reject CC but adds a reflexive perspective and “some subjective and aesthetic as well as historical and ideological dimensions” (Kramersch 2011: 355) to communicative language teaching.

As a response to national accounts of culture in previous CC, Kramersch adopts a culture stance from a postmodernist view, where culture is a discourse, or so-called “a social semiotic construction” (Kramersch 2013: 68), which seeks to embrace the realities of multilingual individuals constantly on the move. Symbolic competence goes beyond understanding one’s own culture and other nationally oriented cultures; it is about understanding the dynamics and flexibility of numerous discourses. In this regard,

culture becomes a “portable notion” (Kramsch 2011: 355) that is constructed and reconstructed as individuals engage in a negotiation for symbolic meanings when they interact. Interlocutors are expected to deploy various linguistic codes in line with the different spatial and temporal resonances. ELT classes should focus on teaching discursive skills in the new language and culture and communication strategies and speech styles according to specific speakers, topics, situations and purposes (ibid).

2.4.3 Intercultural competence (IC)

IC is considered a foundation upon which ICC builds (Wilberschied 2015) and serves as an integral part of ICC. The concept of IC refers to the condition that someone holds as a capacity to negotiate and respect the meanings of cultural symbols and norms that keep changing during the interaction (Collier & Thomas 1988; Kim 1994). Throughout the literature, a range of alternatives for IC has been used, such as *intercultural sensitivity* (Bennett 1993), *intercultural communicative competence* (Byram 1997), *transcultural competence* (Deardorff 2004), *cross-cultural adaptation* (Kim 2001), *intercultural awareness and intercultural skills* (Council of Europe 2001), *global communication competence* (Chen 2005), and more recently, *global competence and intercultural maturity* (Griffith et al. 2016), and *intercultural capability* (Howard et al. 2019). These synonyms account for the capacity to step beyond one’s cultural conditioning and function effectively and appropriately with other individuals from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds (Matveev 2016; Sinicrope et al. 2007). ICC is the most widely used term in the discourse on the intercultural dimension of language education. Therefore, this study employs IC for the generic and ICC specifically for ELT.

Until now, it seems challenging to offer an accurate definition of IC that everyone agrees on (Deardorff 2006; Moeller & Nugent 2014) since an abundance of scholars (e.g., Alred 2003; Byram 1997; Bennett, 2009; Barrett et al. 2014; Deardorff 2004; Fantini 2007; Hammer et al. 2003; Meyer 1991; Mažeikienė & Virgailaitė-Mečkauskaitė 2007; Spitzberg 1983; Sercu et al. 2005) have attempted to conceptualise

it from different perspectives. For instance, Meyer argued that IC “identifies the ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (Meyer 1991: 137). Fantini defined IC as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini 2007: 12). Deardorff claimed IC as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff 2004: 194). Hammer et al. distinguished IC from intercultural sensitivity by arguing that it is “the ability to think and act in intercultural appropriate ways” (Hammer et al. 2003: 422).

Although there is no consensus on a clear-cut definition of IC, the majority of researchers (e.g., Arasaratnam-Smith 2017; Chen 2014a; Fantini 2012) agree that IC incorporates three aspects: cognition, affect, and behaviour. More recently, the Council of Europe (Barrett 2016) developed the IC framework, which comprises 20 components under five broad categories: values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. Given the various ways IC is operationalised, it seems impossible to establish a standard list of its components (Chen 2017).

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the widely accepted definitions of IC are based on “a western-centric view on intercultural competence, a view in which such competence resides largely within the individual” (Deardorff 2006: 245). For this reason, Parmenter (2003) re-conceptualises ICC to be applicable in Asian countries by fully recognising the significance of human relationships, roles, and protection of faces in interactions among people of Asian cultures where those aspects are essential in interactions. As far as ICC components are concerned, she further highlighted the necessity of understanding the influence of hierarchy, awareness, and knowledge of non-verbal aspects (e.g., silence) and group identity in communications.

2.4.4 Prevalent intercultural competence (IC) models

There is a large number of IC models to describe components and variables

during the intercultural developmental process (Kurylo 2013). In an attempt to identify common themes and re-evaluate previous presumptions, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) categorised IC models as follows:

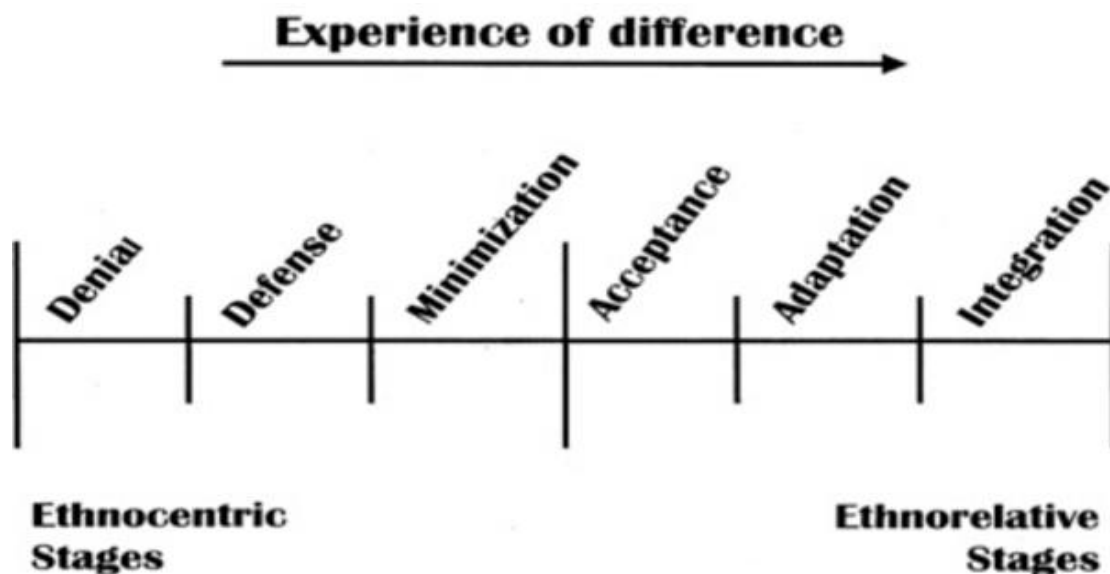
1. Compositional models list relevant characteristics and skills without specifying the relationship among components.
2. Co-orientational models are “devoted to conceptualizing the interactional achievement of intercultural understanding or any of its variants (e.g., perceptual accuracy, empathy, perspective taking, clarity, the overlap of meaning systems) (Spitzberg & Changnon 2009: 10).
3. Developmental models describe ICC about individual development over time.
4. Adaptational models focus on the “mutual alteration of actions, attitudes, and understandings based on interaction with members of another culture” (ibid: 10).
5. Causal path models aim to integrate the components of compositional models and position them in a conversation where variables interact to predict IC.

Additionally, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) pointed out two main problems concerning the nature of these models. Firstly, most models were developed in the Western or North American contexts, which might cause Anglo-centric bias. Secondly, many terms (e.g., intercultural sensitivity or adaptability) for describing IC in those five types of models have not been operationalised in empirical studies. After reviewing a multitude of IC models, Griffith et al. (2016) criticised that many models focused on the attitudinal dimension, thereby lacking the behavioural dimension; and they did not describe the relations among dimensions. Thus, they recommended three criteria an ICC model should follow: (a) define the overall construct and its sub-dimensions, (b) incorporate cognitive and non-cognitive components, and (c) clarify the relationship among the sub-dimensions.

Another attempt to categorise models of IC was from Chen (2017), who classifies ICC models into four types: general models, models for intercultural adaptation, models for education and training, and models for global communication. In the educational context, Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural

Sensitivity (DMIS) (see Figure 2) and Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence (see Figure 3) and Byram's (1997, 2009) ICC model (see Figure 5) are recognised as the most influential models (Moeller & Nugent 2014; Sinicrope et al. 2007). For instance, Bennett's (1993) model describes a dynamic way of modelling the development of IC and comprises a continuum from three ethnocentric stages (denial, defense and minimization) to three ethnorelative stages of development (acceptance, adaptation and integration).

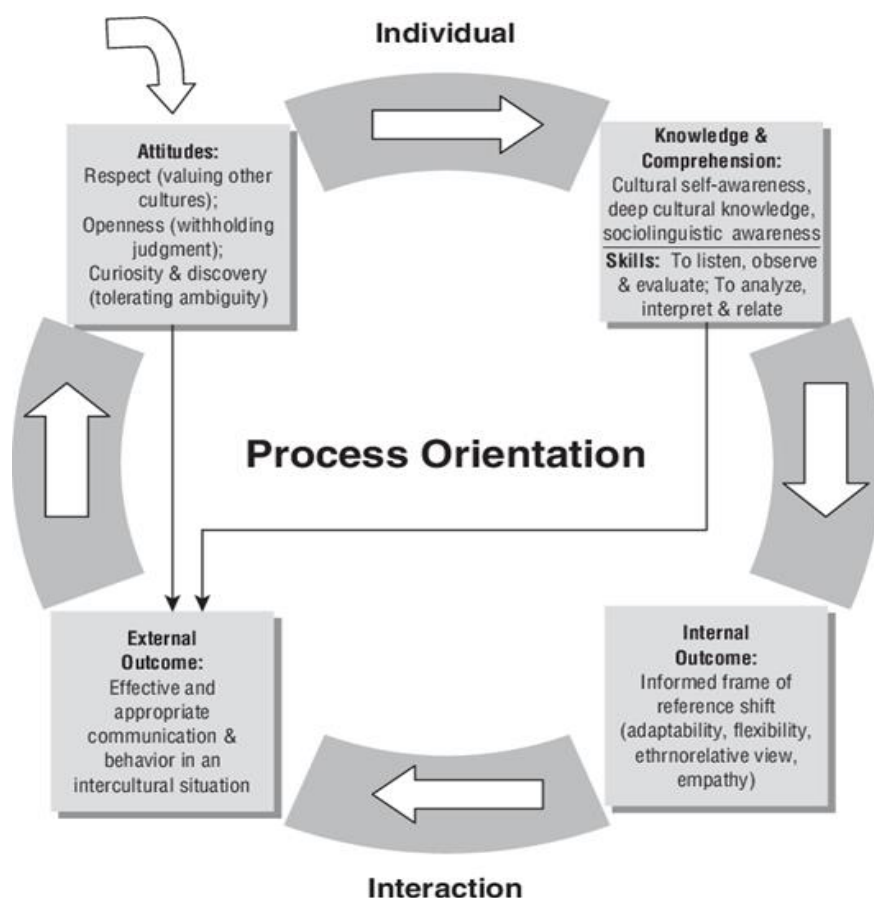
Figure 2. Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.



Deardorff's (2006) model presents a continuous movement between three competences (i.e., attitudes, skills, and knowledge) and two potential outcomes (i.e., internal and external). Regarding the cycle, Deardorff agreed with previous work (e.g., Bloom 1965; Byram 1997; Okayama et al. 2001) that attitude should be the most critical starting point. The following competence is knowledge and comprehension, which consists of cultural self-awareness (i.e., knowledge of how one's native cultural practices influence communication and behaviour), culture-specific information (knowledge of a specific culture's beliefs, norms, and techniques), knowledge of deep culture (knowledge of underlying cultural concepts that influence a person's cultural beliefs, values, norms, and practices), and sociolinguistic awareness (knowledge of the effect the interconnection among society, culture, and language has on communication

and behaviour). The final competence is an assortment of skills (e.g., observing, interpreting, relating, and evaluating). In the framework, individuals can enter at any point with pre-requisite attitudes, followed by knowledge acquisition and specific skills. These merged competences will lead to the internal outcome, including the informed frame of reference (e.g., adaptability, empathy, and flexibility) and the external outcome, which manifests the definition of IC and contributes to an open-minded and tolerant attitude.

Figure 3. Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence.



Nonetheless, the two models above illustrated are not without criticism. Bennett's model is criticised by Scarino (2009) for being too over-generalised to ignore specific contexts and tasks. Moreover, this linear model does not consider the intricate relationship between language and intercultural sensitivity (ibid). Concerning Deardorff's model, Deardorff (2008) reflected on herself and pinpointed the Western bias inherent in the model.

In the field of SL/FL education, Byram's ICC model makes the most

influential contributions and continues to be applied to IC studies (Hoff 2014; Sercu 2004; Shaules 2007). Byram is the first scholar to introduce IC into SL/FL teaching classrooms in his model, which expands the concept of CC. This study aims to explore ICC in ELT against the backdrop of Chinese higher educational and, therefore, employs Byram's model of ICC, which will be illustrated in detail in 2.4.5.

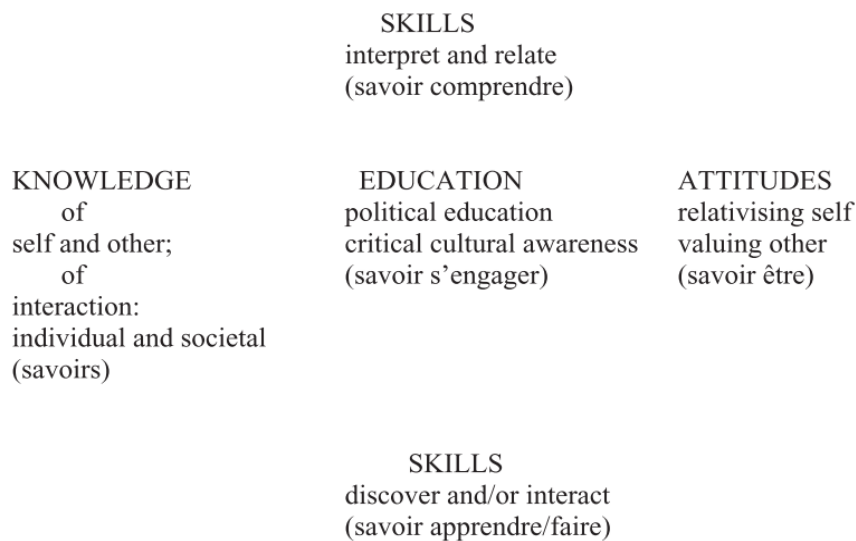
2.4.5 Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and the intercultural speaker

ICC expands the concept of CC and primarily focuses on the contribution of FL teaching. Byram's work (1997) is regarded as the most influential in language education. He is the first scholar who introduces ICC and distinguishes it from IC, which mainly involves one's ability to interact with people from other cultural backgrounds in one's native language, while ICC points to the communicative proficiency in a new language embedded in the intercultural situation. Byram summarises IC as five *savoirs* in the following:

- **Knowledge (*savoirs*):** specific knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
- **Attitudes (*savoir être*):** curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.
- **Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*):** ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.
- **Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*):** ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
- **Critical cultural awareness/political education (*savoir s'engager*):** 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 1997: 48-53)

Figure 4. Byram's (1997) dimensions of IC.



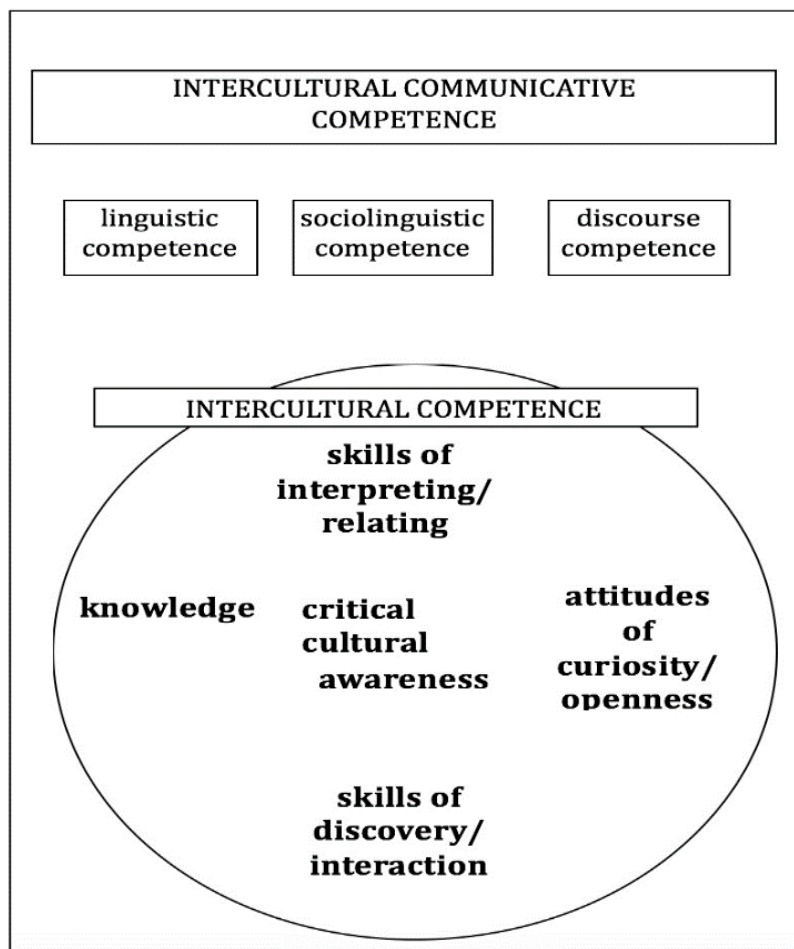
Building on his IC dimensions, Byram's ICC model (see Figure 5) recognises the "inextricable links between 'learning language' and 'learning culture'" (Young et al. 2009: 152). Byram clarifies that language teaching and learning have been more concerned with communication at the level of efficient "information exchange" instead of "establishing and maintenance of human relationships" (Byram 1997: 33). Byram's ICC model makes "use of former conceptions of communicative competence and the notions of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence" (Baker 2015b: 149). To this end, linguistic competence should be supplemented by other attitudinal abilities, such as tolerance and open-mindedness. Byram's model is based on the concept that language learning is a communicative, interactive, and meaningful process. The communicative approach to language learning emphasises the ability to use a language accurately and in a socially appropriate context as a non-native speaker. In contrast, as an intercultural dimension added to his ICC model, critical cultural awareness aims "to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators" (Byram et al. 2002: 5).

Successful intercultural communication requires interlocutors to understand the differences in interactional norms between different speech communities and the ability to "reconcile or mediate between different modes present" (Byram & Fleming 1998: 12). According to Byram (1997), the interculturally competent speaker can effectively

exchange information with members of the target culture, display curiosity and openness, demonstrate knowledge of how language and culture are related in the target culture, possess skills of interpreting and relating, and be able to use an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from different linguacultural backgrounds. If interlocutors maintain conversational involvement, they should be aware of the other's sociocultural background, multiple identities, and linguistic practices used to express one's culture.

One feature of Byram's ICC model is rooted in language education. He noted connections between linguistic competence and the components that comprise IC. He introduced language competence into the concept of IC and then became into ICC. It, therefore, allows the language teacher to plan the intercultural dimension and develop an evaluative and rational standpoint in learners. Another feature of Byram's model is its distinction and interplay between IC and ICC, which consists of IC with linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. IC means the ability to interact in one's native language based on one's attitudes, knowledge, and skills with people from other linguacultural backgrounds. However, ICC involves the ability to do so in another language by someone acting as a mediator between people of different linguacultural origins.

Figure 5. Byram's (1997, 2020) model of ICC.



In addition, Byram has placed critical cultural awareness at the centre of the diagram. Critical cultural awareness involves understanding not only the culture and language being studied but also the readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment about the other culture and the willingness to reflect on one's own culture and question the values and presuppositions in one's cultural practices. Through the comparison, learners can become more aware of their own belief systems and ideological perspectives. They can understand how their own culture is perceived from the other's cultural perspective and how this link between the two cultures is fundamental to interactions. Therefore, the intercultural speaker in this model replaces the notion of native speaker norms as the goal. Instead, the interlocutor should be a negotiator instead of an imitator of the idealised native speaker.

Although many scholars (e.g., Baker 2011; Díaz & Dasli 2017; Hoff 2014;

Liddicoat & Scarino 2010; Sercu 2004) have acknowledged Byram's ICC model, the model is not without criticism. For example, Shaules (2007) is concerned about the abundance of sub-competences, whose meanings are likewise broad. Moreover, this model does not address some possible negative outcomes of intercultural contact, such as prejudices and stereotypes. On the other hand, Baker (2015a, 2015b) pointed out that little empirical research could demonstrate the successful participation of an intercultural speaker who possesses and employs the competences of the model. As to this issue, the level of abstraction makes Byram's model similar to other models, which lack empirical data to demonstrate the interconnectedness of ICC components in practice (ibid).

Hoff criticised the one-dimensional dialogue in Byram's model by arguing that the model "implies that the parameters for the intercultural dialogue are set solely by the Other, and accordingly, the relationship between Self and Other is based on an imbalance of power, rather than equality" (Hoff 2014: 512). For this reason, Byram pinpoints that his model focuses on "agreement" and "acceptance" (Byram 2020: 101) while reconciling opposing views is not always possible in intercultural encounters. Nevertheless, Hoff (2014) pointed out that meaningful intercultural communication should entail participants' recognition of how disagreement and conflict might lead to meaningful communicative situations, the process in which the participants are engaged, and, eventually, achieving a higher level of involvement. That is, a critical examination of different perspectives and outlooks is also necessary to affect interlocutors' ways of thinking and cultivate one's intercultural identity.

2.5 Teacher beliefs and study abroad (SA) experience

This section provides a detailed description of teacher beliefs which serve as a critical concept in the present study. There is an increasing number of research on teacher beliefs regarding a wide array of aspects of ELT. Additionally, the investigated target group of teachers range from elementary schools to higher education. As Pajares (1992) has emphasised, teachers' teaching behaviours involving lesson planning,

instructional decisions and teaching practices are considerably related to teachers' beliefs. As teachers are perceived as indispensable in implementing curriculum reform, it is critical to understand teacher beliefs. In the following sections, I will review different definitions of teacher beliefs and delve into the association between teacher beliefs, instructional approaches and factors which have been documented to influence teacher beliefs and teaching practices.

2.5.1 The definitions of teacher beliefs

Teacher beliefs, which are culture-sensitive and context-specific, are considered fundamental in educational research. Thus, understanding teacher beliefs can illuminate how teacher beliefs inform teachers' teaching process (Stergiopoulou 2012). As a crucial subject of inquiry, beliefs have been broadly used in different disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, education, sociology, anthropology, and business. From the educational perspective, beliefs generally refer to "evaluative propositions which teachers hold consciously or unconsciously" (Borg 2001: 186). Despite many attempts to define beliefs (e.g., Borg 2011; Calderhead 1996; Murphy 2000) across different academic fields, there is a lack of agreement on the precise definition. The difficulty in conceptualising the concept derives from the blurry distinction between beliefs and knowledge, different agendas of studies and the lack of concrete, observable results of beliefs (Fives & Buehl 2012; Zheng 2015).

Throughout the literature, the distinction between teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge proves to be blurry. Fives and Buehl (2012) identify primary sources of teacher knowledge: formal education, observational learning, research findings and experience, all of which influence the construction of teacher beliefs. Nonetheless, teacher knowledge does not necessarily inform teacher actions and behaviours. Although Buehl and Beck (2015) viewed teacher beliefs as subjective claims while knowledge is externally verifiable, they recognised that beliefs could serve diverse functions relating to teachers' knowledge and actions. Teachers' beliefs can help teachers with (1) filtering and interpreting information, (2) framing a specific problem

or task, and (3) guiding immediate actions (ibid). Specifically, the filtering function can evaluate the relevance of teaching content and shape what and how teachers learn about teaching. Once some realities teachers face have been identified as a problem, teacher beliefs play a crucial role in structuring the relevant knowledge and information to the problem (Mansour 2009). Therefore, teacher beliefs and values function as a rich store of knowledge that makes sense of their planning, interactive thoughts, and decisions (Clark & Peterson 1986).

Rokeach (1968) theorised that beliefs were propositions inferred from what a person says or does. Brown and Cooney (1982) took this perception further, proposing that beliefs serve as an impetus or disposition to take actions and tend to shape and determine teacher behaviours. As Kagan (1992) claimed, teachers have their beliefs, an exceptionally provocative form of personal knowledge system that can be generally conceptualised as teachers' implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter. Likewise, Pajares (1992) distinguished between teacher beliefs and teachers' educational beliefs. In his narratives, teachers' beliefs refer to teachers' attitudes about education, including schooling, teaching, learning, and students. In contrast, teachers' construct of educational beliefs includes beliefs about confidence to affect students' performance (teacher efficacy), the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), causes of teachers' or students' performance, perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth (self-concept and self-esteem), and specific subjects or disciplines (e.g., reading instruction and grammar teaching). He further argued that teachers' beliefs are associated with their attitudes toward educational issues and values. Thus, he defined teacher beliefs as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Pajares 1992: 316). Accordingly, he identified three features of teacher beliefs: (1) beliefs are individualised, (2) beliefs guide teachers' thinking and actions, and (3) beliefs are context-specific. These features emphasise both the evaluative aspect and the subjective dimension. Interchangeably, teacher beliefs influence teachers' attitudes and how they select, organise, and interpret information, and in turn, affect how they act in the classroom (ibid).

By contrast, Borg (1999) supports an integrated view wherein beliefs and knowledge, together with theories, assumptions, and attitudes, are under the broad term *cognition*. Further, Borg views teacher beliefs as

Propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change (2011: 370-371).

In line with this understanding, Verloop et al. (2001) claim that teachers as professionals construct their ideas, views and conceptions on essential matters to them but may do so without necessarily compartmentalising whether their thoughts are coping with beliefs or knowledge in their minds. These overlapping concepts in teachers' minds can be understood as "components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions and intuitions are inextricably intertwined" (Verloop et al. 2001: 446). Similarly, Buehl and Beck highlight that teachers "possess beliefs about many different things related to teaching" (Buehl & Beck 2015: 74), such as about knowledge, learners, and teaching activities, and that the extent of specificity varies among them. Understanding how teacher beliefs and practices converge, connect, or interact in defining teaching tasks and organising knowledge and information relevant to those tasks becomes crucial to interpreting the perceptions and practices of language teachers (Mansour 2009). Therefore, when investigating beliefs to probe into the intercultural dimension of ELT and relevant teaching practices, it is pivotal to consider the features that shape the teacher's belief system.

Researchers focusing on teacher education and professional development have emphasised that teacher educators should develop teachers' competence beyond knowledge to cultivate thoughtfully adaptive teachers (Fairbanks et al. 2010). More importantly, teacher pedagogical beliefs should be one of the critical elements of teacher competence. As Pajares suggested:

Few would argue that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom, or that understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improving professional preparation and teaching practices (Pajares 1992: 307).

What teachers reflect on their pedagogical beliefs is a significant aspect in the assessment of teachers' SA experiences due to not only the fundamental role of

reflection in the design of SA programmes (Merryfield 2000) but also the personalised process of teacher belief development (He & Levin 2008; Levin & He 2008). Although teachers' beliefs reflect their knowledge of the subject content, curricular focus and pedagogical methods, they tend to be flexible, dynamic, practical, personal and also involve affective elements. Teachers' beliefs function as filters through which teachers sift knowledge acquired through training programmes, reading, and prior teaching experience. Teachers' beliefs can also reflect their teaching objectives to promote their instructional quality (Richardson 1996, 2003).

In this study, I adopted Skott's definition of teacher beliefs referring to "individual, subjectively true and value-laden mental constructs that are of relatively stable results of substantial social experience and that have a significant impact on one's interpretations of and contributions to classroom practices" (Skott 2015: 19). As Mo (2020) explained, Skott's definition of teacher beliefs can be characterised by four key features. Firstly, teachers' beliefs are a mental construct that is subjectively true, indicating not only that "beliefs are characterized by a considerable degree of conviction" but also that "the individual may accept a different position as reasonable and intelligent" (Skott 2015: 19). Secondly, teachers' beliefs involve not only cognitive but also affective aspects and notice the inextricable link between beliefs and other components. They are value-laden since they require "a certain degree of commitment, either positive or negative" (ibid). Thirdly, teachers' beliefs are contextually situated and relatively stable, subject to change "as a result of substantial engagement in relevant social practice" (ibid). Lastly, teachers' beliefs significantly influence how teachers interpret and tackle problems in their teaching practices. Taken together, Skott's definition of teacher beliefs is broad and inclusive of perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes. It is remarkably relevant to this study and provides a more comprehensive outlook than previous research prospects.

Since the 1970s, English education research has examined teacher beliefs from different perspectives, such as teaching grammar, vocabulary, and literacy instruction. However, insufficient attention has been paid to teacher beliefs about ICC, which has

become the overall orientation of ELT in the process of globalisation (Gu 2016; Young et al. 2009). In the past 20 years, ELT pedagogies worldwide, especially in Europe, North America, and Australia, have been dramatically affected by “the principles of a sociocultural understanding of language and culture” (Moloney 2013: 213). English language teachers are expected to set ICC as a key goal in their teaching process. Enabling learners to be intercultural speakers has been widely recognised as one of the essential aims of English language education (Kusumaningputri & Widodo 2018). At the same time, language teachers play a central part in cultivating five *savoirs* that constitute students’ ICC. To achieve specified purposes, ELT teachers should equip themselves with relevant knowledge and competences before helping their students with ICC development (Bok 2006). Teacher beliefs about teaching ICC determine the success of their instructional practices because they generally comprise the complicated, practically-oriented, personalised and context-dependent networks of knowledge and thoughts that teachers draw on from their work (Borg 2006). Therefore, teacher beliefs about ICC and the degree of their willingness to interculturalise ELT are essential for the realisation of the goal – promoting students’ ICC in the classroom.

2.5.2 The relationship between teacher beliefs and teaching practices

As active decision-makers, teachers make instructional choices by drawing on context-sensitive, practically-oriented and personalised networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs (Borg 2003). Teacher beliefs, which belong to a broader area of teacher cognition, serve a significant role in teachers’ preferences and classroom decisions governing their teaching practices (Borg 2006, 2009; Johnson 2009; Maum 2003; Pajares 1992). What teachers believe about teaching pedagogies and how teacher beliefs are enacted in the classroom have a determining effect on their actions (Chen & Goh 2014; Clark-Gareca & Gui 2019; Kagan 1992; Pan & Block 2011; Pettit 2011).

Previous research has focused on the intricacy between teacher beliefs and teaching practices. Although teachers’ beliefs are believed to have potent influences on their teaching practices, there are significant discrepancies between their professional

ideas and observable teaching manners. With that said, the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices is not straightforward. Instead, it is a complex process mediated by the context, teacher experience and planning (Basturkmen 2012). Rather than categorising the relationship into beliefs influencing practice and vice versa or regarding their disconnections, Buehl and Beck propose an “accurate alternative” (Buehl & Beck 2015: 70) that posits a reciprocal relationship between teacher beliefs and practices. Equally important is that “the strength of this relationship may vary across individuals and contexts as well as the type of beliefs and practices being assessed” (ibid). In this sense, it is not a matter of congruence but the degree of congruence or incongruence between teacher beliefs and practices and their possible results (Ronzon Montiel 2019) or the so-called consistency versus inconsistency in Fang’s (1996) study. The purpose of the inquiry should not simply be to seek evidence that beliefs are or are not related but to understand how teacher beliefs and practices vary and the consequences of belief congruence and incongruence (Buehl & Beck 2015). Variations in relationships between teacher beliefs and practices can be examined based on the teacher’s individual experiences or beliefs about a particular pattern (ibid).

Despite the discussion on whether and how language teachers’ belief systems correspond to their pedagogical practices, scholars tend to agree that these two entities are interrelated instead of mutually exclusive (Borg 2003; Fang 1996). Nevertheless, there seems to be a distinction between teachers’ espoused and implicit beliefs. Espoused or explicit beliefs of teachers “are those which a person can readily articulate”, while implicit beliefs “are those which are held unconsciously and can only be inferred from actions” (Basturkmen 2012: 283). This proposal seeks to expect that a teacher’s implicit beliefs tend to correspond to his/her instructional behaviours.

In terms of the interaction between teacher belief and instructional practice, the system of teacher belief plays an indispensable role in shaping classroom practices by informing, motivating, guiding, or shaping the decision-making process and pedagogical behaviours (Borg 2003; Burns 1992; Fang 1996; Johnson 1992).

Nonetheless, it does not indicate that the findings of previous studies have been consistent. For example, Sato and Oyanedel (2019) examined how Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs about integrated grammar instruction were incongruent with their teaching practices and further identified theoretical, experiential, and contextual conflicts. In other words, what teachers believed in the way knowledge should be taught did not reflect how they considered they could teach, leading to cognitive dissonance. Similar findings have been obtained in earlier studies (e.g., Basturkmen et al. 2004; Liao 2003; Lyster et al. 2013; Roothoof 2014; Zhu & Shu 2017), which seem to be in contrast with studies claiming high correspondences between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices (e.g., Johnson 1992).

Moving to the development of ICC in ELT, the inconsistency between teacher beliefs and classroom realities is apparent. For example, Young and Sachdev (2011) conducted a study where teachers from the UK, USA and France self-reported the intercultural dimension as an integral part of ELT. However, they failed to incorporate the ICC-related components into their instructional activities. This finding can also be found in the study of Ghavamnia (2020), who concluded that Iranian EFL teachers favoured teaching culture in their classes, while some obstacles prevented them from doing so.

Teachers' beliefs are not isolated as a static mental construct. Instead, they can be modified by personal and contextual factors. The interrelations between teacher beliefs, personal and contextual factors may support or constrain the implementation of teacher beliefs in their daily teaching. A synthesis of influential factors from previous studies will be presented in 2.5.3.

2.5.3 Factors influencing teachers' beliefs and teaching practices

Teachers' beliefs and actual practices in the classroom are significant domains of the teaching process (Clark & Peterson 1986). Teacher beliefs provide a basis for action (Borg 2011), and those beliefs guide and affect teachers' decision-making process (Arnett & Turnbull 2008; Isikoglu et al. 2009). Basturkmen reviewed that

“beliefs drive actions, but experiences and reflection on actions can lead to changes in or additions to beliefs themselves” (Basturkmen 2012: 283). Therefore, the concept of teacher belief goes beyond the static psychological entity teachers hold.

Various factors affect the implementation of teacher beliefs into teaching practices. Previous research (e.g., Borg 2010; Basturkmen 2012; Fives & Buehl 2012; Ngo 2018; Pajares 1992; Ronzon Montiel 2019; Zheng & Borg 2014) has revealed that teachers’ stated beliefs cannot always be entirely reflected in their practices because other issues can strongly influence or even override teacher beliefs when informing pedagogical choices (Borg 2003; Farrell & Lim 2005; Richards 1996). Internal factors include teachers’ previous educational experiences as language learners, self-awareness, reflection on present beliefs and instructional methods. External factors include the role of exams, classroom settings, lack of resources and materials, time constraints and colleagues.

Many empirical studies have explored the impact of different factors on SL/FL teachers’ intercultural teaching practices. For instance, Sercu et al. (2005) and Byram and Risager (1999) discovered that educational issues at the macro level, including curricular guidelines, policy stipulations, and attainment targets, and micro-level factors such as learners could influence teachers’ intercultural teaching approaches. As an attempt to explain teachers’ lack of attention to interculturality in classrooms, Garrido and Álvarez (2006) underlined the shortcomings of teacher education programmes. They claimed that although language teacher education could facilitate the application of teacher knowledge of the subject, teaching and learning management, teachers faced struggles with connecting educational theoretical frameworks to pedagogical practices. Consequently, teachers are prone to neglect the “ethical dimension that incorporates meaningful intercultural development” (ibid: 171). Besides, some studies (e.g., Garrido & Álvarez 2006; Conway et al. 2010) concluded that ICC-related challenges have arisen from teachers’ lack of a comprehensive understanding of intercultural teaching pedagogies.

What is equally noteworthy about one prominent factor influencing the quality

of intercultural teaching is teachers' own intercultural experience (Byram 1991; Czura 2018), which makes contributions to the development of language teachers within formal and informal contexts. Through intercultural training, teachers can construct a deep understanding of different cultures and languages and become reflective about their teaching assumptions (Lee 2009). Apart from ICC and language advancement, SA experience can equip teachers with new skills, attitudes and knowledge and provide teachers with opportunities to test innovative teaching activities in the authentic classroom of the home country (Vall & Tennison 1992), which will be illustrated in detail in 2.5.4.

2.5.4 Teachers' SA experience as a factor for intercultural teaching

Numerous studies on teacher beliefs and ICC teaching approaches across different contexts have argued that SA programmes positively impact the depth and width of teachers' intercultural knowledge; and, at the same time, influence the extent they are likely to incorporate an intercultural dimension into teaching realities (e.g., Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. 2003; Chen & McConachy 2021; Göbel & Helmke 2010; Hare Landa et al. 2017; Malewski & Phillion 2012; Pray & Marx 2010; Sercu et al. 2005). For example, Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. (2003) concluded that pre-service teachers with direct contacts in a multicultural environment could express a clearer view of ICC than those who did not, although most teachers realised the importance of ICC at cognitive levels. The study of Pray and Marx (2010) compared Mexican pre-service teachers of English with SA experience and their counterparts with traditional on-campus experience regarding their beliefs about culturally appropriate language teaching. The results indicated that the cohort of teachers with intercultural experience expresses a more empathetic understanding of language and culture than their on-campus counterparts.

As far as in-service ELT teachers are concerned, many studies have explored the impacts of SA experiences on teachers' IC and pedagogical competence (e.g., Anderson & Lawton 2011; Hammer et al. 2003), regardless of the type of SA

programmes. The empirical evidence of such experience is predominantly positive (e.g., Lee 2009; Moorhouse & Harfitt 2019; Tang & Choi 2004). For example, Göbel and Helmke (2010) found that the extent of ELT teachers with richer exposure to different cultures designed more non-prescriptive lessons that focused on the dynamic nature of cultures. Thus, students were allowed to compare different cultures instead of merely absorbing fixed cultural knowledge. The study of He et al. (2017) acknowledged that SA programmes could provide teachers with a unique opportunity to help develop learners' empathy and intercultural understanding.

After teachers return to their home country, they can reflect on teaching strategies they may employ when working with learners. For example, in the study of Plew et al. (2014), Mexican English teachers attending an international professional development programme in Canada enhanced linguistic, intercultural, and professional learning. Meanwhile, the SA experience broadened the teacher participants' pedagogical and cultural understanding and strengthened their pedagogic outcomes. Furthermore, Smolcic and Katunich (2017) synthesised previous studies and summarised seven main threads as crucial intercultural objectives for teachers: (1) building knowledge of culture; (2) building awareness of the role of culture in teaching, school structures, and educational systems; (3) developing cultural and societal self-awareness; (4) create a socio-political awareness and a critical consciousness; (5) understand the process of second language learning; (6) acquire and demonstrate skills and attitudes that support cross-cultural interactions; and (7) personal growth. According to Byram (1994), language teachers are also learners who should experience the language learning process and approach intercultural learning. In this regard, teachers' SA experience may enhance their professionalism and knowledge of teaching methods. Such experience can offer language teachers opportunities for their reflections on teaching and pedagogical capacity.

However, being heavily dependent on residence abroad cannot guarantee an accumulation of teachers' intercultural and professional gains. Sometimes, teachers' ICC does not change significantly, although heading in the overall positive direction.

For instance, Ehrenreich (2004) sought to investigate the impact of the border-crossing German student teachers' teaching assistantship in English-speaking countries on four domains: personal, linguistic, (inter)cultural and professional learning. Nonetheless, she found little continuity between the potential benefits of participants' teaching experience in a foreign school setting and their pedagogical knowledge, beliefs, and teaching practices. Similarly, Cushner and Chang (2015) reported no significant difference regarding intercultural development among three pre-service teacher groups: teachers with overseas experience of 8-15 weeks, the overseas experience of 8-15 weeks with reflective questions provided, and on-campus in a domestic setting. Additionally, Czura (2018) explored whether the length of overseas study influenced teachers' intercultural teaching beliefs and concluded that the time spent abroad alone could not suffice for an adequate understanding of ICC teaching principles.

As SA professional training programmes alone cannot lead to transformative cross-cultural perspectives and global readiness for teachers (He et al. 2017; Plew et al. 2014; Root & Ngampornchai 2013), teachers need guidance to reflect on their teaching beliefs and intercultural experiences (Marx & Moss 2011). Without sufficient reflection, participants may maintain or develop stereotypes and deficit opinions about unfamiliar cultures (Irvine 2003). Thus, multiple measures should be adopted to assess teachers' intercultural readiness and academic competence achieved from SA programmes.

2.5.5 ELT teachers and SA programmes

In the globalisation era, there is a pressing need for higher education institutions to prepare interculturally mindful teachers for global politics, economies, and the integration of diverse cultures into the classroom (Alfaro & Quezada 2010). Universities should restructure teacher education programmes as teachers play a pivotal role in the intercultural teaching process during which learners can be supported to engage with various cultural beliefs, values and behaviour patterns that might contrast with their own cultural experiences (Arthur et al. 2020; Ehrenreich 2006). To address experiential learning in intercultural environments, teachers' participation in culturally

diverse communities of practice abroad as legitimate participants can obtain significant developmental opportunities for preparing themselves as prospective teachers (Wenger 1999). To that end, universities and higher education institutions, such as China Scholarship Council in China and the European Commission in Europe, have offered a variety of intercultural programmes for teachers, aiming to encourage them to gain first-hand field experience, participate in multilingual classes and build cross-cultural relationships at academic, personal, and professional levels.

There are different formats of SA programmes given different lengths of stay and objectives for teachers, referring to such as “SA programs” (Freed 1995), “short-term overseas language immersion programs” (Bodycott & Crew 2001) or “in-country experience” (Byram 2000). Specifically pointing to ELT, one of the influential factors affecting the quality of ICC pedagogical implementation is teachers’ own intercultural experience (Byram 1991; Paige 1993). A wealth of scholars (e.g., Heyl & McCarthy 2003; Hadis 2005; Stachowski & Sparks 2007) suggests that personal exposure to intercultural activities and immersion in other cultures can be the most beneficial way of enhancing teachers’ confidence in their ability to teach, interpersonal skills and professional development.

Smolcic and Katunich (2017) provided a comprehensive review regarding how teachers’ interculturality can be developed in the SA environment. They identified four broad programme types that emerged from previous literature. The first category is stand-alone courses which are part of teacher education programmes or an attempt to improve in-service teachers’ intercultural learning. Secondly, some teachers attend the faculty-led international study tour, which allows teachers to travel to different sites to acquire information about the host country’s history, culture, society, and subject-related knowledge, such as teaching approaches and the curriculum about ELT. Thirdly, teachers are encouraged to attend the international practicum by teaching students from different countries, typically in an international school. Teachers may improve their intercultural awareness through daily interactions with students from multilingual backgrounds and personal exposure to diverse cultures. At the same time, these

community-based experiences can serve as an experiential foundation and reflective practice for teacher development (Sleeter 2008). The last programme type is cultural immersion programmes and field experiences through which teachers serve as an assistant in classrooms. Kristensen proposed four sets of qualifications being improved for teachers through transnational mobility. They include “international skills (foreign language proficiency and intercultural competency)”, “personal (transversal) skills”, “professional (concrete vocational or academic) skills”, and development of European (as opposed to nationalistic) awareness” (Kristensen 1998: 100).

Nevertheless, there are some counter-stories of perceived positive outcomes of SA programmes (Czura 2018; Moorhouse & Harfitt 2019). Specifically, SA programmes may benefit teachers’ intercultural sensitivity, language proficiency, and pedagogical practices. However, there are sometimes contradictory or unelaborated results from previous empirical studies. For instance, Kristensen (1998) divided obstacles to SA programmes into three categories: legal/administrative, practical, and mental barriers. Cook (2009) reported difficulties teachers encountered when they applied pedagogies learned in the host country after they returned to Japan.

Similarly, teachers in the study of Liyanage and Bartlett (2008) felt they could not transfer culturally responsive practices into the teaching environment of their home country. Considering the limited personal growth, Lee (2009) demonstrated that some participants overused their mother tongue in daily interactions, and Sutherland (2011) found that those participants complained about little chances to communicate with local speakers in everyday and academic environments. Rahikainen and Hakkarainen (2013) investigated a cohort of teachers in Nordic countries and pointed out that participants had to deal with challenges concerning language, planning the trip, inadequate funding, and finding a substitute teacher for their absence. In Root and Ngampornchai’s study (2013), the SA programme did not necessarily help to develop participants’ profound levels of IC. Instead, such intercultural experiences may reinforce negative stereotypes about race, culture, and poverty, which has been confirmed in the study of Moorhouse and Harfitt (2019).

In 2015, the Central Party Committee and the State Council in China set targets of constructing world-class universities and first-class disciplines (Double First-Class Initiative) (Chen 2017; Song 2017). It is viewed as a strategic decision that will strengthen the competitiveness of China's higher education system and set the foundation for long-term success. Motivated by the Initiative, Chinese universities have undertaken commendable measures for re-structuring disciplines, building academic teams and training personnel. To develop various disciplines with distinctive strengths at a faster pace, Chinese universities increase efforts to attract high-calibre scholars and experts from overseas institutions because they are the driving force of the construction of the discipline (Liu et al. 2019). Additionally, Chinese universities have continuously provided SA programmes for in-service teachers' professional development and recruiting excellent Chinese scholars with rich intercultural experience from overseas universities. Intending to build an international elite academic team, Chinese universities expect teachers to sharpen their IC skills, incorporate a global perspective, and implement active intercultural approaches in classes.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the existing literature and outlined the key concepts relevant to this study. It attempted to interpret how cultural teaching, teacher beliefs, teaching practices and SA experience are related to ICC teaching globally. Conceptualising culture has evolved from the modernist to the post-modernist view. Intricate relationships between culture and SL/FL education were further discussed. Accordingly, the second section introduced intercultural dimensions in ELT. It pointed out weaknesses of cross-cultural approaches and voted for the application of intercultural practices. The third section sorted out the complexities of the construct of ICC, including the emergence of ICC and its development. Then it summarised several common grounds, relevant components and dominant ICC models based on the existing literature. The fourth section focused on teacher beliefs and their multifaceted and complex relationships with teaching practices. That said, teaching practices do not

always reflect teachers' espoused beliefs, and teachers may engage in teaching behaviours they articulate not to endorse (Lee 2009; Liu 2011). Based on the current literature, this section reviewed individual and contextual factors influencing the congruence or incongruence between teacher beliefs and practices. Contradictory findings of previous studies suggest more studies to shed light on teacher beliefs and teaching practices. To echo the research aims of this study, this chapter offered a concrete perspective regarding how teachers' SA experience impacts teacher beliefs and instructions. Lastly, the core task of building world-class Chinese universities was mentioned. This national strategic initiative became an incentive for Chinese universities to recruit inbound teachers and scholars from abroad. This study focuses on teacher beliefs about ICC and teaching practices in Chinese ELT. Chapter 3 will delve into the overall development of ICC, language educational policies, teacher beliefs, teaching practices, current research gaps and the formulation of research questions against the Chinese ELT background.

3. ICC in China

3.1 Introduction

Linguistic scholars in China have begun to explore ICC since the early 1990s. In the past 30 years of research, ICC studies have obtained diverse perspectives concerning its importance, development, dimensions and framework, assessment methods and challenges of its implementation. In China, where the present study took place, ICC has been integrated into the Chinese educational policies of ELT. Despite a great emphasis on enhancing learners' ICC in ELT within Chinese higher education, previous studies (e.g., Gu & Zhao 2021; Han 2011; Tian 2013; Wang et al. 2017; Zhou 2011) have criticised the peripheral role of ICC and pointed out pedagogical hindrances to improving students' ICC, such as a lack of holistic design of intercultural teaching, unspecified teaching objectives and unsystematic teaching content, a lack of specific intercultural training for teachers and teachers' and students' low awareness of intercultural education. Additionally, Wang et al. (2017) reviewed the development of ICC in Chinese higher education and identified four main recurring problems at theoretical and pedagogical levels, which resulted in the unalignment between Chinese intercultural education and globalisation trends. These problems include (1) a top-down policy requirement for the development and implementation of ICC via centralised MOE; (2) ICC-related theoretical conceptualizations are mostly adapted from Western models; (3) English teachers face challenges in integrating ICC effectively into their teaching; (4) Chinese researchers reiterate the need for more explorative and data-driven empirical research in the future.

Based on previous studies, this chapter briefly presents the emergence and development of ICC after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Then, it provides a description of ICC in Chinese national documents and policies regarding ELT in higher education. Additionally, the primary challenges of ICC implementation in China are summarised. The last section of this chapter illustrates how Chinese scholars construct ICC dimensions and models rooted in the local sociocultural

perspective. At last, it identifies several research gaps in the current academic literature. Four research questions of the present study are formulated at the end of this chapter.

3.2 An overview of ICC in China

3.2.1 Emergence and development of ICC

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China was continuously embroiled in campaigns oriented to corrective political movements, socialist policies, nation-building, devastating natural disasters and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Consequently, China was increasingly segregated from the rest of the world. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping took over at the helm and drove the realisation of *four modernisations* under open-door and economic reform policies. As China began to rebuild relations with other countries, FL education constituted the most urgent demand. Some Chinese international students, such as Wenzhang Hu, Guozhang Xu and Daokuan He, returned to China and started to develop the FL teaching curriculum at the Chinese national level. Afterwards, several ELT works (e.g., Chen 1979, 1983; Xu 1980) emerged while merely focusing on sociolinguistic aspects of cultures in English-speaking countries. Therefore, culture and society in ELT were simply addressed at the superficial level.

In the 1980s, ICC became the subject of academic study in China and gained growing awareness from scholars to keep pace with internationalisation. However, most work was largely borrowed from overseas conceptualisations (Wang et al. 2017). Such impulses provoked an array of English language courses about Anglophone cultures. A typical example was an initial course titled British and American culture. The attainments for teaching culture were mainly about acquiring macro cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries (Han 2011). In this sense, cultural competence equalled a body of knowledge about Anglophone cultures and descriptions of their cultural values. ICC teaching approaches were primarily aligned with comparative cultural studies between Chinese and English-speaking countries. As Cao (1998) summarised, culture-fact-based teaching content and an information-loaded system prevailed in Chinese universities.

Nonetheless, it was not until the 1990s that the ICC concept began gaining attention from college English teachers. Then, some progress has been made from early attempts to improve communicative language competence and expand to specific cultural knowledge, then to more general cultural awareness and expertise, and eventually to ICC as the current goal of ELT.

3.2.2 Educational policies within Chinese higher education

Over the past decades, China has undergone a series of national policy reforms regarding the integration of ICC into ELT in higher education. As the main driving force for the pedagogical implementation of ICC, MOE in China has issued plentiful national policy documents and guidelines for developing ICC. For example, the *English Teaching Curriculum for English Major in Higher Education* (2000) first specified that ELT should develop English-major students' intercultural awareness and ICC. According to this curriculum, teachers are required to cultivate English majors' sensitivity, tolerance, and flexibility in coping with cultural differences. Afterwards, another two instrumental documents came out. The *College English Curriculum Requirements* (MOE 2004) for non-English majors highlighted that IC should serve as primary teaching content. More recently, the educational reform in 2017 has integrated ICC development into FL teaching curricula and other documents, including the *National standard on the teaching quality of higher education* (MOE 2018) and the *Outline of the national medium-and long-term program for education reform and development 2010–2020* (MOE 2010) that inform intercultural teaching and learning. From the top-down policy perspective, language teachers are required to foster learners' ICC, and learners are expected to develop ICC that moves beyond linguistic competence in the classroom. Thus, these published educational policies provide a basic and general outline to guide ELT in tertiary education.

More recently, China and some neighbouring countries have strengthened all-dimensional cooperation. Motivated by the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in China (Cai 2017), Chinese higher education has increasingly engaged in training

international learners with global awareness, knowledge of international rules and the capacity to participate in international affairs and competitions. To this end, the newly published *College English Curriculum Requirements of China* (MOE 2020) underlies that one crucial goal of college English education concerns intercultural education, namely, to facilitate English language learners' understanding of different cultures, to increase their awareness of similarities and differences between Chinese and other cultures, and to enhance learners' ICC. Thus, a paradigm shift is urgently demanded in the theory and practice of ELT from communicative language teaching to an intercultural language teaching approach (Gu & Zhao 2021; Liddicoat & Scarino 2013; Sun 2016; Zhang 2007, 2012).

3.3 Theoretical models of ICC from Chinese perspectives

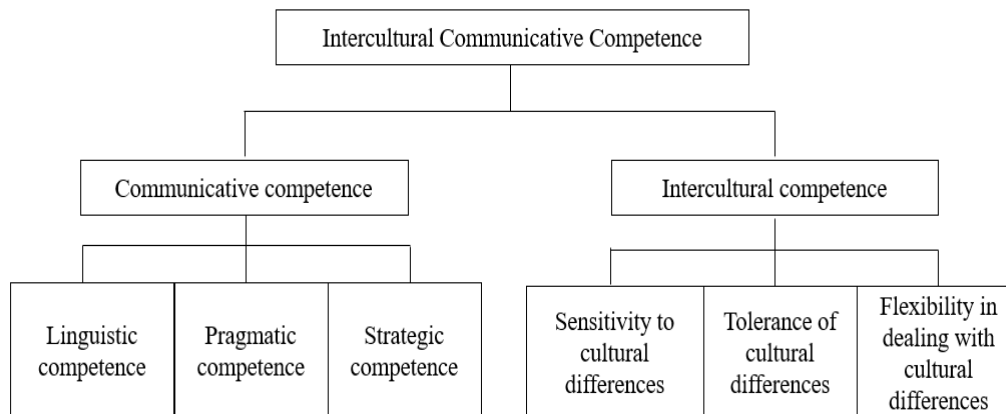
The majority of ICC research in China has primarily involved borrowing overseas insights and adapting them to localised SL/FL learning contexts, attempting to prepare Chinese learners for successful interactions in intercultural settings (e.g., Lu 2002; Zhang 2002; Zeng 2005). Moreover, cultural comparisons with native English-speaking countries provided the primary frame of reference for the ICC teaching field. Therefore, the native-English-speaking model and its related cultures have served as teaching instruments for Chinese students to explore beyond Chinese geographical boundaries.

At present, the most well-known ICC models in language education are developed by Western researchers (Gu & Zhao 2021). Given that ICC concepts are greatly influenced by scholars' cultural contexts (Nadeem et al. 2020), their applicability to particular sociocultural settings other than Euro-American is not fully verified yet (Martin & Nakayama 2015). For instance, intercultural education within contemporary European developments emphasises active European citizenship regarding social equality and non-discrimination (Faas et al. 2014; Portera 2008). Nonetheless, intercultural education in the Chinese context represents a means to educate students as “goodwill ambassadors” (Gu & Zhao 2021: 244) who can preserve

self-cultural identity with international horizons, introduce Chinese culture to the world, and maintain a harmonious community. Thus, many ICC models have emerged beyond the Euro-American concept on the basis of Chinese sociocultural environments.

There is growing awareness of the need to examine and expand the dynamics of ICC based on Chinese notions to consider the increasing complexities of both Chinese and global contexts. Many Chinese scholars (e.g., Gao 2002; Gao 2014; Gu 2017; Sun 2016; Wen 2004) from the last decade have been seeking appropriate ways to conceptualise IC that aligns with the Chinese sociocultural context. Some of them have proposed ICC models for Chinese ELT by drawing on traditional Chinese philosophical concepts with a focus on *harmony* as the chief goal between cultures. For example, Gao (1998, 2002) recommended two levels of ICC development: (1) *going across* cultures (*qi* 器) means the increase of target culture proficiency; (2) *going beyond* (*dao* 道) cultures highlights the gaining of cultural awareness and reflective and tolerant attitudes. She further suggests that while going across has been the emphasis of culture teaching in Chinese ELT, going beyond should be the most significant pedagogical objective. Considering the inadequacies in ELT models in China, Wen (2004) came up with an ICC model which consists of (1) communicative competence, including linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence and (2) intercultural competence, involving sensitivity to cultural differences, tolerance of cultural differences and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences (see Figure 6). She further suggests that ICC should be an integral part of general education, and ELT should offer a specific ICC course to help students with a competitive global edge.

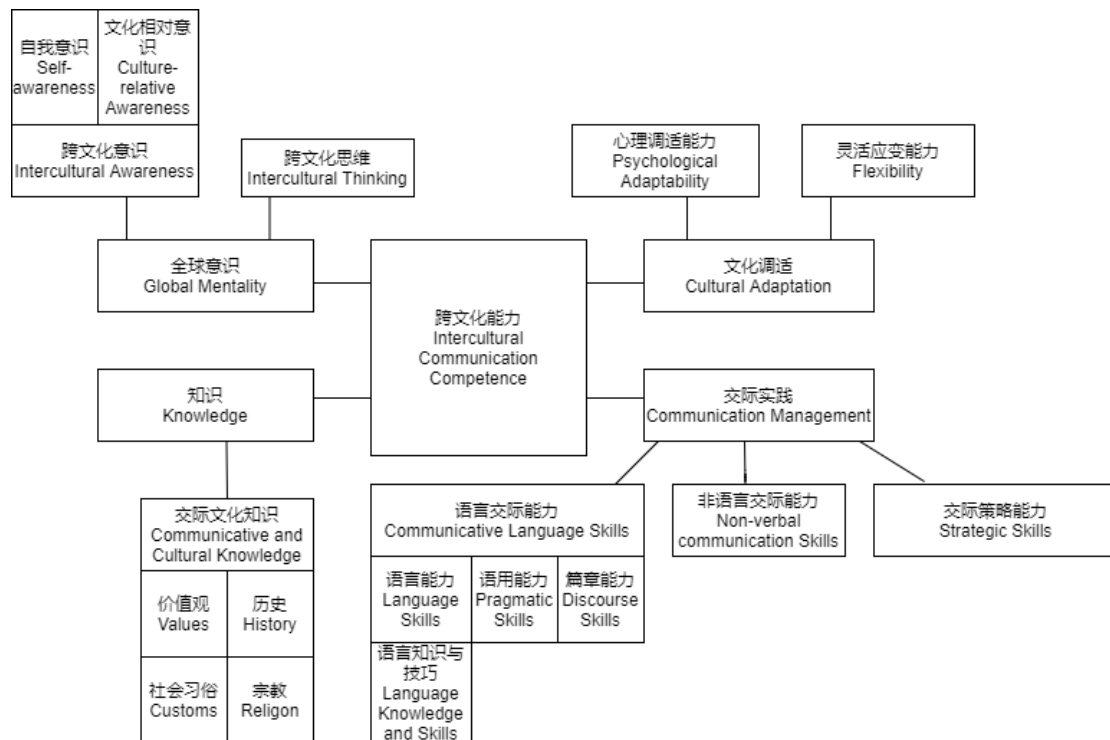
Figure 6. Wen's (2004) two-component ICC model.



Additionally, other ICC models and dimensions have been proposed recently, including Yang and Zhuang (2007) and Zhang and Yao (2020), who provide Chinese insights into ICC development:

- Yang and Zhuang (2007) (see Figure 7) argued against the linguistic concept of previous models, which ignored the communicative goal. To achieve a successful communication purpose, they proposed an ICC framework which consists of *global mentality, cultural adaptation, knowledge and communication management*. These four dimensions include various sub-dimensions which are perceived as significant in the development of ICC.

Figure 7. Yang and Zhuang's (2007) model of ICC.

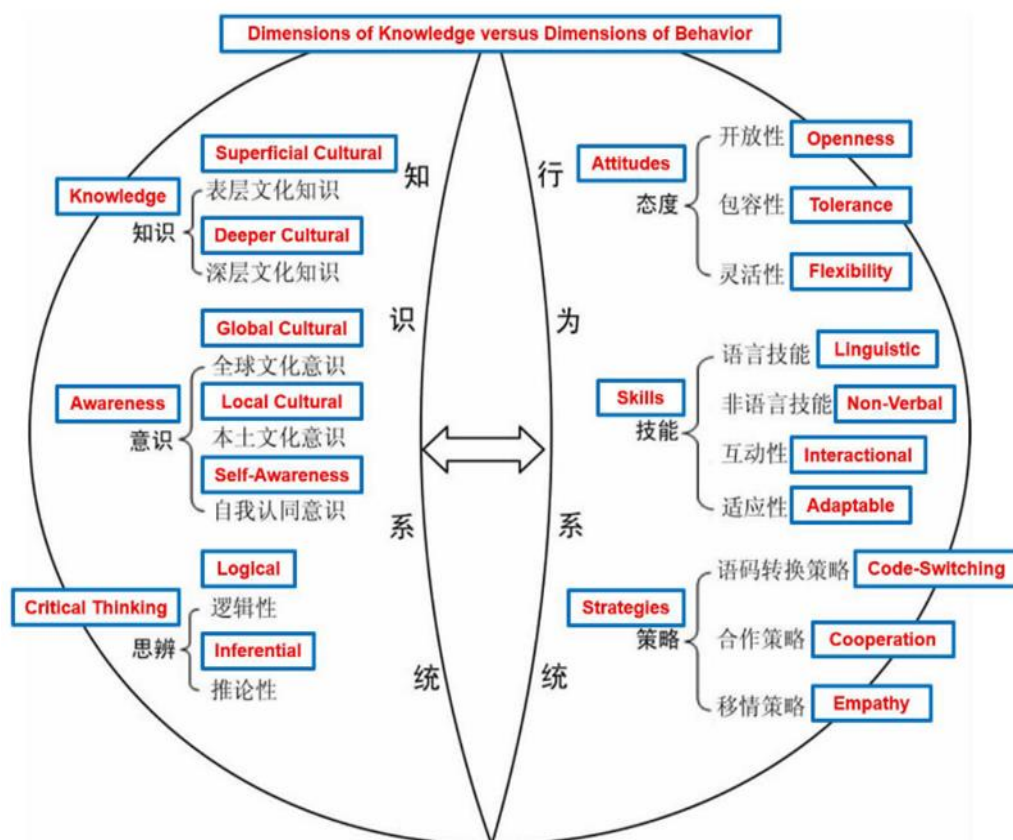


The first level - global mentality, includes intercultural awareness (self-awareness and culture-relative awareness) and intercultural thinking (e.g., analysis, comparison, understanding, and resolving intercultural conflicts), which is the foundation of other dimensions. Yang and Zhuang (2007) support the view that the more positive attitude one holds, the more successful one can be in intercultural communication. The second level is cultural adaptation, which involves reducing uncertainty, anxiety mitigation and psychological adjustment when one suffers intercultural communication failures. The third level is about knowledge which not only includes “large or capital-C Culture” but also “small-c or small culture” (Chastain 1976: 338; Doyé 1999: 19). Besides, it is essential to note that an understanding of one’s own culture is significant for understanding other cultural phenomena (Lustig & Koester 1999; Yang & Zhuang 2007). The last level is communication management, based on achieving the first three levels. This level involves communicative language skills, non-verbal communication skills and strategic skills. It goes beyond CC-related competences and asks one to pay attention to the influences of the interlocutor’s social

status, gender, and attitudes toward others on the intercultural communication effects.

- Gao (2014) proposed a conceptual framework called the Knowing-and-Doing Model (see Figure 8) for Chinese students' ICC assessment based on the traditional Chinese philosophical principles of integration of theory and practice (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一), which came up by the Chinese philosopher Yangming Wang in the Song Dynasty (Wang et al. 2017). The left hemisphere involves knowledge-oriented competences, and the right hemisphere refers to behaviour-focused competences. Knowledge-oriented competences consist of knowledge, awareness and critical thinking, and behaviour-oriented competences include attitudes, skills and strategies. These components are mutually interactive.

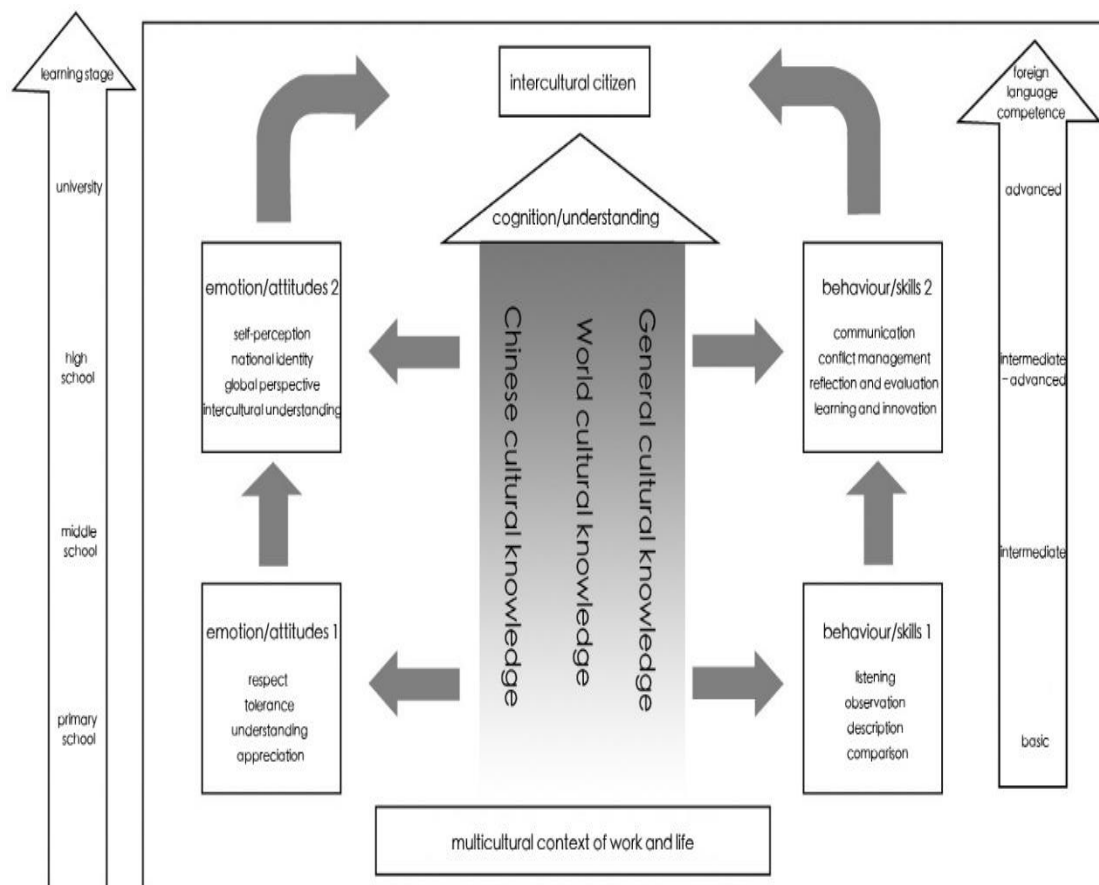
Figure 8. Gao's (2014) Knowing-and-Doing Model adapted from Tong (2020).



- Sun (2016) outlined five basic principles of ICC teaching suitable for Chinese FL education, including *critiquing, reflecting, exploring, empathising* and *doing*.

- Zhang and Yao (2020) put forward a ‘4-3-2-1’ theoretical framework (see Figure 9), referring to four perspectives (communicative behaviour, interpersonal relationships, cultural conflicts, and identity), three dimensions (cognitive understanding, affective attitudes, and behavioural skills), two contexts (working and life contexts) and one platform (foreign language education). With this framework as the theoretical basis, they suggested an Integrated Model for Chinese students’ Intercultural Competence Development (IMCSICD), intending to develop Chinese students’ ICC at all educational levels.

Figure 9. Zhang and Yao’s (2020) Integrated Model for Chinese students’ Intercultural Competence Development.



Despite the growth in the number of ICC models in line with Chinese contexts, little research has been conducted to investigate the systematic pedagogical practice of ICC integration in classrooms (Wang & Pan 2019). According to Gu and Zhao (2021), studies concerning the assessment of ICC are scarcer owing to the complicated,

multilateral, and fluid nature of ICC-related competences. Therefore, both theoretical and pedagogical features of ICC should be considered to support language learners to perform successfully in ICC tangibly. Accordingly, previous empirical studies on Chinese ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and relevant teaching practices will be reviewed in 3.4.

3.4 Research on ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices

It is unreasonable to isolate the research on ELT teachers' beliefs from specific contexts where teachers are located. An array of contextual factors, including institutional, sociocultural, historical, and economic environments in which teachers work, tremendously influence teachers' beliefs and instructional behaviours. Since the millennium, Chinese researchers and language educators have been increasingly interested in examining ELT teachers' beliefs (Mo 2020). To date, the most influential study on Chinese ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC was conducted by Han (2014), who investigated 1,081 in-service ELT teachers through a teacher survey in 39 universities across different regions of China. Her study touched upon teachers' beliefs about ICC regarding their teaching objectives, instructional activities, and contents. Her findings indicated that Chinese ELT teachers received insufficient training, an over-focus on students' grammatical competence, and ignored improving students' intercultural attitudes and sensitivity. Due to an examination-oriented education system, unfavourable working environment and limited lessons, most teachers still prioritised linguistic knowledge and abandoned intercultural education.

Han's study inspired subsequent research on ELT teacher beliefs in Chinese universities, drawing on different data collection methods. For instance, Chen (2014b) employed a mixed-method research design and probed into teachers' beliefs about teaching ICC. Additionally, she analysed cultural representations of teaching materials in ELT. Apart from a teacher questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, Wu (2019) employed classroom observations to address ELT teachers' ICC teaching practices and influential factors in a comprehensive university in China. In these two studies, teachers

reported having unclearly defined ELT teaching goals, blurry teaching cognition and a lack of balance between Chinese and other cultural teaching contents. To address the low teaching quality of ICC, a range of studies (Rao & Geng 2018; Wu 2019; Yang & Zhuang 2008) concluded that teachers' incompetent teaching behaviour mainly derived from internal and external factors. Internal hindrances involved a low level of teaching motivation, lack of intercultural experience, teaching experience, reflection, and teachers' professionalism. External factors included imbalanced social development, unqualified teaching materials, unpleasant university climate, limited support from colleagues and different students' learning needs and feedback.

Additionally, there are disparities between the consensus on teaching ICC from the top-down perspective and the intercultural teaching reality from bottom-up situations. For example, Zhang (2012), Hu (2013) and Sun (2016) pointed out that the Chinese national ELT curriculum provided English teachers with scant guidance on what and how to teach ICC in classes. From the empirical perspective, many studies (e.g., Chen 2014b; Han 2014; Wu & Zhou 2010) revealed that teachers lacked a systematic understanding of cultural teaching and the ICC concept. Moreover, the majority of language teachers lacked sufficient intercultural experiences. Consequently, ELT classrooms were dominated by traditional cultural teaching approaches. In addition, the ineffectiveness of intercultural teaching mainly derived from teachers' vague conceptualisations of ICC (Rao & Geng 2018; Wu & Zhou 2010), teachers' unfamiliarity with specific aspects of the target cultures (Han & Song 2011; Li 2021), exam-oriented educational system (Rao & Geng 2018; Yue & Chauhan 2010), limited teaching hours (Wu & Zhou 2010), unreasonable assessment (Han 2014), the lack of intercultural teaching materials (Hu 2006; Han 2014; Li 2021; Wu & Zhou 2010; Yang & Zhuang 2008) and unsystematic teacher training (Yan 2014). To that end, it has become increasingly significant to re-evaluate language teachers' training in cultural studies and upgrade their views towards ICC, as teachers' beliefs towards ICC and strategies to explore cultural artefacts correlate closely with the amount of teacher training that they had (Torres Rocha 2014), attesting to the differences between groups

of teachers according to their educational background.

As Chinese higher education intensifies its global interconnectedness, a recurring theme in academics is an exploration of associations between teachers' beliefs, teaching practices and SA experience. Nonetheless, empirical results from previous research seem different or even contradictory. For example, Xiao (2014) and Wu (2017) indicated that English teachers with personal exposure to other cultures showed higher scores of intercultural sensitivities than those who did not have direct intercultural contacts. Similarly, in the study of Zhou (2011) and Tian (2013), Chinese in-service ELT teachers with SA experiences expressed a higher level of the cognitive dimension of ICC than their counterparts with domestic campus education experience. However, Cui and Wang (2016) investigated 117 English language teachers in a Chinese university. They demonstrated no statistically significant differences in intercultural attention, intercultural confidence, communicative involvement, and intercultural sensitivity among teacher groups based on their previous SA experience, although SA participants' scores ranked higher than their counterparts without such experience. These contradictory findings underline the complex linkage between teacher beliefs, teaching practices and SA experience and deserve more empirical studies.

3.5 Research gaps and the formulation of research questions

A deeper look into the previous literature on the effects of SA on teachers' personal growth and academic competence not only provides significant insights but also points to several limitations. To be first, an extensive body of literature has focused on ICC from a theoretical and pedagogical perspective (e.g., Hu 2013; Yang & Zhuang 2007; Yue & Chauhan 2010), while empirical research on ICC teaching from teachers' attitudes in China is relatively scarce (Chen 2014b; Gu 2016; Zhou et al. 2011). As the study of Zhang (2012) and Liao and Li (2020) summarised, the current intercultural education in the Chinese educational context encounters a lack of systematic planning and, thus, is frequently fragmented and biased. Consequently, ELT instructors receive scant guidance on how to teach ICC in college English courses (Sun 2016).

Secondly, although SA experience for practising teachers is on the rise, little attention is paid to their existent beliefs and thought patterns (Biraimah & Jotia 2013; Gleeson & Tait 2012). On the other hand, despite many studies which have explored relations between teacher beliefs, teaching practices, and SA experiences through a survey (e.g., He et al. 2017; Lee 2009; Pray & Marx 2010; Wolff & Borzikowsky 2018) or qualitative approaches (e.g., Alfaro & Quezada 2010; Dunn et al. 2014; Hamel et al. 2010; Root & Ngampornchai 2013; Tam 2016), it is unclear whether teachers with SA experience and their beliefs about teaching ICC are different from those without such experience (Xue 2009). Even fewer studies have examined the predictive power of SA experience in teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC. Moreover, a large number of studies focused on pre-service teachers (e.g., Pence & Macgillivray 2008; Sutherland 2011), hence constraining the generalisability of results to in-service teachers within higher education. Lastly, as existing research mainly focuses on language teachers' overall perceptions of ICC, there is a scarcity of studies on the influence of individual and contextual variables on teacher cognition about ICC (Gong et al. 2018) and their implications for teacher education.

According to Byram et al. (2002), the specific mode of teaching ICC should depend on the particular ELT context, including the types of students, nature and perceptions of teaching and learning. Considering the gaps mentioned above in our knowledge of in-service teachers' views of ICC in China's ELT classrooms and the changes in understanding ICC over the last few decades, the present study examined in-service ELT teachers' beliefs towards ICC in the context of Chinese higher education, probing for SA experience related differences. Specifically, teachers' SA experience may affect their cultural teaching objectives, attitudes towards ICC and instructional practices for achieving expected teaching outcomes. As this study was exploratory in nature, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

- (1): What are Chinese ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices?
- (2): Are there differences (or similarities) in ICC beliefs and teaching practices between NSA and SA teachers?

(3): To what extent does the SA experience predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their relevant teaching practices?

(4): What other factors may influence the (in)congruence between teacher beliefs and instructional practices in ICC?

Concerning that SA experience lays the foundation on which ELT teachers' cognition about ICC can be examined, this study inquired about ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and how they translate their perceptions of ICC into pedagogic approaches. The present study may not only contribute to the comparatively little research on ICC-related issues in China but also aid in understanding whether the SA experience can facilitate teacher beliefs about ICC and intercultural teaching approaches in ELT classes.

3.6 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the developmental stages of ICC in the Chinese ELT context, including its emergence, evolving process, educational policies, and existing challenges of ICC implementation with empirical evidence. As the majority of ICC models instil Western bias, Chinese researchers and academic scholars advocated Chinese-based ICC frameworks to foster suitable ICC approaches to ELT in the local context by drawing on Chinese traditional philosophies.

In China, ELT teachers still face a wide range of barriers to ICC-related professional development and its implementation, although the current ELT reform is being implemented under the newly developed syllabus and strategic national initiatives. ELT teachers' instructional practices predominantly utilise a knowledge-oriented, oversimplified approach to students' cultural information and knowledge acquisition rather than a comprehensive approach to holistic ICC development. Therefore, teachers' beliefs about ICC and teaching behaviour tend to be divergent in China's ELT classrooms. This gives rise to a range of issues with language teaching policy, teacher education and optimising the transformative potential of SA programmes.

On the policy front, one of the goals of China's strategic initiatives of building

world-class universities is to “develop a higher education system of international stature” (Yang & Welch 2012: 645). Chinese universities tend to be explicit in sending faculty members to partner universities overseas and recruiting scholars from abroad. Those inbound teachers are expected to leverage their global social networking, worldviews, and critical awareness in support of Chinese students’ Core Competences² (Core Competences Research Team 2016) and the internationalisation of universities.

However, it is necessary to emphasise that SA is not the universal remedy for providing teachers with the desired ICC teaching outcome. At present, there is little empirical description of teacher beliefs and teaching practices regarding ICC, and more empirical research is needed to discuss this topic with confidence. Therefore, this study investigates the dimensions of teacher beliefs and instructions among Chinese ELT teachers and thus unveils the relationship between teacher beliefs, teaching practices and SA experience from the bottom-up perspective.

² The core competences for Chinese students includes three dimensions: personal development, social participation and fundamental literacy. In the dimension of social participation, Chinese students should develop into a human being with open-mindedness, respecting for cultural diversity, being active in intercultural communication and understanding the concept of a community of shared future for mankind (Core Competences Research Team 2016).

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology employed to achieve the study purpose. To be specific, section 4.2 illustrates the research design and its rationale and explains how the present study is carried out. Section 4.3 proceeds to explain the research context where this study took place. A teacher questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with participants were adopted to collect data for the subsequent analysis. Triangulation was achieved to provide a multifaceted and comprehensive picture of the research questions under investigation. The illustration of the research methodology in this study touches upon the data transcription and data analysis in section 4.4. Section 4.5 presents details of three rounds of pilot studies before the formal data collection. Section 4.6 explains the administration of the questionnaire and individual interviews with participants. At the same time, it offers details of all participants' demographic information in two data collection phases. Moreover, section 4.7 introduces how the validity and reliability of the study instruments are tested and how the data of the study is analysed. Lastly, section 4.8 explains the ethical considerations of the study during, before and after the data collection stages.

4.2 Research design

Research methodology is chosen based on the research questions, and well-designed research emphasises the importance of the fit between research questions and research design (Howe & Eisenhart 1990). According to Phakiti and Paltridge, a research paradigm is an epistemology or worldview of “what constitute knowledge or reality” (Phakiti & Paltridge 2015: 15) and guides investigators to collect data and respond to relevant questions. In general, educational research is situated within diverse research paradigms. For example, a quantitative study to understand educational phenomena is based on empiricism, positivism, post-positivism or pragmatism, while

a qualitative study draws upon structuralism, constructivism, or postmodernism (Hartas 2010). Given the proposed research questions in this study, the combined views of positivism and constructivism were applied. Teacher beliefs, teacher ICC pedagogical practices, and SA experience are relatively complex but stabilised at and in specific times and situations. These three issues can be addressed using numeric data drawn from a large sample of teachers, using a postpositivist perspective (Morse & Niehaus 2009), and can be explored quantitatively to verify the identified relationship. On the other hand, delving into the contexts where teachers experience and work from a social constructivist view can reveal the complex interactions in a dynamic way.

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Quantitative → Qualitative) to achieve the purpose. Figure 10 shows the overall research design.

Figure 10. The research design of this study.



A mixed-method design “integrates the two approaches [i.e., quantitative and qualitative] at one or more stages of the research process” (Dörnyei 2007: 163), aiming to achieve a full picture of the target phenomenon. It generally employs the data collection associated with both quantitative and qualitative forms of data and, therefore, increases the strength while eliminating the weaknesses of each paradigm. To be specific, the mixed-method design of this study proceeds with “rigorous quantitative sampling in the first phase and with purposeful sampling in the second, qualitative phase” (Creswell 2014: 274). Creswell also pinpoints that:

The quantitative results typically inform the types of participants to be purposefully selected for the qualitative phase and the types of questions that will be asked of the participants. The overall intent of this design is to have the qualitative data help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results. A typical procedure might involve collecting survey data in the first phase, analyzing the data, and then following up with qualitative interviews to help explain the survey responses (ibid).

Compared with a single quantitative or qualitative method, a mixed-method design enhances the research credibility because it overcomes the disadvantages of single quantitative or qualitative methods. For instance, the quantitative method design can provide objective data, while it sometimes fails to show what factors shape the data. To that end, a qualitative method can facilitate a deeper look at the underlying factors by conducting individual or focus-group interviews.

In this study, the methodological sequence began with the quantitative data collection and data analysis through a teacher questionnaire to examine how participants responded to ICC. Group differences between NSA and SA teachers regarding their beliefs and instructions on ICC were further addressed. By doing so, the independent variable was the teacher participants' SA experience.

Afterwards, the qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews built on the quantitative results and helped explain the initial quantitative findings in more detail. More specifically, teachers participated in semi-structured individual interviews. The semi-structured interviews coped with the themes about teaching ICC included in the questionnaire, aiming to confirm and broaden the quantitative data analysis results. The interviews were conducted via online meeting platforms (i.e., VooV meeting and Zoom) without the presence of others so that the participating teachers would feel at ease in expressing their opinions.

4.3 Research sites

This study took place at two Chinese universities - University A³ and University B in a metropolitan city in Western China. These two universities were purposively selected as the location for this study.

4.3.1 University A

As a strategical response to social and economic changes brought by the global

³ University A and University B are accorded pseudonyms to the university for the purpose of protecting the participants in this study from being recognised based on their working locations.

mobility of human forces and educational reforms in China regarding national competitiveness development, University A has recognised the significance of internationalising in-service teachers' professional development and adopted different approaches to enhance teaching quality.

At the time of data collection, University A recruited 1,965 teaching personnel and around 29,000 registered students attending undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in 20 institutes. Almost 90 per cent of the teaching staff had doctorates and postgraduate degrees. Turning to the Institute of Languages and Communication, where this study was based, the institute was built in 2009. It consisted of 6 departments, i.e., English Language and Literature, Eurasian Languages, College English Teaching, English Teaching for Postgraduate students, Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) and Experimental Language Teaching. A total of 120 teaching staff and around 700 students were recruited at the institute. On its web page, the institute claimed that more than 40 per cent of teachers have had international academic experience.

Although University A is famous in the field of engineering science in China, it has made strides in promoting its competitiveness in social sciences and humanities in response to the globalisation process. To improve the professional skills and global competences of teaching staff, University A has offered in-service teachers a variety of intercultural programmes over the past years and increased investment in intercultural exchanges to develop in-service and pre-service teachers' professional development. In addition, University A has established cooperation with 290 universities and multinational enterprises in 49 countries. As an active advocate and actor in the internationalisation of Chinese higher education, University A can serve as an information-rich case to investigate English teachers' beliefs and practices about ICC.

4.3.2 University B

University B was established at the beginning of the 20th century. Since its inception, it has been a multidisciplinary polytechnic university focusing on training engineers. After 1980, University B strengthened its teaching in humanities, law, and

sciences. At present, it has developed into a comprehensive and research-oriented university that offers various subjects, including literature, education, medicine, management, engineering, and economics. In 2019, University B officially released its “Double First-Class (First-Class University and First-Class Disciplines)” development proposal and committed to cultivating global citizens who can thrive in today’s world.

At the time of data collection, University B comprised 24 schools and 60 departments. There were around 54,000 registered students in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and over 3,500 teaching staff, including 120 ELT teachers recruited at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Considering its global connections, University B has established cooperative ties with around 20 world-leading universities, academic institutions, and enterprises worldwide. According to the policy published on the official website, University B encourages teachers to participate in international conferences, forums, and overseas exchange programmes. Therefore, in-service ELT teachers have the opportunity to be exposed to different intercultural experiences, which may lead to beneficial teaching outcomes. Besides, University B has increased investment as a tactical tool to attract prospective teachers and scholars from institutions abroad.

4.4 Methods of data collection

This study adopted a Chinese-English online written questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as research methods to obtain a deep understanding of the researched phenomena. These methods enabled me to explore research questions in-depth and triangulate the data to address the complexity of relationships between Chinese in-service ELT teachers’ SA experience, beliefs and teaching practices in teaching ICC under investigation. The following sections provide a rationale for using the instruments applied in the present study.

4.4.1 The online-written questionnaire

First, this study employed a quantitative approach through an online

questionnaire, which has been the most suitable design to obtain data from a large number of participants in a study group. This quantitative approach is generally used to collect and analyse numerical data to describe and explain a phenomenon under investigation (Creswell 2014). This method was therefore employed to gather preliminary information and explore the context of teaching ICC in Chinese universities. It further increased validity, reliability, and generalisation.

Items in the questionnaire concerning teaching ICC can shed light on the second phase of designing interview guidelines. Additionally, administering the questionnaire in form of online is time and cost-saving in a relatively short time frame (Lefever & Matthíasdóttir 2007) and allows participants to reply at their own pace (Pena-Dix 2018). Moreover, the online questionnaire enables me to access a larger group of potential participants.

In this study, a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was designed to explore ELT teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in teaching ICC. The items were built on and adapted from Deardorff (2004, 2006), Sercu et al. (2005) and Zhou (2011) and were modified to fit the Chinese ELT context. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) comprised five sections in the following way:

- Section 1 Questions 1-7 (Q1-Q7) probed demographic information regarding participants' gender, age, teaching experience, types of English courses, academic degree, and prior overseas experience.
- Section 2 (Q8-Q17) asked about ten different ELT objectives participants aimed to achieve.
- Section 3 (Q18) included 14 ICC-related components summarised by Deardorff (2006) and inquired participants about the perceived importance of ICC components, ranging from 1 = the least important to 5 = the most important.
- Section 4 (Q19-Q27) asked participants how they perceived ICC in ELT classrooms. A 9-item series of items touched upon participants' opinions, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.
- Section 5 (Q28-Q44) investigated the extent to which participants implemented

ICC practices.

All ELT teachers recruited in the study were asked to read the statements carefully and denote how close they thought the items referred to ELT. At the end of the questionnaire, one open question asked the participants for their contact details if they would like to participate in the semi-structured interviews, which will be illustrated in 4.4.2.

4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

According to Dörnyei (2007), interviewing is the most frequently used method in qualitative inquiries. It can help elicit rich information regarding interviewees' verbal and non-verbal expressions (Brinkmann 2013) and, therefore, is considered as a mediation of understanding discourses "manifested through language, and consists of a system of beliefs, attitudes, and values that exist within particular social and cultural practices" (Danielewicz 2001: 11). Interviewing offers me with opportunities to access interviewees' lives, to examine interviewees' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences (Harvey-Jordan & Long 2001) through the process of describing their stories in a narrative way. Thus, interviews were selected in this study to triangulate the data obtained from the questionnaire and further support the validity of the questionnaire answers.

Interviews were employed for the second phase of data collection. As Borg (2015) informed, teachers' learning and teaching experiences may greatly influence teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Therefore, probing teachers' opinions can help me know what teachers have experienced and how these experiences influence teachers' beliefs and teaching practices.

As Dörnyei (2007) mentioned, there are various types of interviews: semi-structured, unstructured, structured interviews and single or multiple sessions. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, a semi-structured interview is "an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 3). In this setting, the researcher and the participant meet as part of a collaborative enquiry.

The researcher asks probing questions to obtain knowledge about relevant issues arising from interviewees' perceptions (Gillham 2005). Therefore, the researcher in a semi-structured interview is playing the role of providing guidance and direction, following interesting developments and allowing the interviewee to elaborate on specific issues (Dörnyei 2007). The focus on seeking interviewees' descriptions of their life implies the flexibility and multiplicity of the interviewing process because individual differences in thoughts and experiences might lead to diverse interpretations and influence the conversational process.

Given the purpose of this study, I opted for semi-structured interviews, which were guided by, but were not restricted to pre-designed interview protocols (see Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 for details). This type of interview grants me the guidance and direction to examine the target research topic while it still makes me flexible in asking for further information on the rising issue (Dörnyei 2007). The purposes of conducting semi-structured interviews in this study were two-fold: to triangulate the quantitative findings emergent from the questionnaire and to investigate hidden reasons for (in)congruence between Chinese ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and actual teaching behaviour in classrooms.

4.5 The pilot study

Conducting a pilot study is crucial “for not only ensuring reliability and validity but for determining if the instrument will illicit the needed information” (Kezar 2000: 398). Broadly speaking, a pilot study can be considered a “feasibility study” (Jupp 2006: 110), aiming to test feasibility in practice or to improve the quality of methods. In addition, researchers can obtain first-hand experience with the research questions studied from the pilot study, reshape the research design, enhance the interpretation and conceptualisation of research findings, and eventually validate the results (ibid). Therefore, piloting is an integral part of the preparation for data collection tools.

Moreover, one primary purpose of the pilot study is to test survey instruments because the pilot study helps not only ensure reliability and validity but also determine

whether the instrument can cover the variables it was intended to elicit (Dörnyei 2003, 2007; Kezar 2000). Bearing this in mind, I conducted pilot studies aiming to check reliability on the established scales firstly; secondly, to eliminate practical considerations, such as the time to complete the questionnaire or some unclear questionnaire statements.

In this study, three rounds of piloting were adopted. In the first round, two researchers proficient at ELT were invited to check a draft questionnaire and provide critical feedback on the focus, format, questions, and language used in the draft questionnaire. Based on their comments, minor corrections were made to clarify the meanings of certain questionnaire items, such as replacing “a limited number of” with “a limited amount of” and “curiosity and discovering skills” with “skills of discovery”. Their suggestions were applied to enhance the accuracy and comprehensibility of a near-final version of the questionnaire.

The second round of the pilot study was conducted at a Chinese university in September 2020 for the purpose of revealing potential problems with the questionnaire. Forty ELT teachers participated in the pilot study on a voluntary basis. They were informed about the research and issues of confidentiality at the very beginning (Cresswell 2003). When all the participants agreed to participate, I sent the questionnaire link to all participants via email. On average, it took the participants around 30 minutes to finish the questionnaire. Afterwards, they were asked to write down any comments regarding the questionnaire. Again, these participants recommended minor revisions. For example, two participants commented that the total number of items shown on each page was too few. Therefore, the design of the questionnaire was adjusted to be more reader-friendly, and the number of items displayed on each page increased from 10 to 20.

After finishing the pilot study of the questionnaire items, I started with the pilot study of the interview questions. In the initial stage, I developed an interview schedule for the participating teachers after referring to some relevant studies. Afterwards, I piloted the interview questions with eight ELT teachers who worked at a Chinese

university. This step could help develop my interviewing skills (Silverman 2017). Although the participating teachers were proficient in English, all the questions were piloted in mandarin Chinese as their mother tongue. This would facilitate smoother interview conversations. As Starfield (2015) explained, it is crucial to elicit data in a language which is comprehensible for the respondents. Therefore, translating the interview questions and interviewing the participants in their first language is the best way. Conducting interviews in mandarin Chinese in the present study allows the participants to construct the meaning and reflect on their previous experiences actively and thoroughly.

In the pilot stage of semi-structured interviews, I used guidelines for asking about the participants' comments, such as: (1) Do you understand all the interview questions? (2) Which question do you think is difficult to understand? (3) Which question do you think needs to be revised? (4) What other comments do you have about the interview content? All participants provided feedback on the clarity of the interview questions. Accordingly, some questions were adjusted based on the participants' comments.

4.6 Sampling

4.6.1 Administration of the questionnaire

After receiving approval from universities A and B, I contacted several foreign language departments where English language teachers work. The finalised questionnaire was distributed from January to April 2020. A hyperlink of the questionnaire was sent to participants' university Email accounts with the assistance of administrative departments and two university teachers. Following a snowball distribution approach, some participants circulated the hyperlink among their acquaintances.

Table 1 summarises the background information of teacher participants in the quantitative phase. The target population of this study was ELT teachers teaching English at universities. While 170 ELT teachers consented to answer the questionnaire

items, data for seven teachers were excluded from further data analysis because they failed to complete their inventory. Thus, a total of 163 teachers responded to the questionnaire on a voluntary basis.

Female teachers accounted for 71.78% of the sample, while 26.99% were male teachers. 29.45% of the participants' ages ranged from 41 to 45. Most participants held either a master's (65.64%) or a PhD (30.06%) degree. More than half of the participants (53.99%) had over 15 years of ELT experience. Regarding types of ELT courses, 60.12% of the participants taught undergraduate non-English major courses, while only 1.84% of the sample taught undergraduate English-major courses. Among all the participants, 60.74% of teachers had prior SA experience, and the majority (64.65%) attended intercultural programmes as visiting scholars.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants in the quantitative phase.

Demographic characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	45	26.99
Female	117	71.78
Unknown	1	0.61
Age		
20-25	7	4.29
26-30	19	11.66
31-35	21	12.88
36-40	40	24.54
41-45	48	29.45
46+	28	17.18
Academic degree		
Bachelor	7	4.29
Master	107	65.64
PhD	49	30.06
Years of teaching experience		
1-4	27	16.56
5-10	23	14.11

11-15	25	15.34
More than 15 years	88	53.99
Types of teaching English courses		
Undergraduate non-English major courses	98	60.12
Undergraduate English major courses	73	1.84
Graduate non-English major courses	26	15.95
Graduate English major courses	36	22.09
SA experience		
No	64	39.26
Yes	99	60.74
SA programmes attended		
Visiting scholar	64	64.65
Academic degree obtained abroad	19	19.19
University exchange programmes	22	22.22
Overseas teacher training	2	1.2
Confucius Institute	1	0.06
Workshop in higher education abroad	1	0.06
Teachers of English to speakers of other languages in other countries	1	0.06

Before answering the survey, all participants were required to indicate their consent by clicking on the “Next” button on the first page, where all information was presented concerning the study purpose, possible risks, and the time duration of filling out the questionnaire. Moreover, the confidentiality of the information they provided was ensured. Generally, it took participants around 15 minutes to finish the questionnaire. Participants were reminded to answer all compulsory questions they happened to miss before they went on to the next page.

4.6.2 Process of semi-structured interviews

Regarding the interviews, the last item of the questionnaire asked participants to leave their contact details (e.g., Email address, phone number or WeChat account) if they were willing to participate in follow-up interviews. Thirty-two participants

demonstrated positive attitudes toward the interview. Considering the purpose of the study, I employed purposive sampling based on the SA experience information obtained from the survey and invited ten teachers to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. To be specific, I selected participants on a purposive basis according to their previous SA experience and then accepted the ones for whom it was convenient to participate. The insights gained from the questionnaire results served as stimuli for interviews. Table 2 presents the participating teachers' profiles in semi-structured interviews.

Table 2. Demographic information of the participants in semi-structured interviews.

Interviewees	Age	Gender	Teaching experience (years)	SA experience (years)	SA residence
S1	31-35	Female	7	3	Germany
S2	36-40	Female	3	0	None
S3	26-30	Male	1	1	UK
S4	26-30	Female	2	0	None
S5	31-35	Female	6	2	US
S6	31-35	Male	8	5	Spain
S7	31-35	Female	2	3	Hong Kong
S8	31-35	Female	7	3	Hong Kong
S9	36-40	Male	10	0	None
S10	31-35	Female	5	0	None

Note: all names are pseudonyms.

All semi-structured interviews took place between December 2021 and February 2022 and were conducted individually. Mandarin Chinese was the communication language to ensure that participants clearly understood questions and clarified more specific and valid information. Before the interview, I was concerned about language skills and interview questions, as these may influence the quality of conversation and reciprocal communication. Nevertheless, all the participants' friendliness, open-mindedness, and curiosity were encouraging and ensured the high quality of all interviews. Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on limited face-to-face conversations, all semi-structured interviews had to be conducted online by using meeting software (VooV meeting and Zoom). In line with Deakin and Wakefield (2014), there is no difference in the quality or content between online and

in-person interviews. All semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded with the assistance of recording functions embedded in meeting software.

As presented in the interview protocol in Appendix 6 and 7, probing questions in semi-structured interviews involved several aspects following the suggestions provided by Minichiello et al. (1995), who proposed funnelling, probing and storytelling for an interview. Funnelling means starting a discussion with introductory questions before narrowing it down to topic-specific questions. At the beginning of each interview, therefore, I asked the participants about their basic information, such as their academic degree, teaching experience, taught courses, and familiarity with target cultures. This step helped the interview participants engage with the following questions in a quick manner. Afterwards, probing was employed to enable the participants to elaborate on their responses. I focused on their perceptions of cultural teaching and ICC in ELT in this step. For example, questions such as “how do you consider teaching culture in your ELT classrooms” and “what does ICC mean to you” were asked. Moving to the storytelling phase, which encourages the participants to elaborate on their personal experiences, a question such as “can you please give me an example of what you just said” was asked to allow participants to narrate their personal stories in a flexible way. This phase involved teachers’ reflections on factors that influence their ICC instructions and made contributions to making meaning of their experience. In addition, the difficulties and challenges participants encountered in teaching ICC were also addressed.

Each interview ended with the open-ended question, “is there anything or any other comments you would like to add?” which offered the interview participants opportunities to add final content and, therefore, encouraged rich data to be forthcoming (Dörnyei 2007). At last, all the participants were asked whether they were willing to be contacted for more clarifications or checking before the interview ended.

4.7 Data analysis

The data analyses were guided by the research questions and the designed

instruments. When analysing obtained data, the use of “triangulation” is employed in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Burns 1999, 2010; McKernan 1996). In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted for the data analysis. When different data analyses are used, the data will then be applied to a more in-depth analysis for a comprehensive assessment. To that end, a series of data analyses in the present study endeavoured to gain a richer and less subjective understanding.

Data analysis was quantitative and qualitative, following several steps to answer the proposed research questions. Firstly, all the returned questionnaire data were analysed anonymously by using SPSS 26.0 for research questions 1 – 3. Here, it is noteworthy that Likert-scale items have sparked ongoing discussions and debates about their characteristics of data and analytical approaches. Existing literature reflects two contradictory viewpoints. One camp (e.g., Jamieson 2004) maintains that a Likert-scale falls within the ordinal level of measurement and only non-parametric tests (e.g., Chi-Squared test and Mann-Whitney U test) are suitable for data. However, the other camp argues that (e.g., Glass et al. 1972; Lubke & Muthén 2004) parametric tests are practically valid although the Likert-scale items are ordered. This study employed a five-point Likert-scale, which is often treated as an interval scale (Brown 2000b; Chyung et al. 2017). Such a five-point Likert-scale is “perfectly appropriate to summarise the ratings generated from Likert scales using means and standard deviations, and it is perfectly appropriate to use parametric techniques like Analysis of Variance to analyse Likert scales” (Carifio & Perla 2008: 1151). Therefore, a variety of parametric statistical procedures (e.g., factor analysis and linear regression) were taken in this study. Due to a few evident categorical items (i.e., gender and academic degree) asking for participants’ demographic information in the questionnaire, non-parametric analysis techniques were also implemented. More details will be presented in 4.7.1.

To answer research question 4, I adopted the thematic analysis. To be specific, I transcribed and translated the interview data into English and double-checked the precision of the translation. Accordingly, the excerpts presented in the findings were selected based on two criteria: (1) what they described is a representative opinion, and

(2) what they reflect sheds light on teachers' perceptions and practices. Table 3 provides a systematic overview of data sources and analysis methods to address the research questions. The following section will present the methods of data analyses and the rationale for their selection.

Table 3. Summary of research questions, data collection instruments and data analysis methods.

Research questions	Data collection	Data analysis methods
1: What are Chinese ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices?	Online questionnaire	Exploratory factor analysis; Descriptive analysis
2: Are there differences (or similarities) in ICC beliefs and teaching practices between NSA and SA teachers?	Online questionnaire	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test; Correlation analysis; Descriptive analysis
3: To what extent does the SA experience predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their relevant teaching practices?	Online questionnaire	Correlation analysis; Multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis
4: What other factors may influence the (in)congruence between teacher beliefs and instructional practices in ICC?	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis

4.7.1 Analysis of questionnaire data

This section introduces the steps employed to process the questionnaire data. Generally, the quantitative analysis involved exploratory factor analysis (EFA), descriptive statistics, comparative analyses, correlational analyses, and inferential analyses. All statistical analysis processes were carried out using SPSS 26.0 for Windows.

4.7.1.1 Measuring validity and reliability

Validity and *reliability* are two key characteristics that influence the quality of the collected data on the scales. Field defines *validity* as “whether an instrument

actually measures what it sets out to measure” (Field 2009: 11). *Reliability* refers to “whether an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations” (ibid). Following these two principles, this study involved two steps in examining the crucial properties of the study instruments. They are:

(1) A careful examination of the internal consistency of the multi-item scales. Internal consistency reliability refers to using groups of statements or items in order to measure various aspects of the same concept. Internal consistency is tested by Cronbach’s alpha α , as it is the most frequently used reliability index (Derrick 2016).

A reliability analysis indicated that the α measure (0.90) for the overall scale was a very good degree of reliability. The α measure for specific constructs is listed in Table 4, demonstrating satisfactory reliability for the scale.

(2) Factor analysis is a commonly used method to condense a large set of scale items down to a smaller number of coherent dimensions (Pallant 2007). The construct validity can then be achieved by retaining items that have the highest loadings on the factor. In the present study, all items of the questionnaire were tested for validity. Before running the factor analysis, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sample adequacy) value and Bartlett’s sphericity test were planned for measuring the appropriateness of the data for factor loadings. Kaiser summarised the KMO value scale:

in the .90s, marvellous
in the .80s, meritorious
in the .70s, middling
in the .60s, mediocre
in the .50s, miserable
below .50, unacceptable

Kaiser (1974: 35)

First, KMO and Bartlett’s test results (KMO = .88, Bartlett’s test < .001) confirmed that factor analysis was suitable for the questionnaire dataset. Factor loadings higher than 0.30 were perceived as appropriate. Second, the questionnaire data were fed into SPSS 26 to conduct a factor analysis to identify the grouping of the statements to be further analysed. An acceptable loading pattern with five factors for the questionnaire was achieved, including *ELT objectives, the perceived significance of ICC components,*

attitudes toward ICC for the teacher belief domain and *ICC-relevant topics and teaching approaches* for the ICC teaching practice domain (see Table 4).

Table 4. Factor loadings and Cronbach's Alpha on questionnaire scale data.

Domains	Factors	Belief Items	Factor loading					Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
			F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	
Teacher beliefs about ICC	F1: ELT objectives	1. Improving students' intercultural awareness and ICC.	0.72					0.93
		2. Assisting students in developing a better understanding of their own culture and identity.	0.64					
		3. Developing students' cultural literacy.	0.87					
		4. Improving students' ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.	0.57					
		5. Facilitating students to reflect on cultural differences.	0.68					
		6. Assisting students to acquire skills that will be useful in other subject areas and real life (e.g., giving a presentation, formulating ideas accurately or putting thoughts into words).	0.73					
		7. Promoting the acquisition of an open mind and a positive disposition towards other cultures.	0.68					
		8. Providing students with information about shared values and beliefs in the target culture(s).	0.68					
		9. Providing students with information about a wide variety of cultural expressions (e.g., literature, music, film).	0.76					
		10. Helping students acquire knowledge about target culture(s) such as history, politics, and geography.	0.75					
	F2. The perceived significance	1. Open attitudes toward cross-cultural learning and people from other cultures		0.87				0.96
		2. Cross-cultural awareness		0.68				

of ICC components	3. Respect for other cultures		0.78				
	4. Deep knowledge and understanding of own and others' cultures		0.72				
	5. Understanding others' views, feelings, and motives		0.65				
	6. Listening and observation skills		0.64				
	7. Curiosity and skills of discovering		0.72				
	8. Ability to critically interpret and/or relate to documents/events from other cultures		0.81				
	9. Understanding from others' cultural frame of reference and cultural lens		0.52				
	10. Adaptability and adjustment to other cultures		0.62				
	11. Withholding judgement		0.73				
	12. Culture-specific knowledge		0.84				
	13. Ability to conduct different genres of communication/interactions		0.61				
	14. Tolerating and engaging with ambiguity		0.68				
	F3. Attitudes towards ICC	1. English language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.			0.57		0.83
		2. English teaching should touch upon both English-associated cultures and Chinese cultures in order to help students mediate between the two cultures.			0.81		
3. English language and its associated cultures can be taught in an integrated way.				0.63			
4. Teaching culture is as important as teaching the target language in English language classes.				0.82			
5. English teachers should focus on developing students' attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures.				0.81			

		6. Besides cultures associated with the English language, teachers should also touch upon the cultures of other countries.				0.92		
		7. Teachers should present a realistic image of another culture and therefore touch upon various sides of another culture.				0.61		
		8. Students should possess a high level of proficiency in English before they can address their intercultural communicative competence.				0.52		
		9. When you have a limited amount of teaching time, teaching culture has to give way to language teaching.				0.72		
		10. Teachers should present a realistic image of another culture and therefore touch upon various sides of another culture.				0.51		
Teachers' ICC practices	F4. ICC-relevant topics	1. How often do you touch upon the following (inter-)cultural aspects in the classroom?				0.68		0.83
		1.1 Living conditions, daily life, food, and drinks.				0.59		
		1.2 Ethnic and social groups				0.53		
		1.3 Educational, professional life				0.82		
		1.4 History, geography, and political systems				0.52		
		1.5 Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions				0.72		
		1.6 Literature, music, and movies				0.53		
		1.7 Values and beliefs				0.59		
		1.8 Religious beliefs				0.63		
	1.9 Technological development				0.68			
		1. International relations with students' own country and other countries					0.78	0.89

F5. Teaching approaches	2. I ask students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country.					0.91
	3. I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures.					0.62
	4. I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures.					0.72
	5. I ask students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture.					0.51
	6. I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic.					0.62
	7. I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures.					0.61
	8. I invite a person originating from a foreign country to my classroom.					0.71
	9. I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss or debate over a cultural topic.					0.52
	10. I ask students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures regarding a particular topic.					0.68
	11. I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet.					0.59
	12. I encourage students to question their own values, beliefs and perspectives, which are perceived differently by people from other cultures.					0.57
	13. I talk with students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures/countries or their inhabitants.					0.63
	14. I ask students to independently explore cultural events.					0.72
	15. I ask students to explore cultural implications in teaching materials.					0.91

	16. I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communication between Chinese people and people from other cultures and explain the causes.					0.72	
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4.7.1.2 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive statistics involved calculating the proportion of participants regarding different demographic variables and mean values for questionnaire statements. In addition, descriptive statistics were employed to list the average mean scores (M) and standard deviation (SD) of five constructs in the questionnaire.

4.7.1.3 Comparing means of groups

An independent t -test was considered the most appropriate statistical procedure for comparing mean scores across different groups (Brown 2001; Cohen et al. 2000). I performed a series of independent t -tests to examine the significance of the differences between SA and NSA participants regarding their beliefs and teaching practices. T -test significance values smaller than 0.05 were regarded as indicators of significant differences between groups. In other words, when the p -value is smaller than the significant level (0.05), the null hypothesis will be rejected, and the conclusion can be drawn.

4.7.1.4 Correlation analysis

According to Pallant, a correlation analysis is “used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables” (Pallant 2007: 163). He identified that a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) is designed for continuous variables while Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) is used for ordinal data. In the current study, both Pearson’s r and Spearman’s ρ were adopted to explore any associations among dimensions and between ICC-related dimensions and demographic variables in the questionnaire. In addition, the correlation coefficient should range from -1 to +1. A coefficient of +1 signals a perfect positive relationship, and a coefficient of -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, while a coefficient of 0 indicates no linear relationship (Field 2005). This study follows Field’s (2005) recommendations for reporting effect sizes. Accordingly, the following scale is used to

interpret the size of an effect: $\pm .1$ = a small effect, $\pm .3$ = a medium effect and $\pm .5$ = a large effect (Field 2013: 82).

In the study, correlational analyses were performed to explore the strength and direction of the association between variables under investigation (Dörnyei 2007). When more than one predictor variables exist, it is impossible to examine their contribution to the criterion by simply comparing the correlation coefficients. Therefore, hierarchical linear regression analysis is further planned on the collected data to obtain a precise picture of the predicting role of SA experience on participants' beliefs and teaching practices.

4.7.1.5 Hierarchical linear regression analysis

Regression analysis is defined as “a way of predicting an outcome variable from one predictor variable (simple regression) or several predictor variables (multiple regression)” (Field 2009:198). It is a frequently used statistical technique to explain variance in the level of one variable based on the level of other variables. It allows the researcher to assess the strength of the relationship between each predictor variable to the criterion variable (Cohen et al. 2003). The essence of regression analysis is to fit a model to the obtained data and employ it to predict values of the dependent variable from one or more independent variables.

In order to answer research question 3, I adopted hierarchical multiple regression in which “the independent variables are entered into the model in the order specified by the researcher based on theoretical grounds” (Pallant 2007: 163). Specifically, I enter more significant variables into the model in each step. This included the indicator of the significance of variables, including the range of the explained variance R^2 , and the value and significance of the β weights. In the present study, I conducted regression models with biographical variables at the first block and SA experience at the second block to examine how well the SA factor predicts teacher beliefs and teaching practices after controlling for selected variables (i.e., participants' age, gender, academic degree, English teaching experience, and types of ELT courses).

4.7.2 Analysis of interview data

The qualitative analysis aims to obtain a deeper understanding of the statistical results revealed by quantitative analysis. Many researchers (e.g., Miles & Huberman 2002; Wong & Breheny 2018; Xu & Zammit 2020) have come up with a range of approaches for qualitative data analysis. A mainly inductive approach to analysis seemed to be the most suitable for understanding various and potentially unexpected perspectives, experiences, behaviour, motives, views, and identities that emerged, and it is well suited to enabling participants' voices to be heard (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). Specifically, thematic analysis is adopted to systematically analyse the interview data of this study (Charmaz 2014; Clarke & Braun 2016), as it deconstructs the data in detail and unveils different subjects through interpretations (Ayres 2008; Bryman 2012; Boyatzis 1998).

Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 79). Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a guideline for thematic analysis, which is made up of six phases: a) familiarising with data, b) generating initial codes, c) searching for themes, d) reviewing themes, e) defining and naming themes, and g) producing the report (Braun and Clarke 2006: 88). Following the six-phase analysis procedures, I started the interview data analysis by firstly transcribing the recorded voices verbatim and repeating readings of the texts. Then, all transcribed data were imported into NVivo 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software and thus helped me to manage data in an organised manner more efficiently. NVivo makes sense of raw data, searches for themes and extracts meaning (Lee & Fielding 1995). It is efficient at tagging data into relevant categories, making the data neat and easy to find (Gibbs 2014).

During the reading process, I reviewed the texts and searched for recurring themes representative of the participants' thoughts and meanings the participants attached to their surroundings (Rose et al. 2020). I paid specific attention to influential factors in shaping teachers' instructions. Afterwards, I tried to clarify the patterns and regularities within texts and classified them into themes related to research question 4.

I repeatedly coded and re-coded the transcribed data to identify categories, refine the salient themes, and connect the relevant theme segments (Dörnyei 2007). Identified themes of this study were related to influential factors in shaping teachers' ICC teaching towards three levels, i.e., macro, meso, and micro levels. These themes were translated into English, and some transcribed extracts were selected to report the findings in Chapter 4.

Here, it should be pointed out that member checking was employed to enhance the validity of qualitative analysis (Creswell 2014). Given that all interview data were in mandarin Chinese, member checking is considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 314). Therefore, I sent the Chinese transcripts to participants for their comments on how accurately their thoughts were recorded before starting the qualitative data analysis.

4.8 Ethical considerations and access to the field

Unlike other scientific inquiries, researchers should take ethical considerations into account since the present study involves human participants (Spradley 1980; Punch 1998; Denscombe 2010). Ethical considerations in all forms of research are crucial as they protect research participants in order that they can provide trustworthy information without causing negative effects (Lindorff 2010). With that said, there is no exception for educational research, which generally involves complex ethical issues (Stutchbury & Fox 2009).

Before the data collection, including the pilot study phase, I got approved by the department to implement data collection processes. Since ethical considerations pervade throughout the data collection process, potential ethical concerns have been taken into account from the beginning of the study. To that end, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were included during the fieldwork.

4.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is the most fundamental and commonly used ethical

requirement for academic research. It refers to “participants being fully informed about the research and their expected role in it” (Daniels 2008: 124). According to Burns (2000), participants should have a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of the research and consent to participate without coercion. In this study, all participations were voluntary, and participants were aware that they had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. To that end, the principle of informed consent places emphasis on the researcher, who should be responsible for notifying participants of different aspects of the research in clear and understandable language. At the same time, clarifications should include the nature of the study, the participant’s potential role, the research objective, and how the data will be used (Piper & Simons 2005).

Due to concerns about ethical considerations, researchers should cope with informed consent with caution. Following those considerations mentioned above, I made explicit information about this study and the consent form, including the present study purpose, the participants’ roles and how this study affects the participants. Furthermore, I reported to the participants how I would process the obtained data, how long I would store the data and when I would eliminate the data. In addition, I informed the participants that they had the right to withhold consent at any stage during the study, even if they had already concluded their participation.

In the survey phase, it is crucial for all the participants to agree to participate in this study. Thus, detailed information about this study has been provided at the top of the online questionnaire. The consent form in both English and Chinese were provided, and participants were given a choice between “I give my consent to participate: I will take the survey” and “I do not consent to participate: I will not take the survey” (see Appendix 1). After the required storage period for this study, all the data would be deleted.

In the interview phase, all interviewees were provided with a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for details) in both English and Chinese with detailed information about this study and a follow-up Consent Form for Interview Participants (see Appendix 4 and Appendix 5) which they were

asked to sign for the voluntary participation in the interview.

4.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are considered central issues in terms of ethics. According to Wiles et al. (2008), confidentiality is emphasised by the principle of respect for autonomy because identifiable information related to participants should not be disclosed without permission. Confidentiality allowed participants to not only interact confidently but also to refuse to enable the publication of any material that they perceived might cause negative effects on them. To prevent harm and ensure confidentiality, this research adopted the member check strategy, referring to “copies of interview transcripts are returned and reviewed together by investigators and interviewees” (Lunsford 2009: 132).

Moreover, making participants’ information anonymous and untraceable to readers was crucial (Bryman 2016). All personal data were kept securely as electronic transcriptions in a password-protected file. Information on individual personal identities was stored securely and separately.

4.8.3 Access to the field

The fieldwork of this study was conducted at two universities in China. I entered these fields with the purpose of getting overt access to the department directors, deputy directors and ELT teachers for their formal consent. I did not meet them beforehand. Firstly, I made a brief self-introduction and provided oral information about my project to them. When they got familiar with me and my project, they made a favourable decision quickly; therefore, I got permission from them to initiate my data collection process.

4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a detailed description and explanation of the research methodology applied in this study and reported justification for the methods adopted

for the research context, participants recruitment, data collection, and data analysis approaches in detail. Great attention has been paid to each procedure to ensure that the collected data is representative of sampling teachers' beliefs towards and teaching practices of ICC in ELT classrooms.

As described in the preceding contents of this chapter, this study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods to understand the complex phenomenon of ELT teachers' beliefs and practices. Drawing on various data collection sources not only allowed me to overcome the inherent limitations of each method but also reflected different components of teacher beliefs and practices. In this study, 163 ELT teachers from two Chinese universities participated in the online questionnaire, and ten teachers joined the semi-structured interviews. In addition, the validity, reliability, and ethical considerations were taken into account. Ethical approval and gaining access to the research site was the initial stage, followed by the data collection process and data analysis methods. A series of quantitative analysis methods (i.e., EFA, descriptive statistics, comparative analyses, correlational analyses, and inferential analyses) and qualitative analysis (i.e., thematic analysis) were adopted to analyse and interpret the data. The following chapter will illustrate the findings obtained from quantitative and qualitative research methods in the study.

5. Questionnaire findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, quantitative data analysis results are structured in order to address research questions 1 – 3 of this study. Specifically speaking, the first section starts with the general quantitative findings for each factor of the questionnaire based on M and SD . Afterwards, it provides a comparative count of teachers' beliefs and instructional practices in teaching ICC between NSA and SA teachers. The second section presents quantitative data analysis results deriving from correlational analyses and hierarchical multiple regression analyses after controlling for individual variables (i.e., gender, age, academic degree, types of English teaching courses and English teaching experience) in an effort to examine the extent the SA experience factor can predict the participants' beliefs and instructional practices in ICC. In the last section, the significant findings of this study are summarised.

5.2 Questionnaire results

5.2.1 What are Chinese ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices?

5.2.1.1 ELT objectives

Teachers' beliefs about intercultural education were first assessed in terms of their perspectives on the objectives of ELT. The underlying assumption was that teachers who define their teaching objectives in terms of ICC would express more willing attitudes towards intercultural teaching than those who aim to promote linguistic skills and CC. Therefore, rather than merely focusing on language teaching, ten broad ELT objectives were listed. Teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they believed the objectives were significant.

Table 5 shows that the participants generally demonstrated positive attitudes about listed ELT objectives, as presented in an above-average endorsement of all ten items (ranging from 3.42 to 4.69). More specifically, the aim of *improving students'*

intercultural awareness and ICC scored the highest ($M = 4.69$, $SD = .54$), which suggests that the participating teachers tend to prioritise ICC-oriented teaching objectives. In contrast, the cognitive dimension in ELT objectives *providing students with information about a rich variety of cultural expressions (e.g., literature, music, film)* ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .67$) and *helping students acquire knowledge about target culture(s) such as history, politics, and geography* ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .68$) ranked the lowest. However, scores of the cognitive dimension were above the neutral level. These results imply that the majority of participating teachers rated the overarching goal of improving students' intercultural awareness and ICC as the most important and deemed acquiring knowledge about the target culture the least important objective.

Table 5. Overall sample beliefs about ELT objectives.

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Improving students' intercultural awareness and ICC.	4.69	.54
Assisting students in developing a better understanding of their own culture and identity.	4.66	.55
Developing students' cultural literacy.	4.62	.62
Improving students' ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.	4.6	.6
Facilitating students to reflect on cultural differences.	4.59	.56
Assisting students to acquire skills that will be useful in other subject areas and real life (e.g., giving a presentation, formulating ideas accurately or putting thoughts into words).	4.56	.6
Promoting the acquisition of an open mind and a positive disposition towards other cultures.	4.52	.61
Providing students with information about shared values and beliefs in the target culture(s).	4.45	.64
Providing students with information about a wide variety of cultural expressions (e.g., literature, music, film).	4.43	.67
Helping students acquire knowledge about target culture (s) such as history, politics, and geography.	3.42	.68

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree.

5.2.1.2 The perceived significance of ICC components

ICC components in the questionnaire provide another lens through which ELT teachers' perceptions of ICC can be examined. Accordingly, the participants were asked to indicate the significance of 14 elements adapted from Deardorff (2004, 2006). According to Table 6, the descriptive statistics imply that the participants provided the

mean scores for these items ranging from 3.18 to 4.58, being higher than 3 with a neutral attitude. This result indicated that the participants held neutral to somewhat positive attitudes towards all ICC-related components.

To be specific, *open attitudes toward cross-cultural learning and people from other cultures* ($M = 4.58, SD = .58$), *cross-cultural awareness* ($M = 4.57, SD = .57$), and *respect for other cultures* ($M = 4.56, SD = .57$) received the highest mean scores by the participants. On the contrary, three components, including *culture-specific knowledge* ($M = 3.57, SD = .57$), *ability to conduct different genres of communication/interactions* ($M = 3.57, SD = .57$) and *tolerating and engaging with ambiguity* ($M = 3.57, SD = .57$) were assessed the least important by the participants.

Table 6. Overall analysis results of ICC components.

The rank of importance	Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Open attitudes toward cross-cultural learning and people from other cultures	4.58	.58
2	Cross-cultural awareness	4.57	.57
3	Respect for other cultures	4.56	.57
4	Deep knowledge and understanding of own and others' cultures	4.55	.6
5	Understanding others' views, feelings, and motives	4.55	.57
6	Listening and observation skills	4.45	.61
7	Curiosity and skills of discovering	4.42	.66
8	Ability to critically interpret and/or relate to documents/events from other cultures	4.41	.66
9	Understanding from others' cultural frame of reference and cultural lens	4.4	.62
10	Adaptability and adjustment to other cultures	4.39	.69
11	Withholding judgement	4.32	.7
12	Culture-specific knowledge	4.31	.63
13	Ability to conduct different genres of communication/interactions	3.31	.68
14	Tolerating and engaging with ambiguity	3.18	.75

Note: 1 = The least important; 2 = Somewhat unimportant; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Somewhat important; 5 = The most important.

5.2.1.3 Teachers' attitudes towards ICC

In an effort to examine how the participants perceive teaching ICC in ELT classrooms, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on nine related statements.

These statements were adapted from Byram's (1997) ICC model and Sercu's (2005) study. The respondents were asked to give their opinions on the significance of each ICC-related statement from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

As can be seen from Table 7, the descriptive statistics demonstrate that the average mean score was 3.73. This finding indicates that the participants agreed that the development of language learners' ICC should be integrated into their instructional activities and approaches in the classroom. Accordingly, the highest mean score was $M = 4.58$ for the statement *English language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity* ($SD = .62$), indicating that Chinese ELT teachers believed in the necessity and indispensability of enhancing Chinese students' cultural identity. Notably, the mean score of two statements, i.e., *students should possess a high level of proficiency in English before they can address their intercultural communicative competence* ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .88$) and *when you have a limited amount of teaching time, teaching culture has to give way to language teaching* ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .46$), was higher than 3 with a neutral attitude. These findings reveal that developing English language learners' linguistic competence is emphasised at the participating teachers' conceptual level. It suggests that the participants place English language learners' linguistic competence as the prerequisite for ICC development.

Table 7. Overall sample attitudes towards ICC.

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
English language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.	4.58	.62
English teaching should touch upon both English-associated cultures and Chinese cultures in order to help students mediate between the two cultures.	4.57	.63
English language and its associated cultures can be taught in an integrated way.	4.56	.6
Teaching culture is as important as teaching the target language in English language classes.	4.51	.59
Teachers should present a realistic image of another culture and therefore touch upon various sides of another culture.	4.49	.91
English teachers should focus on developing students' attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures.	4.46	.66

Besides cultures associated with the English language, teachers should also touch upon the cultures of other countries.	4.37	.67
Teachers should present a realistic image of another culture and therefore touch upon various sides of another culture.	4.36	.58
Students should possess a high level of proficiency in English before they can address their intercultural communicative competence.	3.98	.88
When you have a limited amount of teaching time, teaching culture has to give way to language teaching.	3.69	.46

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree.

5.2.1.4 ICC-relevant topics

With regard to the participants' ICC-related teaching practices, Question 30 first asked teachers *how often do you touch upon the following cultural aspects in the classroom?* Ten cultural topics were adapted from Byram and Risager (1999), who compared recent political changes being perceived by language teachers in England and Denmark. As can be seen from Table 8, *values and beliefs* ($M = 3.9, SD = .74$), *literature, music, and movies* ($M = 3.88, SD = .75$) and *educational, professional life* ($M = 3.83, SD = .72$) received a high score. The last three topics that the participants addressed are *technological development* ($M = 3.58, SD = .72$), *ethnic and social groups* ($M = 3.56, SD = .75$) and *religious beliefs* ($M = 3.28, SD = .76$).

Table 8. Frequency of cultural topics addressed by the overall sample participants.

How often do you touch upon the following (inter-)cultural aspects in the classroom?	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Values and beliefs	3.9	.74
2. Literature, music, and movies	3.88	.75
3. Educational, professional life	3.83	.72
4. History, geography, and political systems	3.8	.76
5. Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions	3.8	.73
6. Living conditions, daily life, food, and drinks	3.79	.7
7. International relations with students' own country and other countries	3.67	.79
8. Technological development	3.58	.72
9. Different ethnic and social groups	3.56	.75
10. Religious beliefs	3.28	.76

Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always.

5.2.1.5 Teachers' ICC teaching approaches

In addition, the teacher participants were asked to indicate the frequency of employing 15 intercultural teaching activities in their classrooms. According to Table 9, it is evident that the mean score of statements ranges from 2.86 to 3.96, indicating that teachers operate a diversity of cultural teaching practices with different frequencies in the classroom. More specifically, the majority of teachers adopted *I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures* ($M = 3.96, SD = .75$), *I ask students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures regarding a particular topic* ($M = 3.86, SD = .76$), and *I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures* ($M = 3.77, SD = .68$) as the most common cultural teaching options in their classes.

However, it is worthy of noting that teachers seem to rarely employ *role-play simulations* ($M = 3.37, SD = .85$) and *invite a person coming from another country to the classroom* ($M = 2.86, SD = .93$). These results suggest that the participating teachers mainly adopted teacher-dominated pedagogical approaches to promote learners' intercultural development. That is to say, the teacher participants adopted intercultural teaching approaches with diverse activities but lacked interactive modalities of communication.

Table 9. The frequency of participants' ICC teaching practices.

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
32. I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures.	3.96	.75
39. I ask students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures regarding a particular topic.	3.86	.76
33. I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures.	3.77	.68
44. I ask students to explore cultural implications in teaching materials.	3.75	.82
34. I ask students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture.	3.69	.73
36. I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures.	3.69	.79
45. I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communication between Chinese people and people from other cultures and explain the causes.	3.68	.77

35. I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic.	3.64	.82
38. I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss or debate over a cultural topic.	3.61	.76
43. I ask students to independently explore cultural events.	3.60	.77
46. I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in documents/events.	3.60	.76
31. I ask students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country.	3.56	.72
42. I talk with students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures/countries or their inhabitants.	3.56	.77
40. I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet.	3.37	.85
37. I invite a person originating from a foreign country to my classroom.	2.86	.93

Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always.

5.2.2 Are there differences (or similarities) in ICC beliefs and teaching practices between NSA and SA teachers?

Research question 2 is formulated with the aim of identifying differences or similarities between NSA and SA teachers' beliefs about ICC and relevant teaching practices. Throughout the data analysis, the continuous variable of teachers' SA experience in the questionnaire is then merged into the categorical variable *teachers with SA experience* and *teachers without SA experience* to gain a better understanding of the effects of teachers' SA experience on teacher beliefs and practices in ICC. With no preconceived hypothesis in my mind, I executed independent sample *t*-tests and correlations to look for confirming or refuting evidence. These data analysis results are presented in the following.

5.2.2.1 ELT objectives

In the exploration of teachers' beliefs about ELT objectives embedded in research question 1, SA participants indicated relatively higher responses than their counterparts. Then, an independent sample *t*-test was computed to explore whether there was any significant difference in the ELT objectives between NSA and SA teachers. As presented in Table 10, there were no significant differences demonstrated at $p < .05$ level.

Table 10. Independent sample *t*-test results on ELT objectives.

Items	NSA participants (n = 64)		SA participants (n = 99)		<i>t</i> -value	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Improving students' intercultural awareness and ICC.	3.64	.57	3.73	.51	-1.01	.32 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Assisting students in developing a better understanding of their own culture and identity.	3.64	.57	3.68	.53	-.41	.68 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Developing students' cultural literacy.	3.56	.69	3.66	.57	-.95	.35 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Improving students' ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.	3.59	.61	3.61	.59	-.13	.9 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Facilitating students to reflect on cultural differences.	3.55	.59	3.62	.55	-.77	.45 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Assisting students to acquire skills that will be useful in other subject areas and in real life (e.g., giving a presentation, formulating ideas accurately or putting thoughts into words).	3.63	.58	3.52	.61	1.14	.25 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Promoting the acquisition of an open mind and a positive disposition towards other cultures.	3.44	.69	3.58	.56	-1.35	.18 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Providing students with information about shared values and beliefs in the target culture(s).	3.42	.71	3.47	.6	-.51	.61 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Providing students with information about a rich variety of cultural expressions (e.g., literature, music, film).	3.41	.68	3.44	.66	-.36	.25 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Helping students acquire knowledge about target culture(s) such as history, politics, and geography.	3.34	.74	3.47	.63	-1.21	.23 (<i>n.s.</i>)

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree; *n.s.* = not significant.

5.2.2.2 Perceived significance of ICC components

In an effort to evaluate whether there were significant differences in the

perceived significance of 14 ICC components between NSA and SA teachers, an independent samples *t*-test was computed to compare the means of these two groups. The results are presented in Table 11.

As shown in Table 11, the mean scores of each item in the subscale of the perceived importance of ICC components between NSA and SA teachers were similar, with all mean scores over 3.00. To be specific, the mean scores of NSA teachers' responses for this subscale ranged from 3.22 to 3.59, among which NSA teachers considered *withholding judgement* ($M = 3.59, SD = .56$) as the most significant component while *curiosity and skills of discovering* ($M = 3.22, SD = .77$) as the least crucial element. In terms of SA teachers, means scores of their answers deviated from 3.16 to 3.59. Surprisingly, they placed the most significant emphasis on *deep knowledge and understanding of own and others' cultures* ($M = 3.59, SD = .61$), while they were less likely to pay attention to *curiosity and skills of discovering* ($M = 3.16, SD = .74$), which was in accordance with NSA teachers' answers.

Table 11. Independent samples *t*-tests for rated importance of ICC components.

Items	NSA teachers (n = 64)		SA teachers (n = 99)		<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
Open attitude toward cross-cultural learning and people from other cultures	3.44	.71	3.36	.68	.67	161	.51 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Cross-cultural awareness	3.47	.56	3.43	.64	.35	161	.73 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Respect for other cultures	3.27	.62	3.34	.64	-.77	161	.45 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Deep knowledge and understanding of own and others' cultures	3.56	.53	3.59	.61	-.25	161	.80 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Understanding others' views, feelings, and motives	3.36	.68	3.28	.69	.7	161	.18 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Listening and observation skills	3.36	.68	3.44	.64	-.81	161	.44 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Curiosity and skills of discovering	3.22	.77	3.16	.74	.48	161	.80 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Ability to critically interpret and/or relate to documents/events from other cultures	3.53	.59	3.56	.61	-.25	161	.80 (<i>n.s.</i>)

Understanding from others' cultural frame of reference and cultural lens	3.58	.53	3.55	.59	.36	161	.48 (n.s.)
Adaptability and adjustment to other cultures	3.56	.53	3.54	.59	.3	161	.48 (n.s.)
Withholding judgement	3.59	.56	3.56	.58	.42	161	.42 (n.s.)
Culture-specific knowledge	3.41	.61	3.26	.75	1.28	161	.42 (n.s.)
Ability to conduct different genres of communication/interactions	3.47	.62	3.38	.68	.81	161	.64 (n.s.)
Tolerating and engaging with ambiguity	3.39	.63	3.41	.61	-.24	161	.64 (n.s.)

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree; n.s. = not significant.

5.2.2.3 Teacher attitudes towards ICC

The independent sample *t*-test allowed me to take a closer probe into the mean scores for comparing the attitudinal dimension of ICC between NSA and SA teachers. According to Table 12, data analysis results revealed that SA participants displayed more positive attitudes towards the majority of statements than NSA participants. Nonetheless, NSA teachers reported a higher level of attitude towards the statement *when you have a limited amount of teaching time, teaching culture has to give way to language teaching* than SA teachers. This result suggests that NSA teachers were still in favour of teaching linguistic norms.

Despite differences in mean scores of teacher attitudes towards ICC between NSA and SA teachers, results from the independent samples *t*-test showed no statistically significant difference for all seven items. The results from the quantitative analysis tentatively led to two conclusions which will be further examined and elaborated in the qualitative analysis phase: SA teachers showed higher responses to developing students' ICC in ELT classrooms. However, NSA and SA teachers are not of significantly different attitudes scores of ICC ($p > .05$).

Table 12. Independent sample *t*-test results on teachers' attitudes toward ICC.

Items	NSA participant s (n = 64)		SA participants (n = 99)		<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			

Teaching culture is as important as teaching the target language in English language classes.	3.23	.62	3.58	.58	-.16	161	.77 (<i>n.s.</i>)
English teachers should focus on developing students' attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures.	2.79	.57	3.48	.65	-.6	128.2	.73 (<i>n.s.</i>)
English language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.	3.18	.61	3.61	.63	-.59	128.6	.41 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Besides cultures associated with the English language, teachers should also touch upon cultures of other countries.	3.04	.7	3.54	.64	-1.34	161	.89 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Students should possess a high level of proficiency in English before they can address their intercultural communicative competence.	3.65	.93	3.75	.9	.12	151.2	.12 (<i>n.s.</i>)
When you have a limited amount of teaching time, teaching culture has to give way to language teaching.	3.75	.56	3.65	.91	.76	125.8	.06 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Teachers should present a realistic image of another culture, and therefore touch upon various sides of another culture.	3.46	.67	3.53	.59	-.8	134.5	.29 (<i>n.s.</i>)

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree; *n.s.* = not significant.

5.2.2.4 ICC-relevant topics

An independent samples *t*-test was carried out to examine whether SA participants reflected different attitudes towards addressing cultural topics than SA participants. As displayed in Table 13, there were statistically significant differences between the two teacher groups in terms of addressing intercultural topics. The data analysis result revealed that the NSA group had delivered fewer topics about *values and beliefs* ($t(161) = -2.73, p = .007$), *traditions, folklore, tourist attractions* ($t(161) = -3.77,$

$p = .00$) and *educational, professional life* ($t(161) = -2.11, p = .04$) than SA participants. These results showed that SA participants distributed more class time to address culture-related topics than NSA teachers. There were no statistically significant differences in other intercultural topics, such as literature, music and movies, history, geography, political systems, living conditions, daily life, food, and drinks.

Table 13. Independent samples *t*-test results for addressing cultural topics.

30. How often do you touch upon the following (inter-)cultural aspects in the classroom?	NSA participants (n = 64)		SA participants (n = 99)		<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
Values and beliefs	2.61	.61	2.91	.73	-2.73	161	.00*
Traditions, folklore, and tourist attractions	2.7	.77	2.86	.74	-3.77	161	.00*
Educational and professional life	2.7	.78	2.93	.67	-2.11	161	.04*
Literature, music, and movies	2.45	.75	2.63	.74	-1.45	161	.15 (<i>n.s.</i>)
History, geography, and political systems	2.7	.77	2.93	.67	-1.28	161	.2 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Living conditions, daily life, food, and drinks	2.55	.73	2.97	.68	-1.91	161	.06 (<i>n.s.</i>)
International relations with students' own country and other countries	2.77	.77	2.96	.73	-.14	161	.89 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Technological development	2.77	.79	2.99	.69	-1.01	161	.28 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Different ethnic and social groups	2.27	.76	2.28	.77	-.61	161	.52 (<i>n.s.</i>)
Religious beliefs	2.5	.69	2.63	.74	-.64	161	.53 (<i>n.s.</i>)

Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Always; * $p < 0.05$; *n.s.* = not significant.

5.2.2.5 Teachers' ICC teaching approaches

Moreover, the independent sample *t*-test was performed to compare mean scores between two teacher groups in terms of their cultural teaching approaches in ELT classrooms. Table 14 showed that there were significant differences in the seven cultural teaching approaches: *I ask students to think about the image that the media promote of*

the foreign country ($t(161) = -2.52, p = .01$); I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures ($t(161) = -3.14, p = .01$); I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures ($t(161) = -1.68, p = .02$); I ask students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture ($t(161) = -2.08, p = .04$); I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures ($t(161) = -2.26, p = .02$); I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet ($t(161) = -1.88, p = .02^*$). and I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in documents/events ($t(161) = -1.38, p = .04^*$). However, the differences in other statements are not significant. Thus, it can be concluded that SA teachers are significantly more competent in facilitating students' intercultural learning with diverse instruction activities in the classroom.

Table 14. Independent samples *t*-test results for ICC teaching practices.

Items	NSA participants (n = 64)		SA participants (n = 99)		<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
31. I ask students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country.	3.39	.79	3.68	.65	-2.52	161	.01*
32. I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures.	3.73	.8	3.1	.68	-3.14	161	.00*
33. I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures.	3.66	.67	3.84	.68	-1.68	161	.02*
34. I ask students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture.	3.55	.75	3.79	.7	-2.08	161	.04*
36. I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures.	3.52	.84	3.8	.74	-2.26	161	.03*
35. I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic.	3.55	.93	3.71	.75	-1.22	161	.23 (n.s.)
37. I invite a person originating from a foreign country to my classroom.	2.8	.98	2.9	.9	-.68	161	.5 (n.s.)

38. I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss or debate over a cultural topic.	3.52	.8	3.68	.74	-1.32	161	.2 (n.s.)
39. I ask students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures regarding a particular topic.	3.72	.81	3.95	.72	-1.91	161	.06 (n.s.)
40. I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet.	3.22	.92	3.47	.8	-1.88	161	.02*
41. I encourage students to question their own values, beliefs and perspectives, which are perceived differently by people from other cultures.	3.39	.97	3.65	.83	-1.8	161	.07 (n.s.)
42. I talk with students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures/countries or their inhabitants.	3.48	.85	3.62	.71	-1.07	161	.29 (n.s.)
43. I ask students to explore cultural events independently.	3.52	.82	3.66	.75	-1.14	161	.26 (n.s.)
44. I ask students to explore cultural implications in teaching materials.	3.61	.89	3.85	.76	-1.84	161	.07 (n.s.)
45. I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communication between Chinese people and people from other cultures and explain the causes.	3.59	.79	3.74	.75	-1.17	161	.24 (n.s.)
46. I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in documents/events.	3.3	.82	3.67	.71	-1.38	161	.04*

Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Always; * $p < .05$; n.s. = not significant.

5.2.2.6 Correlations between independent variables in NSA and SA teacher samples

Then, Person's correlations were performed in two separate samples in order to better understand potential relationships between independent factors in the questionnaire. Given the satisfactory reliabilities indicated in the values of Cronbach's

α (.83 - .96), teacher responses to ELT objectives (10 items), perceived significance of ICC components (14 items), teachers' attitudes towards ICC (10 items), ICC-relevant topics (9 items) and teachers' ICC teaching approaches (15 items) variables were merged and then averaged to represent the "ELT objectives", "the perceived significance of ICC components", "attitudes towards ICC", "ICC-relevant topics" and "teaching approaches" constructs for subsequent analyses. Two correlation matrixes are therefore presented in Table 15 for the NSA teacher group and Table 16 for the SA teacher group.

The correlational analysis in Table 15 shows that the correlations between NSA teachers' perceptions of the perceived significance of ICC components and ELT objectives ($r = .76, p < .01$), attitudes towards ICC and ELT objectives ($r = .41, p < .01$), attitudes towards ICC and the perceived significance of ICC components ($r = .59, p < .01$), teaching approaches and the perceived significance of ICC components ($r = .36, p < .01$), and teaching approaches and addressing ICC-relevant topics ($r = .88, p < .01$) were significant at $p < .01$ level. Correlations between teaching ICC-relevant topics and the perceived significance of ICC components ($r = .26, p < .05$), as well as between attitudes towards ICC and teaching approaches ($r = .25, p < .05$), were significant at $p < .05$ level. However, there were no statistically significant relationships detected between ICC-relevant topics and ELT objectives ($r = .2, p > .05$) and between ICC-relevant topics and attitudes towards ICC ($r = .11, p > .05$).

Table 15. Correlations between independent variables for the NSA group.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. ELT objectives	1				
2. The perceived significance of ICC components	.76**	1			
3. Attitudes towards ICC	.41**	.59**	1		
4. ICC-relevant topics	.2	.26*	.11	1	
5. Teaching approaches	.3*	.36**	.25*	.88**	1

Note: *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed);

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

In terms of the SA group, surprisingly, all five ICC-related factors were positively correlated with each other in a significant manner. Table 16 shows that the correlation coefficient between teaching approaches and teaching ICC-relevant topics,

with a score of .9, is the highest. By contrast, the relationship between teaching approaches and attitudes towards ICC was medium ($r = .32, p < .01$).

Table 16. Correlations between independent variables for the SA group.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. ELT objectives	1				
2. Rated significance of ICC components	.76**	1			
3. Attitudes towards ICC	.45**	.59**	1		
4. ICC-relevant topics	.33**	.44**	.34**	1	
5. Teaching approaches	.36**	.44**	.32**	.9**	1

Note: **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

As described above, the correlational analysis revealed that NSA teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching ICC are inconsistent. It might be attributed to some situational and individual constraints (Mo 2020). However, very solid and significant relations among the five independent variables from the data analysis suggest that SA teachers' beliefs about ICC tended to be congruent with their instructional approaches in ELT classrooms.

5.2.3 To what extent does the SA experience predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their relevant teaching practices?

Firstly, Pearson's r tests and Spearman's rho were computed to investigate potential relationships between five independent and five dependent variables. As can be seen in Table 17, the correlation coefficient for the five dimensions of the questionnaire scale indicated positive relationships ($r =$ from .25 to .76) at the .01 level. In other words, teachers who demonstrated higher scores at ELT objectives, ICC components and attitudes toward ICC tended to employ ICC-related instructional practices more frequently, including addressing relevant topics and teaching approaches. Two additional findings are that ELT objectives had the highest correlation ($r = .76$) with ICC components, while attitudes had the lowest correlation ($r = .25$) with ICC teaching approaches.

As for the gender effect on teacher beliefs, a significant but weak correlation was observed between gender and ELT objectives ($r_s = -.16, p < .01$). In addition, there

was a small negative correlation between age and ICC teaching approaches ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$), implying that younger teachers were more in favour of adopting ICC teaching techniques than elderly teachers. Nonetheless, there were no significant correlations between gender and rated significance of ICC components, attitudes towards ICC, and ICC teaching approaches. No relationships were observed between age and ELT objectives, the perceived importance of ICC components, and attitudes. In addition, the participants' academic qualifications and types of ELT courses made no contributions to teacher beliefs and teaching practices in teaching ICC.

Moving to the effect of English teaching experience, significant correlations were found with participants' perceived significance of ICC components ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$), indicating that teachers with less teaching experience have a higher level of awareness about ICC components than those with more years of teaching experience. Likewise, teachers' teaching experience is significantly correlated with ICC-relevant instructional practices (r ranges from $-.2$ to $.2$, $p < .05$).

Table 17. Correlations between ICC dimensions and personal factors (Pearson's *r* for ICC dimensions, age, SA experience and English teaching experience, Spearman's rho for gender, academic degree, and types of ELT courses).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. ELT objectives	1										
2. The perceived significance of ICC components	.76**	1									
3. Attitudes toward ICC	.41**	.59**	1								
4. ICC-relevant topics	.45**	.39**	.57**	1							
5. Teaching approaches	.3**	.36**	.25**	.34**	1						
6. Gender	-.16**	-.13	-.13	.07	.08	1					
7. Age	-.02	-.14	-.03	-.22**	.19**	-.23	1				
8. Academic degree	.06	.23	-.09	.15	.11	.15	.45	1			
9. English teaching experience	-.06	-.17*	-.16	-.2*	.2*	.83**	.16*	.34	1		
10. Types of ELT courses	-.05	-.04	-.09	.08	.13	.1	.14	.91	.81	1	
11. SA experience	.14*	.06*	.04*	.24**	.07*	.08	.3**	.08	.56	.84	1

Note: *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed);

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

In terms of influences of SA experience on the participants' ICC beliefs and teaching practices, the correlational analysis result confirmed that SA experience is positively connected to five sub-scales of the questionnaire ($r_s =$ from .04 to .24). That is, teachers with more SA experience for academic purposes had higher levels of teacher beliefs and employed more ICC relevant practices.

Based on the previously conducted results, I further investigated whether such associations would exist when controlling for other independent variables. To this end, a more advanced statistical procedure - hierarchical regression analysis was performed to provide deeper insights into the relative contributions of the various individual variables to explaining the variance in teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC. Previous research (e.g., Borg 2006) has mentioned that some individual factors, including age, gender, academic qualifications, and teaching experience, have a direct effect on teacher beliefs. In order to ensure that results are more objective, I entered gender, age, academic degree, types of English courses and teaching experience as control variables, SA experience as an independent variable, and teacher beliefs about ICC and teaching practices as dependent variables.

5.2.3.1 ELT objectives

A preliminary analysis was performed to evaluate the assumptions of multiple regression analysis. The normal probability plot of standardised residuals and the scatter plot of standardised residuals against standardised predicted values indicated that the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were met. Secondly, the collinearity statistics were all satisfactory, implying no problem with multicollinearity (Allen & Bennett 2010).

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was computed to examine the predictive power of SA toward the participants' ELT objectives after controlling for demographic factors. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 18. As can be seen, the first Model belonged to the participants' demographics, which did not significantly affect the participants' ELT objectives, $F(4, 158) = 1.54, p = .19$,

explaining 4% of the variation. In model 2, the R^2 value increased from .04 to .32. That is to say, the regression model overall accounted for 32% of the variation. It was observed that the unique contribution of the SA factor was significant ($p = .04$). Therefore, teachers' SA experience made significant contributions to their ELT objectives ($\beta = .17$).

Table 18. Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting ELT objectives.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Step 1	Gender	-.13	.07	-.16	-1.95	.14
	Age	.03	.05	.08	.53	.65
	Academic degree	.06	.07	.08	.97	.8
	English teaching experience	-.05	.06	-.13	-.87	.44
	Types of ELT courses	.04	.08		.46	.23
Step 2	SA experience	.07	.03	.17	2.13	.04*
$R_1^2 = .04$		$R_2^2 = .32$		$\Delta R^2 = .03$	$\Delta F = 4.52^*$	

Note: β = standardised regression coefficient; * $p < .05$.

5.2.3.2 The perceived significance of ICC components

After controlling the participants' gender, age, academic degree, types of ELT courses and English teaching experience, the obtained data were subjected to hierarchical regression analysis. As shown in Table 19, the first Model, including the variables related to demographic factors, did not significantly predict the participants' perceptions of ICC components ($F(4, 158) = 1.63, p = .17$). In Model 2, the increase of the R^2 value with the added SA factor was not significant. Therefore, it was seen that none of the selected individual variables (gender, age, academic degree, types of ELT courses and English teaching experience), including teachers' SA experience, could not predict the participants' perceptions of the importance of ICC components.

Table 19. Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting the perceived significance of ICC components.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Step 1	Gender	-.11	.07	-.13	-1.58	.11
	Age	-.01	.05	-.04	-.29	.74
	Academic degree	.04	.07	.04	.54	.87
	English teaching experience	-.04	.06	-.09	-.62	.57

	Types of ELT courses	.05	.35	.23	.35	.61
Step 2	SA experience	.04	.03	.09	1.11	.27
R ₁ ² = .04		R ₂ ² = .26	ΔR ² = .01		ΔF = 1.23	

Note: β = standardised regression coefficient.

5.2.3.3 Teacher attitudes towards ICC

Table 20 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis regarding the relationship between participants' attitudes towards ICC and five independent variables. As shown in Table 20, the first Model belonged to the participant teachers' demographic variables. In Model 1, the English teaching experience ($\beta = -.34, p < .05$) was significantly and negatively linked to ELT teachers' attitudes towards ICC. In other words, novice teachers are more aware of the significance of ICC integration into the ELT classroom than expert teachers.

Nonetheless, with respect to the factor of SA experience in Model 2, it is observed that it did not significantly predict teachers' attitudes towards ICC ($\beta = .03, p = .73$) when controlling for other teacher-level independent variables. Therefore, there was only a negative relationship between teachers' English teaching experience and their attitudes towards ICC.

Table 20. Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting teachers' attitudes towards ICC.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Step 1	Gender	-.09	.06	-.12	-1.45	.15
	Age	.08	.04	.27	1.81	.08
	Academic degree	-.07	.06	-.09	-1.1	.25
	English teaching experience	-.12	.05	-.34	-2.25	.03*
	Types of ELT courses	-.21	.23	.31	1.24	.31
Step 2	SA experience	.01	.03	.03	.35	.73
R ₁ ² = .06		R ₂ ² = .30	ΔR ² = .001		ΔF = .12	

Note: β = standardised regression coefficient; * $p < .05$.

5.2.3.4 ICC-relevant topics

The hierarchical multiple regression results of the predictive power of SA on the participants' teaching ICC-relevant topics were displayed in Table 21. These results

indicated that Model 2 – including SA experience as a predictor variable along with other demographic variables – accounted for approximately 37% more of the total variance of teachers’ ICC instructional practices ($R^2 = .45$) than Model 1 ($R^2 = .24$). There was a significant R square change from Model 1 to Model 2 ($p = .03$). These results suggest that as SA experience increases, the participating teachers tend to address ICC-relevant cultural topics more frequently in ELT classrooms.

Table 21. Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting ICC-relevant topics.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Step 1	Gender	-.06	.07	.12	1.05	.27
	Age	-.21	.02	-.28	-1.94	.06
	Academic degree	.24	.19	.52	2.48	.13
	English teaching experience	-.41	.07	-.02	-.25	.73
	Types of ELT courses	-.23	.04	-.28	.35	.27
Step 2	SA experience	0.06	.02	.37	2.4	.03*
	$R_1^2 = .24$	$R_2^2 = .45$	$\Delta R^2 = .03$		$\Delta F = 4.15^*$	

Note: β = standardised regression coefficient; * $p < .05$.

5.2.3.5 Teachers’ ICC teaching approaches

In terms of the predictive power of SA on the participants’ ICC teaching approaches, the hierarchical multiple regression results (see Table 22) indicated that Model 2 – including SA experience as a predictor variable along with other demographic variables – accounted for approximately 19% more of the total variance of teachers’ ICC instructional practices ($R^2 = .29$) than Model 1 ($R^2 = .1$). There was a significant R square change from Model 1 to Model 2 ($p = .02$). This result indicates that as SA experience increases, ELT teachers tend to develop intercultural approaches more frequently within the classroom.

Table 22. Hierarchical regression analysis for predicting teachers’ ICC teaching approaches.

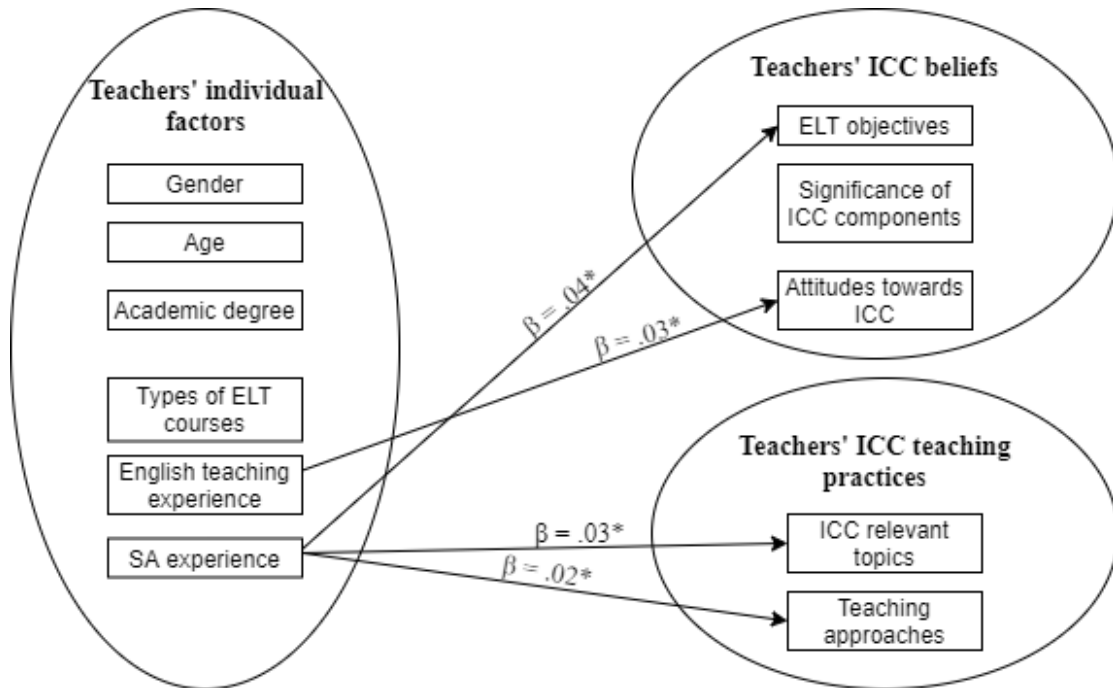
	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Step 1	Gender	.08	.08	.08	1.05	.21
	Age	-.11	.06	-.28	-1.94	.09
	Academic degree	.18	.08	.18	2.28	.12
	English teaching experience	-.01	.07	-.02	-.15	.24
	Types of ELT courses	.07	.02	.031	.28	.53

Step 2	SA experience	.09	.04	.19	2.4	.02*
	$R_1^2 = .1$	$R_2^2 = .29$	$\Delta R^2 = .03$		$\Delta F = 5.75^*$	

Note: β = standardised regression coefficient; * $p < .05$.

Based on the above quantitative analysis results, I schematised the model in Figure 11, summarising hierarchical multiple regression results of the relationships between teachers' demographic factors, teacher beliefs about ICC and teaching practices.

Figure 11. A summary of hierarchical multiple regression results about the relationship between teachers' individual factors and teacher beliefs about ICC and teaching practices in ICC.



Note: * $p < 0.05$.

5.4 Chapter summary

Through a teacher questionnaire online in the quantitative phase, this chapter presented a chain of findings about ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and practices and further showed results regarding the relationship between ELT teachers' ICC-related perceptions and practices. Moreover, the influences of teachers' SA experience on their beliefs and practices in teaching ICC were explored through correlational and

hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Below is a summary of the key findings.

Firstly, this study generated a 46-item inventory for examining teacher beliefs and instructional behaviour relevant to ICC teaching. The underlying structure of each construct was revealed by EFA. Accordingly, five distinct factors related to teacher beliefs and practices were identified: ELT objectives, the perceived significance of ICC components, attitudes towards ICC, ICC-relevant topics, and teaching approaches.

Descriptive analyses of the participants' survey responses regarding the five constructs presented that they demonstrated great agreement with ELT objectives, the stated significance of ICC components, and attitudes towards ICC under the domain of teacher beliefs about ICC. Moving to teachers' ICC practices, they reported frequent uses of teacher-dominated teaching approaches to touch upon visible intercultural components in the ELT classroom. Modalities of interactive communication with students in the intercultural teaching process were missing.

Moreover, the cross-comparison of the two population groups reported that SA and NSA teachers were not of significantly different scores regarding ELT objectives, ICC components, and attitudes towards teaching ICC in their classrooms on the conceptual level. Nevertheless, SA teachers were of significantly higher scores in terms of the following addressed cultural topics in their classrooms, including values and beliefs, traditions, folklore, tourist attractions, educational, and professional life. Compared with NSA teachers, SA participants displayed higher responses to some ICC teaching practices, including *I ask students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country; I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures; I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures; I ask students to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture; I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures; I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet; and I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in documents/events*. These findings showed that SA teachers more frequently implement ICC teaching techniques

than NSA teachers, although both teacher groups' theoretical beliefs were not significantly different. It indicated that NSA teachers' theoretical beliefs seemed to be incongruent with their cultural implementations in classrooms.

Furthermore, I computed correlational analyses aiming to unveil the critical relationships among the five dependent variables of the questionnaire scale. As shown in the previous section (see 5.2.2.5 for details), the interaction pattern among the five components could be presented: SA teachers' theoretical beliefs about ICC and teaching behaviour were consistent and strongly correlated. By contrast, there were weak or even no correlations between NSA teachers' beliefs about ICC and their instructional approaches. These suggested that NSA teachers' conceptual beliefs did not resonate with their actual teaching behaviour.

In an effort to verify the influences of SA experience on the participants' beliefs and teaching practices in ICC teaching, I operated correlational and hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Results revealed that the SA experience had a positive impact on the participants' perceived ELT objectives and the frequency of their intercultural teaching practices. Surprisingly, the participants' SA experience did not significantly influence their perceived significance of ICC components and attitudes towards ICC. Notably, this study found that the participants' teaching experience negatively predict their attitudes towards ICC. In other words, novice teachers were more positive about ICC than expert teachers in China's ELT classrooms.

In conclusion, the participating teachers held positive cognition about ICC, while their teaching approaches were teacher-dominated and lacked interactive modalities of communication in the classroom. More profoundly, although teacher beliefs about ICC between SA and NSA teachers were not significantly different, SA teachers' ELT objectives and teaching practices (i.e., addressing intercultural topics and employing intercultural teaching approaches) tended to be informed by their intercultural experience. Additionally, SA teachers' beliefs correspond to their teaching practices compared to their NSA counterparts. A deeper look at underlying explanations for outstanding findings will be discussed in the next chapter, facilitated by the

qualitative phase with other significant results.

6. Interview findings: What other factors may influence the (in)congruence between teacher beliefs and instructional practices in ICC?

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the dynamics and complexities of Chinese ELT teachers' cultural teaching practices against the backdrop of Chinese higher educational circumstances. It demonstrates how a spectrum of influential factors affects ELT teachers' intercultural education in ELT classrooms.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2012), belief is a filtering mechanism through which one absorbs and interprets new phenomena and experiences. That is, teacher beliefs and practices are bidirectional and inform each other, with the relationship between them mediated by contextual characteristics (Borg 2006; Song 2015). Holliday claims that what happens in the classroom can only be understood from a macro perspective that considers "the attitudes derived from relationships of status, role and authority brought by students and teachers from outside the classroom that influence those aspects of classroom interaction" (Holliday 1994: 14).

From a sociocultural viewpoint, language teachers' beliefs have been shown as contextualised, dynamic, and social-specific (Aguilar 2007). That is, one needs to understand teacher cognition from the social practices they are involved in. Deriving from the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, this chapter presents primary findings regarding ELT teachers' understanding and rationales for ICC to answer research question 4. Additionally, it indicates how multiple contextual factors intertwine to shape teachers' ICC teaching decisions in the classroom.

During the interviews, the participants identified ten influencing factors impeding the realisation of their established beliefs in classroom settings. These factors can be situated at the macro (e.g., country policy), meso (e.g., institutional requirements), and micro (e.g., student and classroom) levels, which will be discussed in-depth as follows.

6.2 Macro-level factors

6.2.1 Gaps between top-down policy and bottom-up teaching constraints

The lack of theoretical and practical guidance from the policy was a prominent theme in the interview data. Notably, six participants (S1, S3, S5, S7, S9 and S10) highlighted gaps between top-down macro-level policy on ICC and teachers' practices on the micro-level, as S5 and S10 described:

S5: In my opinion, it's vital to include ICC in the policy. However, the policy only tells us: to teach ICC in the classroom. It doesn't tell us: what and how to prepare and assess ICC. I think there are some disconnections between the policy and our teaching in practice.

S10: There is a clear goal of improving students' ICC on the policy level, but there are no specific sentences regarding how to enhance students' ICC. I think this is most teachers' utmost concern.

In the extracts above, the interviewed participants suggest that the national curriculum requirements only briefly addressed the goal of developing students' ICC for teachers. Nonetheless, these policy documents did not specify cultural teaching aspects and assessment methods, nor did they offer any theoretical and practical guidance for teachers regarding how to teach and assess ICC. Thus, there appears to be little policy support to provide teachers with opportunities for transforming policy requirements into actual teaching practices. This further leads to ELT teachers' confusion about what should be taught in classrooms.

6.2.2 The washback effect of high-stakes tests

Moreover, S9 expressed that ICC cannot be accurately assessed because of its dynamic and fluid nature. Furthermore, he critically evaluated the summative assessment of English tests which still dominates Chinese educational systems. This causes a washback effect in Chinese universities. That is to say, teachers teach English to the test. English language learners also expect to be taught to ensure that they can pass different English exams. Accordingly, S9 claimed that the current established summative assessments in Chinese universities could not comprehensively assess

students' ICC:

S9: I think ICC is a developmental process. In the beginning, students may not have ICC, but after some time, they may develop competence because...may be attending classes, interacting with foreign friends, and going abroad for a period. This continuous developmental pattern cannot be assessed all at once through the final exam, which is the most frequently used measurement in the Chinese higher education system.

In their interviews, S2 and S9 also mentioned conflicts between teachers' willingness to assess students' ICC and imperative high-stake English exams and priority about English grades in students' academic careers:

S2: We, as teachers, need to help students with their national English exams as a priority. Students mostly care about the exam grade. In addition, I don't have any energy and more time to touch on ICC topics.

S9: There are compulsory English tests in the university, like CET Band 4 and 6⁴. Contents in these tests are made by the Ministry of Education, and those exam contents mainly orient at assessing students' grammar, vocabulary and listening skills. I have to pay more attention to teaching students how to pass these exams first in my classroom. After all, students always put exams first in their studies.

The extract above indicates that teachers' teaching contents and curriculum design were still based on students' academic preferences and content requirements of national paper-and-pencil exams. These exams aim to evaluate learners' linguistic, literature and cultural knowledge, which is aligned with traditional views of English language learning, that is, the conception of culture as a fixed body of knowledge. As a result, other components of ICC development, including skills, attitudes, and intercultural awareness, are neglected in China's summative assessment procedures. In this regard, teachers referred to the backwash effect they experienced: they had to prepare students for the national written exams administered every six months. Since these national-wide exams mainly focus on linguistic knowledge, teachers preferred distributing most of the time to teaching English grammar. Thus, the workload and limited time pressure prevented teachers from integrating cultural content into their classes. As a result, cultural teaching is downplayed and serves a less critical role in teachers' practical decisions.

⁴ CET Band 4 and CET Band 6 are national English tests in China and have existed for 26 years in China. The CET test-takers are undergraduate students who major in any discipline except English.

6.3 Meso-level factors

6.3.1 The lack of pre-service training

ELT pre-service teacher training is considered the site where in-service teachers “learn to teach through exposure to theories, methods, and practices that are considered to be important for EFL teaching and learning” (Yook & Lee 2016: 523). In interviews, the majority of participants reported that they did not receive formal pre-service training and were not given guidance on how to incorporate ICC-related ideas into classrooms. Consequently, the lack of systematic training programmes hindered teachers in boosting their students’ ICC, as S4 and S9 indicated:

S4: When I was a student, we did not have training about how to teach ICC in the future classroom. At that time, although we had some teachers who had studied abroad, they did not explicitly give us instructions on teaching ICC.

S9: I remember we had some foreign teachers when I did my master, but they did not specifically teach us how to design activities and improve our future students’ ICC. I think they might not have ideas about this issue.

Their comments pointed out that one reason for the ineffective implementation of ICC raised by teachers was the limitations of pre-service training guidance on ICC. No participant could recall long-lasting and meaningful teaching ideas from their previous teacher education period. Thus, they seemed to have limited opportunities to develop their pedagogical approaches through pre-service training at the university. These excerpts highlight how beliefs about teachers’ pre-service teacher education can be interwoven into the teaching profession and affect the enactment of ICC (Pappa et al. 2017).

The participants primarily integrated cross-cultural topics in their classes by telling students what they had heard, experienced and know about different cultures. Moreover, there was a sense that teachers were largely dependent on personal knowledge as the primary source to incorporate culture and had to learn relevant teaching strategies from colleagues autonomously. As S3 expressed:

S3: It’s pretty hard for teachers to teach ICC. I can only talk about my personal stories about how I lived my life and communicated with people abroad. At other times, I speak

with my colleagues from Spain, Portugal, or France to know what happens outside of China and how those foreign teachers design ICC-related activities. I also try to use similar activities in my own classroom.

According to the excerpts above, the participants' unpreparedness for integrating ICC into their classes was primarily attributable to their inadequate teaching competence and skills during their pre-service teacher training. This finding justified that in-service teachers' prior learning experience functioned as a default guideline for their teaching practices and philosophies of culture integration into classrooms (e.g., Borg 2003, 2011; Güngör 2017; Lan et al. 2021). In turn, those conceptions and attitudes informed how teachers spontaneously addressed interculturality in classrooms (Pattaraworathum 2021).

6.3.2 In-service professional development

Teachers' professional development is perceived as an effective means of enhancing teachers' ICC and intercultural effectiveness, enriching content knowledge, and updating their pedagogical thinking (Gu 2005; Wong 2016; Yuan & Gao 2021). Nonetheless, the interviewed participants without SA experience indicated that they received few opportunities for professional development, helping them increase ICC teaching quality in the working environment. Due to the inadequate professional development during the work sojourn, teachers are given little space to expand their professional learning of ICC. The personal experience of S5 and S8 underlines the failure of systematic professional development and its spin-off effects on their ICC implementation practices:

S5: Well, it's a pity that the university where I work does not have such professional development for ICC. We indeed had some onboarding training, but it was merely about the rules and regulations of the university and other administrative requirements. There was no specific professional development about ICC involved.

S8: Honestly, I did not receive professional training in teaching ICC when I started working at the university. The dean of the faculty just asked me to prepare lesson plans for my upcoming classes. It seems that ICC education is not that important in the university.

Based on their comments, it can be seen that "intercultural education attains a low rank of priority in the school's professional development" (Pattaraworathum 2021: 164), and

it seems that administrative tasks and responsibilities are considered more critical in the view of administrators. This results in insufficient support for teachers' professional knowledge and limited cognitive concentration on intercultural teaching capability.

By contrast, although SA teachers claimed that they were confronted with a limited professional educational environment in the working university, they acknowledged the positive effects of international mobility on their subject-related competence and professional self-awareness during and after the SA period:

S1: When I was a visiting scholar in Germany, I also attended some classes at the university. I learned how German ELT teachers designed ICC teaching classes, implemented cross-cultural activities, and embedded intercultural topics into the classroom. After I came back to China, I also borrowed some activities and cultural topics from what I learned in Germany and brought them into my classroom.

This comment suggests that S1's SA experience offered her a glimpse into a new culture and provided a means of polishing their pedagogical skills in intercultural education. She believed that her professional development was enhanced and teaching methods were expanded when she observed lessons in a new country. Upon returning to her home university, S1 searched for transferrable teaching strategies gained from German ELT classrooms for her own classrooms.

Similarly, teachers' SA experience was perceived as a starting point for reflecting on their teaching planning and strategies. Cross-cultural experiences offer them opportunities through which they critically review their previous teaching strategies and develop a renewed approach to ICC (Tolosa et al. 2018):

S5: I was like an audience or a listener when I stayed abroad. I started to think that my previous teaching strategies could have been expanded. I should re-design some teaching strategies for my students and incorporate deepened cultural dimensions into the classroom.

As can be seen in the excerpt above, S5 saw her SA experience as a reflective and engaging process in which she thought about her underlying beliefs and practical techniques for ICC. As a result, by inquiring into their previous teaching procedures, participants could make instructional changes for their students' better learning outcomes.

6.3.3 Rigid institutional policy requirements

All participants acknowledged that rigid institutional policies as a potential obstacle to their implementation of ICC-focused language teaching. Although the participating teachers firmly believed that a flexible, bottom-up ELT policy was conducive to developing students' ICC, they had to follow the institutional requirement. Additionally, S1 talked about her unsatisfying experience regarding making digital contact with international students from another country due to institutional policy constraints.

S1: There are many teaching contents required to be taught through English language lessons. Sometimes, I tried to invite some international students and teachers who would also love to build online connections with my students. When I asked the department head for permission, however, I got rejected.

S7: I needed to finish all teaching contents specified in the institutional policy.

According to teachers' comments, strict adherence to institutional teaching policy causes stress to teachers. As a consequence, such a rigid educational policy deprives teachers of opportunities to select teaching materials and explore intercultural teaching activities in a flexible way. It is, therefore, filled with challenges for teachers to foster the development of students' ICC in their teaching practices.

6.4 Micro-level factors

6.4.1 Large class sizes and the homogeneous student body

Large class size is considered one influential element which has an impact on teachers' teaching decisions (Gao 2020; Liu 2016). Half of the interviewed participants in this study reported that the large class size inhibited students' active participation in classroom activities. Teachers unanimously agreed that ICC-relevant practices in small classes could be more effective than in large ones. The participants expressed that they could design effective ICC activities and discussions with a small number of students because every student could be given sufficient time to participate in classroom activities. Thus, participants thought that the effect of implementing ICC activities in

small classes could be better.

S2: I generally teach students in lecturer classes. At least 70 students are present at the same time. Therefore, it's not easy to design some activities for such a large class.

S4: In my class, it's impossible for every student to say something or discuss one topic. If the class size is small, students might better undertake tasks in small groups or individually.

According to extracts, English is a compulsory subject at Chinese universities and is often taught in large class sizes, focusing on teacher-led instruction of knowledge and skills. This is sharply different from seminars or tutorials in other countries, which are student-centred and discussion-oriented. Consequently, teachers were inhibited from implementing intercultural teaching activities.

On the other hand, S5 and S8 mentioned the feature of a homogeneous study body in the class, where there was a lack of cross-cultural community, open discussion, and negotiation:

S5: My students are all Chinese students. In the UK and the US classrooms, there are many international students. That would be easy for teachers to organise interesting cross-cultural games and activities. More importantly, international students would love to share something with students from other cultures. It's pretty easy for teachers to initiate some intercultural topics.

S8: I think if there were some international students in the class, that would be easier for me to ask questions about cultural topics. Nonetheless, my students are all Chinese and want to pass exams.

As illustrated by S5 and S8, the ethnically homogeneous nature of Chinese students shared culturally and linguistically similar characteristics. They owned pervasive assumptions and motivations for passing examinations. To a large extent, this characteristic hinders teachers from bringing cultural topics which can grab students' attention. From a sociocultural perspective, language teachers in a monolingual and homogeneous cultural environment like Chinese feel challenged to be involved in using effective intercultural strategies and methods.

6.4.2 Professional community of practice

“Community of practice” is the term coined by Lave and Wenger (1991: 97-98) and was further developed by Wenger (1999) as the essential notion of his social theory

of learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) envisioned learning as a *situated activity* involving acquiring knowledge and skills by participating in communities. The concept of community of practice is therefore defined as “a group of people who regularly interact with each other by means of a shared communicative repertoire in order to accomplish a common task” (Ehrenreich 2009: 37). Being different from formal learning approaches which place emphasis on artificial educational settings, communities of practice can be established inside and outside of teachers’ workplaces. Specifically, teachers can share innovative knowledge about teaching skills, activities, methods, and materials through interactions in the community. In sum, teachers’ engagement in professional communities of practice increases their overall instructional quality and learning from others (Turner et al. 2018).

As the interview data analysis indicates, eight participants mentioned different forms of communities of practices they have attended, including annual academic conferences and workshops at other universities. Echoing previous research on the potential of professional learning communities (Doğan et al. 2016; Doğan & Adams 2018), the participants considered learning communities effective for their professional development as they developed new teaching skills from older participating teachers’ sharing about teaching problems and attested solutions. As evident in the extracts below, S2 and S10 demonstrated that attending different communities of practice contributed to expanding the habits of mind they could bring to their classrooms.

S2: There are many national academic conferences in different locations in China on ICC education in language classrooms. Many keynote speakers who are highly respected deliver speeches about their perspectives and teaching methods regarding teaching ICC. Also, many young teachers shared their research on teaching ICC. Their sharing is really insightful. I shared my teaching problems with them and learned from their answers.

S10: I attended some workshops organised by different universities about ICC teaching. I learned many teaching techniques and strategies which can be brought to my classrooms. I want to try those new ideas in my class.

From the descriptions above, the participants stated that communities of practice offered them a unique space where they could expand their ICC teaching knowledge base and increase their overall teaching quality.

Apart from active participation in professional meetings and workshops in the home environment, all SA participants acknowledged opportunities of heading to another country where they had engaged in upgrading their teaching qualifications in the international community of practice. They expressed that they highly appreciated the dialogue and interaction with teachers from the host university because the overseas sojourn resulted in their professional development. To be specific, SA helped teachers familiarise themselves with the teaching practices of other countries and encouraged them to reflect on their teaching strategies. Returnee teachers, S6 and S7, for example, explained how they had learned teaching techniques and digital tools at the host university in another country:

S6: During the overseas immersion, I first learned how local English teachers used digital games to improve students' oral skills.

S7: In the practical classes, I learned how teachers used card games in small groups in order to improve students' ICC. I also enjoyed those activities.

According to the comments above, SA teachers' engagement in international communities expanded their repertoire of pedagogical strategies beyond what was inherent in their own sociocultural and educational contexts.

In addition, all interviewed SA participants emphasised that intercultural networking necessitates a process of ongoing critical reflection on their teaching approaches so that they can adjust their teaching activities in their classrooms at the home university.

S1: During the sojourn in Hong Kong, I met many local teachers. We compared and shared our teaching experiences in the lesson I observed. Furthermore, I tried to select some group activities that fit my classroom.

According to the above excerpt, self-evaluation and self-reflection were crucial to transforming SA teachers' perspectives and enabled them to incorporate new methods into their classrooms.

6.4.3 Time constraints

When teachers were asked to explain why they could not get around to culture teaching, seven teachers complained that they were constrained by the limited class

time. Teachers were demanded to cover compulsory teaching content by the standardised syllabi. Thus, they were restricted by the mandatory content and lacked the autonomy to structure culture teaching flexibly. They stated that involving cultural information in classes would slow the teaching process. To a large extent, teachers had to follow the tightly paced teaching schedule. Consequently, teachers tend to adopt explicit instruction on culture to a lesser extent, and the students receive little culture-oriented input. As S1 and S4 explained in the following:

S1: I know that students should be interculturally aware and communicate with people from different backgrounds in an appropriate manner. One big challenge in addressing ICC-related content is the lack of teaching time. I really don't have enough time to design ICC-related activities. I need to teach the required content from the institute.

S4: I had prepared some group discussions about cultural topics, but I did not have much time to make them in my class. I have to prepare students for the final written exams as a priority.

The excerpt reviewed here suggests that the extent of teachers' culture teaching depends on how much time they can allocate. Given time constraints underlying the divergence between teachers' established beliefs and actual practices, teachers have to adjust their strategies and tailor practices to suit a limited amount of teaching time. As reported by the interview participants, since they were required to prepare students for the final exams at the end of each semester, they felt pressed by scheduled class hours to meet excessive syllabi requirements, which were not negotiated with teachers.

6.4.4. Teachers' confusion about ICC assessment

Even though all the interviewed participants demonstrated a willingness to integrate ICC-related content into classrooms, they admitted that they were confused about appropriate content and methods regarding ICC assessment. Equally important, the English teaching curriculum of China does not specify the aspects of assessment, nor does it provide any additional guidance on how to assess ICC (Gu & Zhao 2021). This leads to teachers' helplessness and loss in incorporating ICC assessment into ELT classroom activities. For instance, S4 and S5 added some comments as follows and the sense of disorientation in measuring students' ICC:

S4: There are many ICC-related components and contents. It's tough to measure students' ICC. At the same time, I don't exactly know what aspects should be and can be included, and...of course, how to assess those is another big problem.

S5: I have no idea how to evaluate my students' skills and intercultural awareness. These components are too subjective to be assessed. For example, it seems challenging to evaluate whether students are tolerant of communication differences between Chinese and other cultures through the assessment method.

According to the above excerpts, the fluid and dynamic nature of the ICC concept leads to ELT teachers' confusion about what should be assessed in authentic teaching actions.

6.4.5 Students' low level of classroom engagement

Engagement is a multi-fold phenomenon and is perceived as inseparable from students' learning processes. Classroom engagement refers to "the amount of participation that students take in the class to be actively involved in the activities and whether the mental and physical activities have a goal" (Yan 2021: 2). Reeve (2013) and Reeve and Tseng (2011) conceptualised engagement as fourfold, comprised of behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and agentic components. Behavioural engagement is defined as "active involvement or participation in learning-related activities, such as asking questions in class and doing the homework" (Dincer et al. 2019: 2). Emotional engagement refers to "students' affective reactions in the learning process" (ibid). Cognitive engagement concerns "adopting sophisticated learning strategies such as conceptual understanding over surface knowledge" (ibid). As the fourth construct, agentic engagement means "learners' active, constructive contributions to their learning activities, such as offering input and making suggestions" (ibid).

Five teachers in semi-structured interviews expressed that their teaching behaviour was closely correlated with students' classroom engagement. If students tend to disengage from classroom activities or group discussions, ELT teachers will transform themselves into controlling teachers who are prone to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way (Reeve 2009). There are two representative responses as below:

S3: Sometimes, I indeed added some intercultural activities, small group discussions, or

some role-plays into the class. However, I realised that students are not quite involved in those activities. Maybe they were not interested in these activities. Perhaps they do not have basic intercultural knowledge. Therefore, they were not prepared for classroom participation. I afterwards quit those activities and taught in a dominant role.

S6: I tried hard to encourage students to participate in class discussions. Otherwise, they try to be quiet without saying something. Moreover, they never told me what intercultural topics or content they were interested in. I generally follow my own lesson plans. I just used the roll calling to ask them questions in relation to intercultural content.

S3's comment shines a beam of light that students' learning disengaged behaviours and low levels of motivation made a negative impact on teachers' instructional styles during ICC-relevant instructions. From his point of perspective, students were emotionally as well as cognitively disengaged. Thus, the burdens of teaching responsibility pushed him to change his teaching style to a structured one, which means teacher-dominated one-way knowledge transmission toward students. In contrast, S6 placed emphasis on students' agentic engagement in classroom topics and contents. Even if S6 embraced and enacted an autonomy-supportive style and sparked students' engagement, he failed to support students' autonomy because students seemed passive and intrinsically unmotivated in ICC activities. Consequently, S6 adopted a pressure-inducing style toward learners during instructions.

ICC-oriented activities and discussions in classrooms require discourses and interactions, which can be demanding for some Chinese students who may have been encultured to remain silent in the classroom. The above two examples indicate the complexities of ICC-oriented ELT, which should align with the Chinese sociocultural context.

6.5 Chapter summary

Using semi-structured interviews in the qualitative phase, this chapter exhibited the findings of examining how a multitude of factors lead to the disconnection between teacher cognition and teaching practices in ICC. Although teachers generally placed a high value on ICC as a crucial teaching outcome, their practices were facilitated or constrained by a combination of factors at the macro, meso and micro levels.

To be first, teachers demonstrated two meso-level factors which, to some degree, inhibited their classroom implementation of ICC. Meso-level factors involve the strict institutional policy requirements, lack of pre-service training and in-service professional development. In other words, the participants' lack of guidelines on teaching culture and ICC in their classrooms apparently derived from what they have gained as an English learner and a teacher during the teaching process. Instead of the systematic cultural integration in the teaching period, they generally brought their own personal intercultural knowledge and stories into the classroom and implemented certain practices learned from foreign colleagues. In this regard, ICC teaching became "a matter of the individuality" (Pattaraworathum 2021: 147) based on teachers' spontaneity. This reaffirms that ICC is less prioritised in teachers' academic training.

Besides, macro and micro level factors significantly influenced the ELT teachers' classroom decision-making and lesson planning, which caused the rise and fall of their incorporation of the cultural dimension into their actual instructions. These factors involved gaps between top-down policy and bottom-up teaching constraints, the wash-back effect of high-stakes tests, large class sizes and the homogenous student body, professional community of practice, time constraints, teachers' confusion about ICC assessment, and students' low level of classroom engagement. These factors hindered teachers from maximising teaching ICC in ELT classrooms.

Notably, teachers' SA experience enabled teachers to actively reflect on their beliefs and teaching actions and restructure the course design with innovative strategies. As Borg claimed, "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg 2003: 81). SA teachers' critical examination of their exposure to different cultures contributed to translating their reflection on SA experience into pedagogical insights and formulating concrete methodological possibilities in the classroom (Chen & McConachy 2021).

7. Discussion

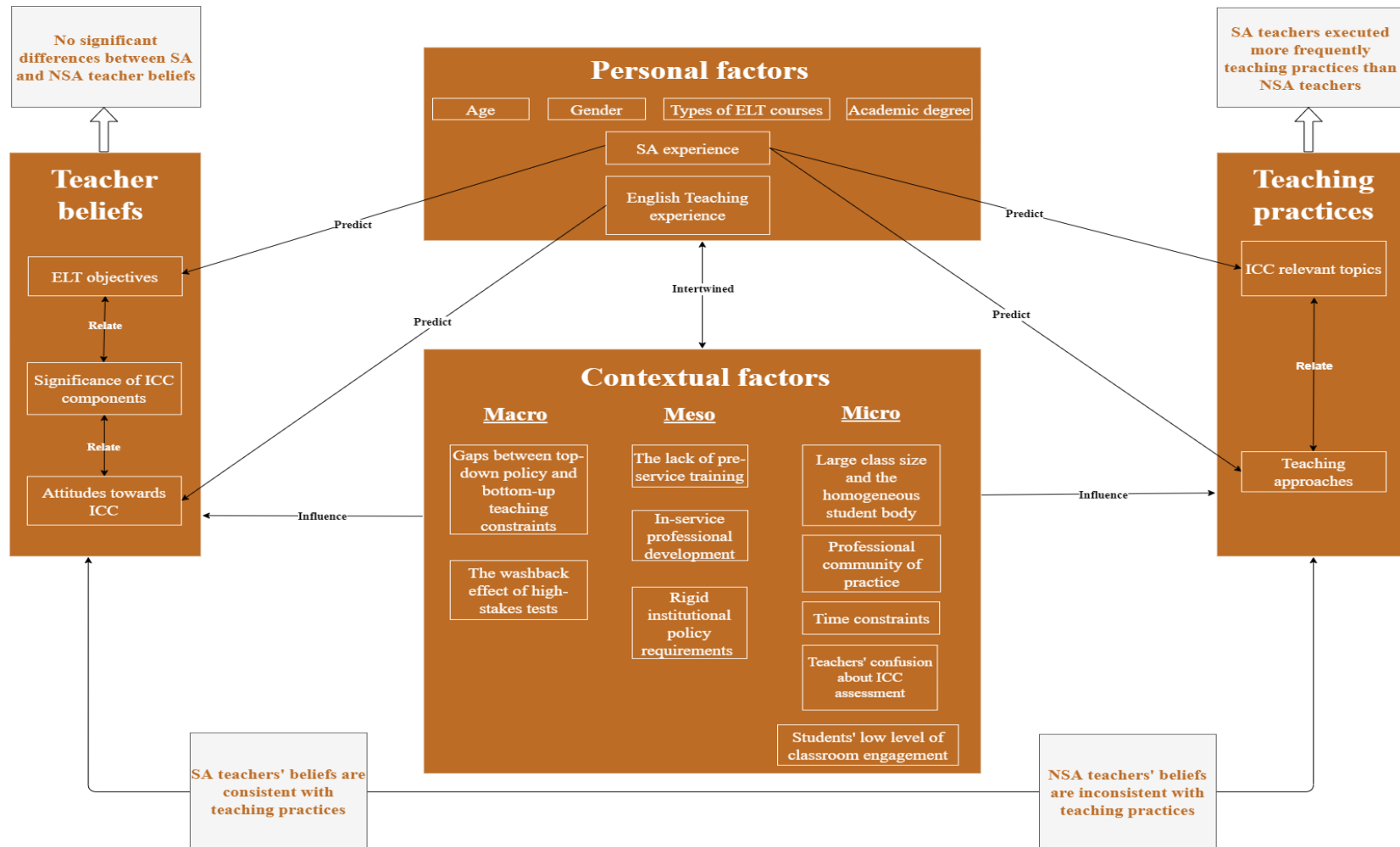
7.1 Introduction

The present study attempted to probe Chinese university ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and their instructions in classrooms. Answers to four research questions were offered in the previous two chapters. Unlike previous studies focusing on Chinese ELT teachers' general beliefs about ICC and classroom pedagogies, this study examined and compared NSA and SA teachers and their differences (and similarities) in different components of beliefs about ICC and teaching pedagogies in classrooms. Besides, it developed an understanding of the multifaceted and complex relationship between teacher beliefs about ICC, teaching practices and teachers' SA experience.

This chapter takes account of the findings described in the two preceding chapters: all analysis results addressing research questions in the first quantitative phase in Chapter 5 and the examination of influential factors at three levels (i.e., macro, meso, and micro levels) in the second qualitative phase in Chapter 6. Accordingly, Figure 12 visualises the data analysis results emergent from the previous two chapters.

By comparing the findings of this study with previous research in intercultural education, ELT teachers' cultural teaching instructions are brought into more light; so far, it seems that teachers' beliefs, teaching practices and SA experience are intricately interrelated. The discussion of noteworthy results in the study will provide implications for developing ELT teachers' teaching pedagogies, coping with challenges they encounter in incorporating ICC and acknowledging the crucial role of the SA experience in boosting teachers' ELT objectives and the way to achieve ICC teaching goals.

Figure 12. Visualisation of findings for quantitative and qualitative phases.



7.2 Research question 1: What are Chinese ELT teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices?

The first research question examined the first three constructs regarding Chinese ELT teachers' beliefs about integrating ICC into the classroom. In terms of ELT objectives, quantitative data analysis results implied that ICC and cultural teaching-related objectives ranked higher than linguistic objectives among participants. That is to say, the participants perceived teaching cultural components as the priority at the conceptual level and were optimistic about exploring cultural content. This finding is congruent with the studies of Zhang and Bai (2014) and Han (2014), both of which found that ELT teachers in Chinese universities considered culture teaching a pivotal component. At the same time, the participants in this study expressed a high level of willingness to address ICC and touch upon different cultural elements in classes. These findings echo previous studies across different educational contexts (e.g., Oranje & Smith 2018; Safa & Tofighi 2021; Tolosa et al. 2018; Young & Sachdev 2011), indicating that ELT teachers have acknowledged the necessity of incorporating cultural components into their teaching process. That is to say, ELT teachers have been found disinclined to promote ICC development in their classes.

Nevertheless, the findings mentioned above are different from or even contradictory to some earlier studies situated in China (e.g., Cai 2009; Liu & Shang 2017; Tian 2013; Zhou 2011; Zhou et al. 2011), which revealed that the majority of participating ELT teachers were not ready for enhancing learners' ICC in classrooms and emphasised teaching linguistic knowledge. In the study of Zhou (2011), for example, although the participants embraced an intercultural perspective towards cultural teaching, they stressed the acquisition of cultural knowledge instead of intercultural attitudes and skills. Similarly, Tian (2016) reported that the participating ELT teachers in China held "language first, culture second" attitudes. A plausible explanation for the inconsistent results may derive from a different selection and sampling of participants, whose variation of demographic factors (e.g., genders, places

of origin, and English language capabilities) could influence empirical results. As Yang (2018) points out, the development and implementation of ICC in Chinese higher education are highly uneven across different regions and universities, although ICC has been acknowledged as one of the goals of China's ELT curriculum.

The prominence of ICC in ELT classrooms is further demonstrated by teachers' perceptions of the significance of ICC components. According to the quantitative analysis, ELT teachers ranked *open attitudes toward cross-cultural learning and people from other cultures* as the top ICC element, followed by *cross-cultural awareness* and *respect for other cultures*. It is consistent with the findings of Deardorff (2004) and Tian (2013), both of which revealed that the attitudinal component was considered very important. This finding echoes the foundational attitude element in any IC model (e.g., Deardorff 2006). As such, it also reflects what Okayama et al. (2001) emphasised regarding the necessity of attitude in valuing and learning cultures. Additionally, the perceived role of attitudes by the participants in the study tends to substantiate Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter hypothesis, which captures the relationship between affective variables and the success of SL/FL acquisition.

Nevertheless, the cognitive dimension, such as *culture-specific knowledge*, is considered by the participants of the study as the least important component. This finding corroborates Deardorff's (2006) study, in which teachers perceived *knowledge* as the least important in IC. On the contrary, this result differs from the findings reported in the study of Han (2014), who revealed that Chinese ELT teachers did not perceive affective and behavioural dimensions as pivotal; instead, they still considered the cognitive / knowledge element as the primary component of ICC. It was divergent from the study of Han and Song (2011), with the conclusion that ELT university teachers in China prioritised cultural knowledge transmission while rarely focusing on raising learners' attitudes and skills for ICC, and Luk's (2012) study, wherein Hong Kong ELT teachers were ambivalent about the self-positioning in culture-ELT integration to promote students' intercultural understanding.

The questionnaire touched upon the participants' attitudes towards ICC in ELT

classrooms. As Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. (2003) maintained, the language teacher serves as the mediator between two or more cultures, and therefore, language teachers' views have an outsized influence on the content of educational processes. The results suggest that Chinese ELT teachers believe in the significance of the integration of ICC into their classes, and they are found to demonstrate a willingness to promote students' ICC development. More importantly, the participants have realised that they should increase learners' cultural knowledge, improve their attitudes towards different cultures, further their skills with people from different lingua-cultural backgrounds, and eventually enhance their cultural identity.

These findings are in line with the result of Han's (2014) research, which presented that 1,081 Chinese ELT teachers from 39 universities acknowledged the significance of teaching (inter)cultural dimensions of ELT. Similarly, these results confirmed the findings from previous studies in the Chinese context, such as Luk (2012), Zhang (2014) and Guo (2014), all of which showed that the participants were unanimously positive in their attitudes towards ICC in language education, and in other contexts, including Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. (2003), Bickley et al. (2014) and Safa and Tofighi (2021).

However, the above-mentioned findings contradict both Piatkowska's study (2013), which found that Polish English teacher educators were unaware of teaching culture and stressed the crucial role of grammatical competence together with the development of linguistic skills, and the study of Nguyen (2013), who concluded that ELT teachers in Vietnamese universities did not consider culture teaching as their responsibility and position culture as a minor supportive role in their teaching process. Additionally, the findings of this study differ from the results obtained from a series of studies conducted by Sercu (2002, 2005), who claimed that teachers of English, French, and German perceived intercultural teaching basically with regards to providing cultural knowledge while did not mainly intend to promote learners' acquisition of intercultural attitudes, nor their ability to cope with intercultural encounters. Moving to the Chinese context, this study was unaligned with Han and Song (2011), who revealed

that ELT teachers in Chinese universities prioritised instructing cultural knowledge but rarely focused on improving learners' skills or attitudes in IC.

The last two dimensions of the questionnaire aimed to explore how the participants take ICC into implementation in their classrooms. From the beginning, the extent to which the participants addressed different cultural topics during ELT constitutes an indicator of the degree to which current ICC practices can be examined. In this study, the most frequently three cultural topics addressed by the participants were *values and beliefs, literature, music, and movies, and educational and professional life*. Put differently, those addressed cultural manifestations coincide with Weaver's (1993) visible/invisible cultural dichotomies in the much-used *iceberg model of culture*, i.e., the surface level represents the visible cultural reflections above the surface; and the deep level containing invisible culture remains hidden, such as values, beliefs, and perceptions. Those mentioned cultural manifestations the participants addressed in the present study concurred with the finding revealed in prior studies (e.g., Han & Song 2011; Han 2014; Pattaraworathum 2021). For example, drawing on an ELT teacher survey, Han (2014) reported that teachers most frequently touched upon *daily lives, values and beliefs, and customs* when coping with cultural topics in a cross-cultural teaching context. Similarly, Pattaraworathum's (2021) research on cultural teaching practices in the lower secondary school context found that teachers taught a higher degree of *social manners* in different cultures than some cultural products on the surface level. Nonetheless, although Sercu (2005a, 2005b) concluded that *history, geography, political system, daily life and routines, food and drink and traditions, folklore and tourist attractions* were primary cultural contents taught by teachers in ELT classrooms, the results of the present study revealed a higher degree of the participants' teaching about invisible cultural aspects than topics on the surface level.

Apart from cross-cultural topics addressed by ELT teachers in their classrooms, it was evident that the participants generally enacted a diversity of teaching techniques to operate efficiently in intercultural education (see 4.1.1.4). In light of the existing studies, a notable resemblance is discernible between ELT teachers' self-reported

culture teaching approaches. For example, employing contrastive cultural examples has been repeatedly sanctioned by teachers across different SL/FL teaching contexts (Kidwell 2019; Stapleton 2000).

According to the questionnaire results, the most frequent teaching strategies by the participants were: *I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures*, *I ask students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures regarding a particular topic*, and *I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures*. This result echoes the findings of previous studies (e.g., Han 2014; Tian 2013; Zhou et al. 2011), which reported similar cultural teaching strategies. Additionally, the present study further confirms Han (2014), who revealed that ELT teachers in Chinese universities rarely adopted simulated encounters and invited foreign guest lecturers to the class. As Sercu (2006) and Yang (2010) suggest, teachers should encourage students to relate their own culture to other cultures and compare cultures. This study showed that presenting unique features of different cultures was a frequent teaching approach by teachers and specifically involved encouraging learners to compare their own culture(s) with other cultures.

Furthermore, the strategies mentioned above corroborate what Gong (2018) has framed teachers' ICC teaching practices into "one-way transmission approach", "two-way interaction approach", "experience-oriented approach", and "multiple-perspective/critical approach". Specifically, teachers are inclined to use a one-way transmission approach by transmitting cultural facts and demonstrating features of other cultures. For example, teachers generally tell students what teachers know about different cultures and people using CDs, videos, and online resources. This approach is consistent with *what teachers have heard/read/experienced about other cultures/countries* in the present study. The two-way interaction approach means contrasting cultures, and teachers use this approach to compare students' own culture(s) with other cultures and to allow students to share their opinions on their own and other cultures. Therefore, this pedagogy places great significance on two-way exchanges and emphasises differences between learners' home culture(s) and the target culture

(Larzén-Östermark 2008). The experience-oriented approach serves a critical role in enhancing learners' openness to different cultures by immersing students in either imagined or authentic cultural experiences. A typical example is to ask students to attend role-play situations where people from various lingual-cultural backgrounds communicate. The last type of ICC teaching approach is the multiple-perspective/critical approach, which encourages students to eradicate stereotypes about other cultures, analyse various cultural perspectives on the same cultural phenomenon and reflect on their own cultures. This approach stresses fostering students' respect for and open-mindedness about other cultures through explorations and discussions. As Larzén-Östermark demonstrates, ICC teaching should be considered "a reciprocal, dialogic process where the student's own culture and the foreign culture(s) are taken into consideration" (Larzén-Östermark 2008: 540). In the study of Gong (2018), he found that teachers primarily utilised one-way transmission in teaching ICC and positively perceived employing two-way interaction. Nonetheless, he concluded that the participants were less optimistic about the experience-oriented and multiple-perspective/critical approaches to ICC teaching. In line with Gong (2018), teachers in this study mostly resorted to a one-way transmission approach and sometimes a two-way interaction approach.

To sum up, quantitative findings regarding the participants' ICC practices revealed that teachers were mostly positive about using the pedagogy of information to convey facts about other cultures through frequently a one-way transmission approach and sometimes a two-way interaction approach. Students are generally informed by acquiring factual knowledge or culture-specific information. These findings tend to echo results revealed by earlier studies, such as Larzén-Östermark (2008), Qin (2015), Gong (2018) and Pena-Dix (2018).

7.3 Research question 2: Are there differences (or similarities) in ICC beliefs and teaching practices between NSA and SA teachers?

The second research question sought to ascertain whether there are similarities

or differences in teachers' beliefs about ICC and implementation techniques in ELT classrooms based on their SA experience. According to quantitative data analysis results (see Chapter 5), SA teachers considered the majority of statements regarding ELT objectives, perceived importance of ICC components and attitudes towards ICC with higher scores than their NSA counterparts. Despite those facts, it was found that the two teacher groups did not display significant differences in those dimensions. In other words, SA and NSA teachers perceived ELT objectives, the perceived importance of ICC components and attitudes towards ICC as crucial on the conceptual level, regardless of their SA experience. This finding matches the study of Tian (2013), who revealed no statistically significant differences between sub-groups for ELT objectives and the reported importance of ICC components based on teachers' SA experience. In addition, the results of this study support the findings of Czura (2018), who reported no significant differences in cultural teaching objectives based on pre-service English teachers' length of stay abroad, although teachers with over three months abroad stay displayed higher scores than teachers without such abroad experience.

One plausible explanation for such no significant difference between NSA and SA teachers' beliefs lies in that ICC has been integrated into national ELT curricula and other official documents regarding Chinese higher education, such as China's new *National guidelines for college English curriculum* and *China's national criteria of teaching quality for undergraduate foreign language majors*. Therefore, the participating ELT teachers, whether they have SA experience or not, probably have well-established perceptions of ICC. It leads to a high consensus on developing English language learners' ICC and teachers' holistic views of intercultural teaching in ELT.

Moving to ELT teachers' classroom practices, however, SA teachers were more likely to address intercultural topics about *values and beliefs, traditions, folklore and tourist attractions* and *educational and professional life*. This finding appears to concur with the evidence of the effects of teachers' extensive intercultural contact on delivering intercultural topics. In their study conducted in the German educational context, Göbel and Helmke (2010) noted that ELT teachers with more intercultural connections seemed

to deliver intercultural and culture-associated topics more readily than their less internationally experienced colleagues. They further claimed that more interculturally experienced teachers were more likely to address *subjective culture* related to implicit and hidden cultural meanings.

Then, a deeper probe into the questionnaire responses between two groups of teachers revealed that NSA teachers' beliefs did not echo their actual teaching practices. Correlational analyses confirmed the result. SA teachers' beliefs and teaching approaches in ICC teaching were strongly correlated. It suggested that apparent disparities existed between NSA teachers' stated beliefs and actual teaching practices compared with SA teachers. These mismatches between NSA teachers' "ought to" beliefs and their concrete practising approaches in their classrooms aligned with previous literature (e.g., Birello 2012; Horii 2015; Oranje & Smith 2018; Sercu et al. 2005; Song 2015; Thornbury 2011). A possible explanation for mismatches and disparities could be that NSA teacher beliefs about ICC might be positioned on a peripheral dimension, which is "theoretical or newly acquired and, therefore, less likely to influence practice" (Oranje & Smith 2018: 4). This is similar to the distinction between theoretical and abstract beliefs and practical, concrete, and contextualised beliefs (e.g., Birello 2012; Feryok & Oranje 2015). As Mangubhai et al. (2005) point out, teachers have not only a broad and abstract view but also an experience-oriented practical understanding and perception. In this respect, NSA teachers may hold a positive theoretical belief about ICC on the conceptual level (e.g., ICC is crucial within ELT) while reporting a contextualised and practical belief associated with the concrete operationalisation of the view (e.g., ICC should give way to teaching grammar).

7.4 Research question 3: To what extent does the SA experience predict teachers' beliefs about ICC and their relevant teaching practices?

It is worth noting that ELT teachers' SA experience positively predicts their perceived ELT objectives and ICC instructional practices. In other words, it confirms the benefit of SA in enhancing teachers' conceptualisations of ELT quality teaching and

intercultural pedagogical outcomes. It is congruent with findings in subsequent interviews, which illustrated how SA participants became open-minded about diversified ICC teaching approaches and were aware of the necessity of incorporating cultural teaching techniques into their classrooms. These findings are consistent with the study of Li and Edwards, who described that SA teachers in China “were implementing innovations introduced as part of their overseas-based professional training included a shift from authority figure to supporter, guide and motivator” (Li & Edwards 2013: 406). Compared with NSA teachers, SA teachers returning from another country tend to implement ICC curricula and plan classes using a diversity of practical techniques and intercultural strategies more effectively. SA teachers are likely to engage with fundamental skills essential for ELT curriculum development, critically evaluating and adapting teaching materials and creatively using authentic materials to meet pedagogical needs. These newly imbued class management offer learners chances to develop ICC. These findings echo the positive impacts of SA on teachers’ cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills in teaching interculturality (e.g., Allen 2010; Li & Edwards 2013; Mayumi & Hüttner 2020; Moorhouse & Harfitt 2019). On the other hand, intercultural language education tends to partly rely on the SA experience of ELT teachers, as reported in earlier theoretical conceptions (e.g., Byram 1991; Paige et al. 2003). In this sense, border-crossing teacher education or professional teacher development programmes can continue to serve an invaluable role in enhancing ICC-oriented teacher effectiveness (Trent et al. 2014).

This study further revealed that ELT teachers’ SA experience was a significant factor that positively influenced teachers’ classroom practices in ICC. ELT teachers’ extensive academic exposure to different cultures substantially impacts their ICC instructional behaviour. This finding confirms theoretical perceptions claiming that teachers’ intercultural experience is of significance for the content quality of intercultural education (Byram 1991). Furthermore, it conforms to empirical results from earlier studies (e.g., Cushner 2007; Göbel 2007; Göbel & Hesse 2008; Göbel & Helmke 2010; Moorhouse & Harfitt 2019; Moorhouse 2020; Mo 2021), indicating a

close connection between teachers' intercultural experience and their ICC implementation outcomes. For instance, the study of Moorhouse and Harfitt (2019) identified that in-service teachers benefitted from abroad opportunities within five knowledge domains – personal knowledge, context knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, sociological knowledge, and social knowledge for the 21st century. Concerning in-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge, they further argued that compared with teachers without intercultural experience, SA teachers were more confident to try new pedagogies in their classrooms and more motivated to use various teaching resources to help students learn in an enriching environment.

Apart from teachers' SA experience, a range of demographic factors, including age, gender, academic degree, English teaching experience, types of ELT courses and SA experience, were investigated to examine their associations with teacher beliefs and classroom instructions regarding ICC. According to the analysis results (see 5.2.3), teachers' teaching experience negatively and significantly predicts their attitudes towards ICC. That is to say, novice teachers held more profound statements of ICC than expert teachers. This finding is inconsistent with the study by Zhang (2014), where the participating ELT teachers with more than seven years of teaching experience are more willing to integrate intercultural teaching into classes than those with less than seven years.

Surprisingly, multiple hierarchical regression analyses revealed that the single SA factor did not predict teachers' beliefs about the significance of ICC components and attitudes towards ICC. This finding supports the assertion of Czura that “the positive impact of stays abroad on the level of ICC is not as straightforward as it might seem” (Czura 2018: 331). Likewise, it corroborates previous studies (Boye 2016; Czura 2018; Ehrenreich 2004, 2006) that the intercultural project alone does not suffice for the emergence of ELT teachers' adequate understanding and expertise in terms of the principles of ICC education. As Mendenhall et al. (2004) concluded, current cross-border training might not significantly influence participants' attitudes. Despite calls for intercultural programmes as a facilitative tool for teachers' intercultural teaching, it

may be fundamental to re-evaluate intercultural training programmes through which teachers can consistently improve their global thinking and perspectives in teaching ICC (Gong 2018).

To sum up, SA experience can significantly enhance teachers' awareness of ELT objectives and expand their ICC teaching practices but could not necessarily influence their perceived significance of ICC components and attitudes towards ICC in the present study. Although one of the primary goals of SA or in-service intercultural training is to raise teachers' cross-cultural awareness and perceptions, it seems that intercultural intervention cannot be a universal guarantee of teachers' more positive conception of ICC. In this case, the association between SA experience and teacher belief development does not exist in a linear cause-effect pattern.

7.5 Research question 4: What other factors may influence the (in)congruence between teacher beliefs and instructional practices in ICC?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate potential factors which shape teachers' attitudes towards and preparedness for ICC education. These identified factors have been categorised into macro-level factors (i.e., gaps between top-down policy and bottom-up teaching constraints and the washback effect of high-stakes tests), meso-level factors (i.e., the lack of pre-service training, in-service professional development, and rigid institutional policy requirements) and micro-level factors (i.e., large class sizes and the homogeneous student body, professional community of practice, time constraints, teachers' confusion about ICC assessment as well as students' low level of classroom engagement). All these factors restricted teachers' understanding of intercultural language teaching and strategy executions in classrooms. In other words, interactions of those factors caused a limited correspondence between teachers' self-reported beliefs and enacted practices of ICC. Several prominent findings deserve an in-depth discussion in the following paragraphs.

First, pre-service teacher training is considered critical for challenging, transforming, and internalising teacher beliefs and attitudes (Castro 2010; Gay 2010,

2013), as it is “understood as the starting point from which teachers can begin to feel prepared and empowered to change their pedagogical approach to FLT [foreign language teaching]” (Manzano Vázquez 2018: 2). As revealed in the findings, the lack of pre-service teacher training has led to practising teachers’ inefficiency of comprehensive inclusion of intercultural components in classrooms, which have been confirmed by previous research (e.g., Borg 2011; Dirba 2007; Freeman 1993; Larzen 2005; Lan et al. 2021; Safa & Tofghi 2021). Being confronted with such a divergence between their willingness to adopt intercultural teaching strategies and the low quality of teachers’ pre-service training realities, they mainly resorted to their cultural knowledge and personal experiences as the primary source to address cultural topics (e.g., Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. 2003; Lan et al. 2021; Tian 2016). As a result, it has led to teachers’ one-way transmission of cultural information to their students in teaching ICC. Here, it might be safe to conclude that language teacher education programmes in China are ineffective in bringing about required ICC education training which can serve the pedagogical status quo of ICC in ELT.

According to the participants’ comments, professional development training was one essential source of teachers’ pedagogical guidance when they initiated their teaching careers. Nonetheless, the participants, especially those who did not have SA experience, reported little faculty support and pedagogical training at the working university. As revealed in interviews, the typical outcome of such a shortage of professional learning created little space for teachers’ access to a diverse teaching repertoire. In this regard, professional training programmes are inevitable for in-service teachers to obtain guidelines on the theoretical and practical enactment of ICC (Larzen-Östermark 2009; Safa & Tofghi 2021).

It is worth noting that SA teachers related their intercultural experience to professional development in a myriad of ways. SA tended to form a new community of practice with teachers from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds when they were abroad. By engaging in dialogic interactions and critical exchanges, SA teachers were dedicated to mutually constructing intercultural knowledge and sharing the outcomes of research

output, enhancing intercultural awareness, acquiring new skills and expertise, gaining a better understanding of their working contexts, and eventually promoting their professional practice (Kowalczyk-Wałędziak & Underwood 2021; White et al. 2014; Yuan 2015). This finding is congruent with previous studies (Marx & Moss 2011; Okken et al. 2019; Shoffner 2019) that international networking potentially nurtured teachers' global competences, reflective thinking, and acceptance of diverse education approaches. This finding may explain why SA teachers more effectively integrated cultural practices into the classroom than NSA counterparts in this study.

Moreover, apart from observed professional limitations on teachers' cultural teaching enactments, a multitude of significant contextual factors hindered how teachers addressed cultural dimensions in classrooms. Findings of semi-structured interviews indicated that teachers' actual teaching practices in ICC were predominantly shaped by several reasons noted in previous literature, including the lack of time (Czura 2016; Fernández-Agüero & Chancay-Cedeño 2019; Han & Song 2011; Karabınar & Guler 2013; Sercu 2005c; Simin 2018), class size (e.g., Sercu 2005c), institutional policy requirements (e.g., Rasouli & Moradkhani 2021), the lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills (e.g., Liu & Shang 2017; Lallana & Salamanca 2020; Vo 2017), unorganised assessment of ICC (e.g., Gu 2016; Gu & Zhao 2021) and ambivalent guidance on the governmental policy level (e.g., Gu & Zhao 2021; Han & Song 2011). In the Chinese higher educational context, teachers and learners place great importance on passing high-stakes exams and getting good grades, constraining ELT teachers' ICC pedagogical approaches and enthusiasm. In the case of an unorganised assessment of ICC, for example, the present study resonates with previous studies (e.g., Gu et al. 2012; Gu 2016; Young & Sachdev 2011), concluding that there is a lack of variety in ICC assessment methods.

Based on the interview findings, it is remarkable that the unitary composition of students becomes an obstacle to teachers' ICC implementation. As Zhang (2020) and Zhang (2021) recognised, Chinese students in underdeveloped western regions have limited networking opportunities with people from other linguacultural backgrounds

due to economically and geographically disadvantaged situations. It leads to students' low intercultural awareness and experience in Western China. In turn, local ELT teachers are demotivated and discouraged from implementing ICC techniques in classrooms.

In addition, the findings of the present study extend previous literature, showing that students' level of classroom engagement in ELT classrooms had negative effects on teachers' instructional styles. This finding confirms the studies of Reeve (2009) and Jiang and Zhang (2021). More specifically, students who are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally engaged would like to work in a supportive learning environment, such as answering, asking questions and expressing their learning needs and interests. This will further lead to teachers' autonomy-supportive approaches to ICC. On the contrary, students' disengagement and disinterest in intercultural education may discourage teachers' exploration of new teaching approaches and further trigger a controlling teaching style. As such, a dissonant ecology of classroom settings may be enforced. Teachers are likely to feel destabilised in their teaching roles, and students are less involved or committed to ICC activities. Consequently, ICC implementations are less likely to be successful.

Due to the confounding effects of hindrances at different levels, teachers are forced to be "tasked with bringing about teaching innovations in response to curricular changes without adequate support" (Tolosa et al. 2018: 227) in implementing ICC practices. Negative effects may take place. First, given that ICC teaching practices are incongruent with teacher beliefs and the macro policy demands of the country, a misalignment is made between educational reforms required by governmental policies and the unsatisfying enactment of educational reform. Second, teachers' efforts to make culture teaching more relevant to students' ICC needs have been undermined by insufficient departmental support and strictly standardised teaching curricula. In this regard, teachers are not autonomous, so they cannot self-govern their teaching process and engage in their own thinking about educational decisions (Kong 2020). Given that ICC teaching practices are not isolated from the macro system of a country, ELT

teachers, with their teacher autonomy being not granted, confront unpredictable difficulties in ICC education. This study implies that university administrators and policymakers play a critical role in teachers' teaching process and strongly influence teacher autonomy in ICC.

7.6 Chapter summary

This chapter clarifies how Chinese ELT teachers perceive the concept of ICC and their teaching practices in their classrooms and to what extent how SA experience and other factors influence their perceptions and cultural teaching practices. The discussion illuminates the issues at the heart of the teachers' ICC teaching pedagogy. It confirms that teachers' prior SA experience significantly shapes their beliefs about ICC (i.e., ELT objectives) and relevant teaching practices (i.e., addressing cultural topics and teaching approaches).

However, going abroad is not the one-size-fits-all solution for teachers' enactment of intercultural teaching. Due to the intertwined constraints ranging from educational policies to classroom ecology, teachers' intercultural implementations in real classrooms are not always in accordance with their reported beliefs.

8. Implications and contributions

8.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the present study is to understand ELT teachers' beliefs towards ICC and the extent to which teachers' intercultural teaching is actually operationalised in Chinese higher education based on empirical evidence. I incorporated a comparative perspective and explored differences between SA and NSA participants' ICC beliefs and instructions. Considering tangible outcomes of teachers' SA experience, I endeavour to construct relationships between teacher beliefs, teaching practices and SA experience in intercultural education. I also obtained a richer understanding of influential factors shaping how teachers translate their thoughts to teaching behaviour in the classroom. These factors do not independently exist, but they are intertwined.

At the nexus of theory and practice, the results of this thesis carry a range of significant implications. This thesis also adds empirical evidence to the limited research on ICC grounded in the Chinese ELT context. This chapter begins with a statement of theoretical contributions to the current literature on ICC in 8.2. Then suggestions for stakeholders (i.e., educational policymakers, university administrators, pre-service and in-service teachers) are presented in 8.3.

8.2 Theoretical implications

A mixed-method design in this study gives the participating teachers opportunities to voice their views concerning teaching ICC. It provides insights into how ELT teachers conceptualise ICC and operationalise intercultural teaching approaches situated in China. As presented in Chapters 5 and 6, which elucidated ELT teachers' views of ICC and actual teaching practices, this study makes several contributions by adding empirical evidence to the current literature, which will be discussed as follows.

At first, most of the relevant research on ICC takes place in a Western context

(Liao & Li 2020). It thus fails to capture a complete picture of ELT teachers' understanding of ICC and how their perceptions of ICC inform their instructional behaviour from a non-Western perspective. As a response to calls for more research from a non-Western-dominated context, this study narrows the literature gap by shedding light on Chinese ELT teachers' beliefs towards ICC, teaching practices and their intricate relationships with teachers' SA experience. Incorporating different cultural voices contributes to a body of research on ICC and thereby deepens our understanding of ICC across global contexts.

Secondly, it is worth noting that this study examines teacher beliefs and teaching practices concerning ICC from a comparative perspective. This study has offered solid evidence about teacher beliefs about ICC and teaching patterns based on individual differences, i.e., teachers' prior SA experience. As previous studies (e.g., Borg 2006; Chen & McConachy 2021; Göbel & Helmke 2010) indicate, teachers' overseas study experience is a potentially powerful variable for shaping teacher beliefs and professional development. Therefore, there is an increasing call for more comparative studies to discuss teacher beliefs interacting with teachers' SA experience to facilitate the development of ICC in different cultural settings. As a response, this study has gained a greater understanding of comparing teacher beliefs and practices in ICC based on teachers' SA experience. It widens our knowledge of the disparity between teachers' ICC beliefs and practices, especially among NSA teachers. These findings offered insights into the importance of SA programmes in teachers' ICC effectiveness in China and other similar ELT contexts.

Thirdly, this is one of the few empirical studies to investigate the explanatory power of the SA experience, which plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices. This study has provided new insights into the extent to which teachers' SA experience affects their ICC beliefs and teaching patterns. Findings have confirmed and extended results from early studies, which claimed that teachers' SA experience played a significant role in translating teachers' ICC beliefs into teaching practices (e.g., Göbel & Helmke 2010; Lee & Song 2019). They illuminate the vitality

of teachers' SA experience in enhancing their ICC methodological outcomes.

Apart from individual factors, context is crucial for influencing teachers' ICC beliefs and pedagogies. It "interacts and coadapts with teachers' beliefs, the processes of which constructs and constraints the systems" (Zheng 2015: 163). Therefore, contextual factors associated with teachers' belief systems in this study have been explored in terms of the macro-system of society/nation, the meso-system of universities and the micro-system of classrooms, which are complicated and dynamic. Those contextual factors intertwine differently "by either facilitating or hindering the implementation of beliefs into their practice" (ibid: 164). By examining teachers' ICC beliefs from a holistic and dynamic perspective, this study has investigated the interactions between different aspects of teacher beliefs, teaching practices and influential factors. Accordingly, a complex network of relations has been established (see Figures 12 and 13) to not only capture the interconnected and contextualised interactions between beliefs, pedagogies and influential factors but also produce key implications for educational changes.

In a nutshell, this thesis has made noteworthy contributions to the literature on ELT from two aspects. First, teachers' SA experience is proved to be a key predictor of reinforcing ELT teachers' instructional quality of ICC in classrooms. Second, apart from teachers' SA experience, a series of distinguished factors have been identified to influence teachers' ICC implementation in the Chinese ELT classroom.

8.3 Practical implications

Apart from adding new depth to the knowledge of teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC from Chinese ELT teachers' perspectives, this study carries practical implications for educational stakeholders (e.g., pre-service and in-service teachers, policymakers, and university administrators) in English language education and beyond, based on the findings of this study. Here, it is worth pointing out that different stakeholders should jointly make efforts to create such differences to reform. Otherwise, insufficient communication among them regarding the principles, purposes, practices,

and expected outcomes of teaching ICC may result in tensions or resistance in the case of Chinese higher education.

8.3.1 Implications for educational policymakers

The findings of the present study suggest the value of government policymakers taking concrete steps to explicitly esteem and value teachers' critical role in ICC. One major factor for the incongruity between reported teacher beliefs and enacted teaching techniques is vague guidance on ICC from the top-down, centralised educational policies. Thus, Chinese policymakers should be open-minded about the bottom-up perspectives of ELT teachers and help move ELT towards an ICC implementation, or in other words, work towards educational policies and practices supportive of teaching ICC in Chinese ELT classrooms.

To be first, the Chinese government should make more tremendous efforts than ever before to promote the internationalisation of higher education, partly by supplying grants for intercultural training programmes and offering overseas opportunities for pre-service and in-service ELT teachers. In light of a series of findings in the study, ELT teachers can enhance their ICC teaching by furthering relevant teacher professional development in intercultural settings. Therefore, designers of teacher education programmes and policymakers of professional training development should emphasise the role of teachers' intercultural contacts, which is seldom addressed in teacher education and professional teaching training programmes in the Chinese higher educational context.

Nevertheless, the trend of intercultural physical visits tended to be precipitated due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2019. Universities in China and the rest of the world have been forced to shut down their campuses and enforce live-streaming online teaching. The unexpected transition of education and communication mode means a low probability of physical mobility exchanges for university instructors and students. With digitalisation receiving more prominence in higher education, Brautlacht et al. (2022) proposed "internationalisation at home"

strategies by incorporating digital intercultural learning environments, which provide staff and faculty with international learning rights at home. They further pointed out:

Digital learning environments can offer not only an alternative to physical mobility but also create new modes of collaboration and offer a multitude of new international interactions that would simply not be manageable under the traditional physical mobility schemes (ibid: 143).

Thus, adding virtual exchange programmes into formal and informal environments to traditional physical intercultural mobility at the Chinese university is a feasible attempt for teachers to interculturally communicate online and collaborate with other institutions worldwide.

Secondly, educational policies in China regarding teachers' intercultural teaching seem to provide little or vague guidance on transforming the cultural contents of the curriculum into actual teaching actions. Despite an exclusive emphasis on ICC as the core of language education in China's educational policies (see 3.2.2), these top-down policies do not specify the contents concerning cultural teaching and assessment, nor do they provide any practical guidance for ELT teachers regarding how to teach or assess ICC. Informed by the results presented in 6.3.4, there is a pressing need for government policymakers to design and implement Chinese socioculturally and contextually appropriate curricula, guidance and documents which simultaneously help teachers feel supported and enhance their teaching confidence, teacher self-efficacy and ICC pedagogical practices. In such a way, communication flows of policies between policymakers at the national level and teachers at the personal level can be established. ELT teachers can be provided with comprehensive theoretical and practical guidance on how to teach and assess ICC.

Also, the interviewed participants reported tensions between requirements for ICC measurement approaches and the washback effects of traditional summative assessment in Chinese higher education. As Wang (2007) and Gu et al. (2012) reiterated, combining formative and summative evaluations of ICC should be the most appropriate way to conduct ELT in China. For that reason, multi-forms of ICC assessment instruments should be expounded in ELT policies. Reasonable assessment instruments require a combination of summative and formative assessments for measuring students'

ICC learning process.

8.3.2 Implications for university administrators

Universities play a critical role in creating multicultural/multilingual settings and providing intercultural communication opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers. First, university administrators are entitled to advertise the benefits concerning teachers' ICC development and pedagogical qualities (Blell & Lütge 2012; Ehrenreich 2004, 2006; Wolff & Borzikowsky 2018). At the same time, Chinese universities should increase financial investments in cross-cultural overseas immersion programmes, including teacher education, teaching abroad, or intercultural practicum, because these border-crossing experiences will yield interculturally aware and competent language teachers who can make contributions to cultivating global citizens.

The results of this study may shed important light on how the university can improve the quality of SA programmes to support ELT teachers in ways that will enable them to be qualified teachers in the ICC teaching profession. For example, home universities can provide pre-departure workshops through which teachers can set individual goals to prepare for interculturality and reflect on their experiences in cross-cultural educational contexts. According to Levin et al., teachers' personal practical theories refer to:

Teachers' espoused beliefs that guide their classroom practices (theories) based on their prior life experiences, including non-teaching activities (personal), and their experiences that occur as a result of designing and teaching the curriculum (practical) (Levin et al. 2013: 202-203).

Encouraging teachers to reflect and track the development of their pedagogical beliefs allows teachers to examine how they make meaning of their practical and personal experiences to inform classroom behaviours. During the SA sojourn, teacher participants can be encouraged to write reflective journals documenting learning experiences such as intercultural understanding and pedagogical development. After teachers return to their home university, they should participate in debriefing sessions to maximise the benefits of the SA programme. Encouraging teachers to reflect,

articulate, and examine their experiences and beliefs allows them to become more critical practitioners and consider teaching quality from a broader point of view. Sharing intercultural experiences and stories about personal growth can also provide insightful suggestions to future teacher participants.

As evidenced by the data analysis, NSA teacher participants' beliefs about ICC were incongruent with teaching behaviours. Therefore, university administrators should be more aware of teachers' needs, especially those without SA experience, and the contested disparities between teachers' willingness to ICC implementation and their reluctance to teach culture in authentic classrooms. Thus, it is urgent for university administrators to address the needs and concerns of NSA teachers who encounter more ICC-related pedagogical challenges than SA teachers but wish to develop intercultural teaching competences.

Teachers, especially in rural China, have relatively limited opportunities to go abroad. With this in mind, university administrators can apply modern technology to create online professional communities of practices with other international universities (Coleman et al. 2018; Knight 2020; Kowalczyk-Walędziak & Underwood 2021). A good example is Padlet which can be an appropriate social space for teachers of different cultures to share their thoughts across time and provide a way to form a telecollaborative community. Although Padlet has received substantial attention for promoting students' intercultural learning through visualisation appeals and facilitating collaboration and engagement (Kersten 2021; Lomicka & Ducate 2021), this tool may serve as a supplement for creating an online community and assisting in teachers' intercultural teaching as well. Teachers can interact in group discussions, brainstorm ICC-relevant pedagogical ideas and seek suggestions. More importantly, teachers inquiring and reflecting in a professional interactive community will increase teacher effectiveness (Bransford et al. 2005; Timperley 2008). Teachers' participation in such an online community gives them equal access to break geographical restrictions and build their identities as agentive and reflective educators.

Although developing a curriculum is beyond the remit of this thesis, the findings

afford implications for the adjustment of the ELT curriculum in China. As described in Chapter 6, ELT teachers stated that their teaching content selection was a top-down decision by university administrators. Consequently, the participating ELT teachers have no autonomy in ICC teaching. In an effort to mitigate conflicts between ELT teachers' willingness to implement ICC practices and unrealistic curriculum requirements, university administrators need to revise the current ELT curriculum to have a more logical and appropriate course arrangement. More specifically, intercultural teaching should be paid special attention in the ELT curriculum and the context-specific teaching methodologies and techniques to be applied in the classroom (Karabinar & Guler 2013).

Informed by the findings regarding the homogeneous study body (see 6.4.1), which to some extent causes constraints in coping with ICC in ELT classrooms, university administrators may consider attracting international students to higher education institutions. Recruiting international students with multilingual/multicultural backgrounds will alter the dynamics of spoken languages and the student body in classrooms conducive to ICC teaching goals. Day-to-day interactions between international students and local students through English will not only promote the internationalisation of the university but also create a multilingual classroom setting which may give students and teachers the incentive to shift the focus from linguistic knowledge learning and teaching to delving into emergent intercultural communication practices and negotiation patterns.

Concerning that teacher autonomy plays a vital role in improving students' intercultural development and English language learning (Lamb & Reinders 2008), university administrators should allow ELT teachers to take ownership and responsibility for selecting teaching materials, methods, and contents associated with their ICC teaching practices. This suggestion has been reiterated in previous studies (e.g., Little 2004; Wang 2017). To achieve this purpose, university administrators should give teachers some degree of classroom autonomy in their ICC instructions. Accordingly, management in the university should empower teachers to enact their

teaching techniques autonomously.

8.3.3 Implications for teachers

This thesis makes a distinct contribution to teachers' professional development through intercultural training programmes based on its findings. Its findings support the claim that the educational SA experience leads to a better teaching outcome in ICC. That is, more highly interculturally experienced teachers are more likely to become more aware of cultural diversity. They seem more motivated to enact concrete methods to translate intercultural awareness into effective pedagogical practices. This finding may encourage not only ELT teachers but also other FL teachers, such as German, French, and Spanish, to build up more intense intercultural contacts.

An important finding is discrepancies between NSA teachers' stated beliefs and their planned teaching reality in classrooms. NSA teachers seem unaware of how many ICC teaching practices they implement, although they have confirmed the significance of ICC. As such, NSA teachers' beliefs about ICC are peripheral and cannot be compatible with other core beliefs. "Changes in teachers' beliefs and practice may thus become more possible if new concepts are introduced as core beliefs in certain teaching situations" (Zheng 2015: 169). Therefore, extra attention should be paid to NSA teachers to raise their awareness of ICC teaching practices and seek strategies to align their beliefs with instructions. For example, teachers who are unable to take part in intercultural professional development programmes can access "second-hand" resources (e.g., Internet, professional literature, and teaching materials), which provide teachers with professional support, teaching resources, curriculum guidelines and assessment approaches. As a source of inspiration, intercultural guidance books offer a wealth of pedagogical innovations. Teachers can borrow and adjust pedagogical innovations to their teaching planning. As a good example, Blell and Lütge's (2012) book can serve as a valuable tutorial which deals with core concepts of ELT didactics and steers the transformation from ELT theories into practices with authentic teaching scenarios.

In order to address potential inequities in the ICC teaching quality between NSA and SA teachers, NSA teachers can expand their ICC teaching by “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975; Borg 2004), which allows NSA teachers to observe and evaluate SA teachers’ current teaching practices. Accordingly, SA teachers and their rich repertoire of integrating ICC into ELT can serve as a guide for NSA teachers to develop their own ICC teaching methodologies (Tomaš et al. 2008).

As documented in previous studies, SL/FL teachers develop their beliefs grounded in their own educational experiences as learners (Pajares 1992). It is, therefore, necessary for teacher educators to equally distribute constant intercultural lessons and offer culturally appropriate training content to student teachers from the beginning of teacher education in response to their future cultural teaching needs and challenges. To that end, FL/SL teacher education training should equip student teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to cater to different learners’ needs and engage them in intercultural development. In agreement with Baker (2015a) and Safa and Tofighi (2021), teacher education programmes in Chinese higher education should undergo a major revision regarding the development of student teachers’ intercultural awareness and implementation of new teacher education strategies which prepare future teachers to face challenges of promoting ICC teaching in their future classrooms. Henceforth, teacher educators should offer enough space for student teachers to explore various cultural components and invest in teaching approaches toward intercultural education.

On the other hand, by engaging in the SA experience, the teacher participants have opportunities to experience a new cultural context where teachers gain first-hand cross-cultural teaching strategies. However, the findings of the present study showed that SA teachers’ beliefs about ICC were not significantly different from NSA teachers. With that said, ELT teachers should be aware that their SA experience “alone does not lead to multicultural and global readiness for teachers” (He et al. 2017: 155). Teacher reflection should play a crucial role before, during and after the SA sojourn. Teacher participants should actively reflect on themselves and further develop their pedagogical beliefs to guide their teaching actions in classrooms when they return to the working

university (He & Levin 2008; He et al. 2011; Levin & He 2008; Levin et al. 2013; Richardson 2003). For example, Boye (2016) described in detail the structure of the Intercultural Project at Ludwigs Maximilians University in Munich, Germany. Student teachers were required to participate in pre-departure and debriefing workshops and write reflective journals as elements of pre- and post-trip intervention for participants. As such, participants were provided with learning opportunities to anticipate and reflect on practical strategies and skills from an intercultural learning perspective.

Indeed, the interview data showed how teachers were concerned with the true picture of ICC implementation in Chinese universities. Chinese students tend to be obedient to authority, respectful of teachers, and reluctant to express their own opinions publicly under the influence of Confucianism (Kumaravadivelu 2003; Shi 2006). Nonetheless, ICC learning requires a discourse of active thinking, open-mindedness, and a spirit of inquiry, or as Sercu called “Sichtwechsel” (Sercu 2000: 40) in the teaching paradigm shift. Students should not be regarded as passive recipients. Instead, they should actively participate in the increasingly autonomous construction process of cultural meaning (ibid). Tensions between Confucian manifestations of Chinese students’ learning and the intrinsic features of ICC decrease teachers’ enthusiasm for ICC enactment. These invisible challenges force Chinese ELT teachers to reconsider context-sensitive and students-specific ICC teaching pedagogies, suggesting that ELT teachers need to consider how ICC teaching approaches can align and cooperate with Chinese conceptualisations of learning.

A very concrete suggestion about teaching ICC is provided here. Teachers can facilitate the provision of students’ telecommunication in an Internet-mediated telecollaborative partnership. In agreeing with the rationale for developing intercultural awareness and pragmatic strategies (e.g., Belz 2005; Kersten 2017; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; O’Dowd 2003), email communication is suitable for addressing intercultural differences and raising learners’ “awareness of differences in communication that are shaped by the participants and evolve as the relationship between interactants changes over time” (Kersten 2017: 99). Instead of teaching an explicitly prescribed way as an

authoritarian role, teachers should create a collaborative intercultural learning environment in which students can “organise their own group work or even instigate the learning themselves” (ibid: 98). According to Canagarajah (2006), students can be more interested in other cultures when they receive responses on their own culture from a friendly outsider’s perspective through telecollaborative learning. Additionally, teachers should encourage students to express their thoughts about online intercultural communication outcomes.

8.4 Chapter summary

This chapter acknowledges the wide-ranging contributions this study has made to the current literature on ELT teachers’ beliefs about the intercultural teaching dimension, instructional practices, and multifaceted association with the SA experience. Following the findings in Chapters 5 and 6, this study has made some theoretical contributions to the current research on teacher beliefs and teaching practices regarding ICC in Chinese and other similar EFL contexts. Equally significantly, this chapter proposed valid implications for educational stakeholders, i.e., SL/FL teachers, university administrators and educational policymakers, with an aim to enrich the development process of ELT teachers’ beliefs and practices in intercultural education.

9. Concluding remarks

9.1 Introduction

The principal objective of the present study is to examine ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and classroom instructions in Chinese higher education and probe into the potential association between teachers' beliefs about ICC, practices, and teachers' SA experience. Based on the results and discussions described in the preceding chapters, this chapter synthesises the main research findings and concludes with the following sections. Specifically, significant research findings of the study are summarised in the first section, which is followed by outlining the theoretical and practical contributions to the current literature on ICC. This chapter concludes with a consideration of several limitations of this dissertation and possible research avenues in the future.

9.2 Overall findings

The present study adopted a mixed-method design intending to explore ELT teachers' beliefs and instructions in teaching ICC in two Chinese universities. Several rounds of independent samples *t*-tests and correlational analyses further compared differences and similarities regarding ICC-related teacher beliefs and practices between teachers with SA experience and those without SA experience. Then, the question pertaining to the predictive power of teachers' SA experience concerning teacher beliefs and teaching practices in ICC was addressed using multiple hierarchical regression analyses. Eventually, employing semi-structured interviews allowed me to search for the hidden reasons underlying the incongruence between Chinese ELT teachers' beliefs about ICC and teaching practices in the classroom. Based on examining the interactions of different components of beliefs and teaching practices, inconsistencies emerged between what teachers claimed and what they actually did.

The present study addressed four research questions responding to increasing academic calls for more in-depth research on teacher beliefs about ICC from a non-Western perspective. Figure 13 recaps key findings and implications deriving from the

present study. This figure mirrors relationships between teacher beliefs, teachers' teaching practices, and various factors facilitating or hindering teaching ICC in the context of Chinese ELT.

In response to research question 1, the participants were motivated and willing to teach ICC and touch upon different intercultural components in their classes. The participants' positive attitudes were manifested in mean scores for domains of teacher beliefs (i.e., ELT objectives, perceived significance of ICC components and teachers' attitudes towards ICC) and teaching practices (i.e., ICC-relevant topics and teaching approaches). Nonetheless, discrepancies can be detected, for example, between developing students' intercultural awareness as the most crucial ELT objective perceived by the participants and teachers mainly transmitting visible cultural knowledge to students in teacher-dominated approaches. Modalities of communication with students are lacking. Students are still perceived as passive recipients who absorb cultural information without active reflection.

In terms of research question 2, a closer probe into five factors in the survey revealed mixed results regarding teacher beliefs and teaching practices between NSA and SA teachers. Specifically, significant differences were not found between the two teacher groups concerning ELT objectives, the perceived significance of ICC components, and teachers' attitudes towards ICC. Nevertheless, SA teachers' scores on teaching ICC topics and approaches were significantly higher than their NSA counterparts. Correlational analyses for two teacher groups confirmed that NSA teachers' cognitive beliefs about ICC did not resonate with their actual teaching methodologies. A mismatch between NSA teachers' beliefs and practices can be detected here. By contrast, SA teachers' beliefs about ICC were significantly correlated with teaching behaviour. With that said, SA teachers' conceptual beliefs were consistent with their teaching practices. In a nutshell, SA teachers could effectively transform their mindsets and effect ICC-oriented sustainable changes in classroom teaching.

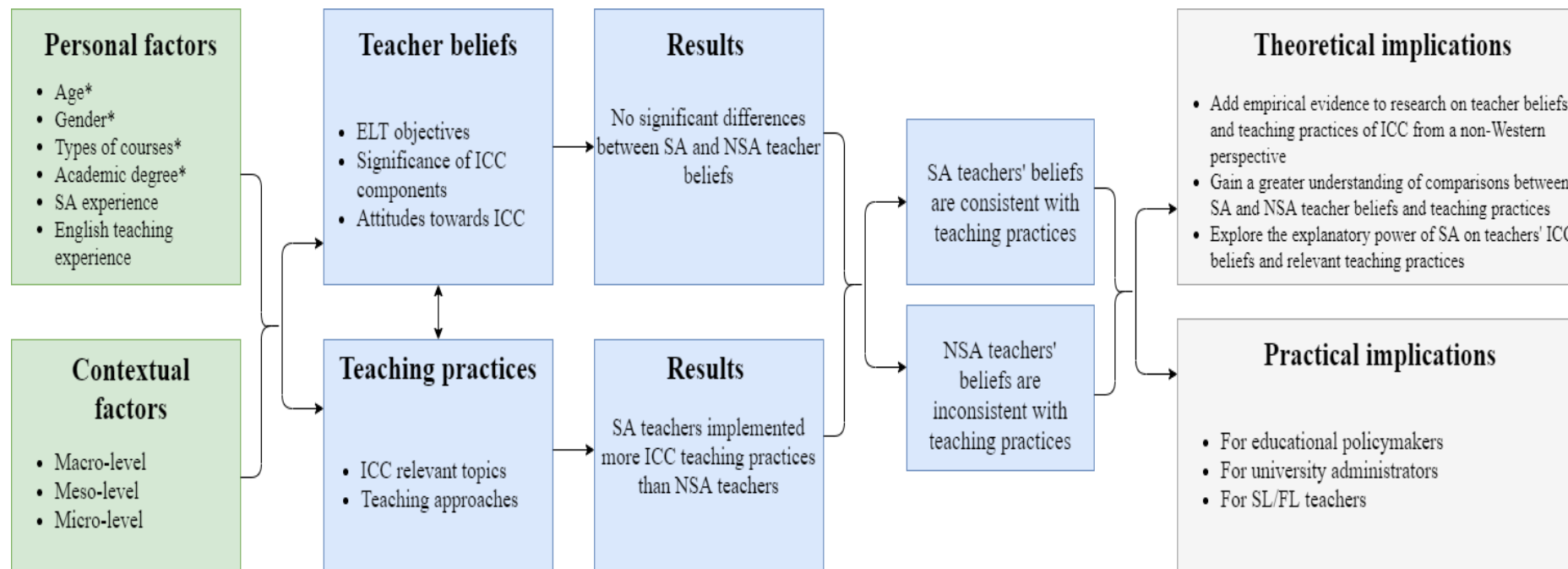
Moving to the predictive power of the SA factor when addressing research question 3, the results were noteworthy. The participants' prior SA experience

significantly predicted their perceived ELT objectives and ICC teaching approaches. It suggests that teachers with SA experience tend to have clearer minds about ELT objectives and adopt teaching approaches at more frequent levels. In this regard, the advantages of teachers' SA experience were evident. Nevertheless, teachers' SA experience did not significantly predict the participants' perceived importance of ICC components, attitudes towards ICC, and cultural topics addressed in the classroom. It implies that enhancing overall teacher cognition and ICC teaching effectiveness does not happen automatically through sending teachers abroad. As teachers' ICC beliefs and teaching practices are complex systems which involve different components, I argue that teachers' SA experience, ICC beliefs, and practices are not a simple cause-effect relationship. Such efforts to improve beliefs and practices concerning ICC involves considering related stakeholders, including policies, university administrative roles and teacher themselves.

At the same time, the emergent findings mentioned above should be interpreted with caution because "these beliefs are often unconsciously held and are shaped by individual factors such as the personal experiences and prior learning encounters of teachers and are hugely influenced by contextual factors" (Gallagher 2020: 3). Taking a holistic and co-adaptive viewpoint, I continue to examine underlying factors that impact on the (in)consistency between beliefs and teachers' ICC teaching practices.

Semi-structured interviews revealed multiple factors at different scales (macro, meso, and micro levels), which explained the disconnection between teacher beliefs about ICC and teachers' classroom pedagogies. These factors include the lack of pre-service training, in-service professional development, large class sizes and the homogeneous student body, professional community of practice, time constraints and institutional policy requirements, ICC assessment and gaps between top-down policy and bottom-up teaching constraints. In a nutshell, these factors at multiple levels are entangled to hinder teachers from implementing ICC teaching pedagogies effectively in ELT classrooms. This study provided implications for educational stakeholders, including policymakers, university administrators and teachers.

Figure 13. A recap of the present study.



Note: * denotes insignificant predictors for the participants' beliefs and teaching practices in the present study.

9.3 Limitations of this study and recommendations for further research

Notwithstanding the theoretical contributions and practical implications, this study has four limitations. First, this study heavily relied on the self-reported data collected from a teacher questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. For a long time, self-reported data have received substantial criticism for their lack of credibility because questionnaire participants may seem to offer socially desirable responses, and interview participants may not depict what they authentically practised in the classroom (Paulhus & Vazire 2007). For example, the data collected from interviews can be subjective because the participants' reported responses are "filtered" (Creswell 2012: 218). Moreover, the presence of the researcher can lead to bias in the participants' answers which might be deceptive as the participants may possibly say what they want the researcher to know (Mertens 2015).

Secondly, the size of the sample employed in this study was relatively small in the quantitative stage (163 participants), and it, therefore, limits the generalisability of the findings. Thirdly, the participating teachers in the quantitative and qualitative phases of the present study were dominated by females (71.78% in the quantitative phase and 70% in the qualitative phase), leading to a high risk of biased findings and results. Out of concerns about gender differences, some studies (e.g., Lee et al. 1995; Yuen & Ma 2002) have shown that gender differences have an impact on teachers' attitudes and teaching approaches.

Fourthly, all the data in this study were collected from teachers' voices and experiences without considering other stakeholders' voices (e.g., students, policymakers, and university administrators). Thus, some findings may be biased. As some studies (e.g., Knoblauch & Hoy 2008; Rubie-Davies et al. 2012) have indicated, university-related elements, such as teachers' colleagues, educational policies and administrative organisations, may also influence teacher beliefs and methodological behaviour.

In order to address the above-mentioned limitations, there are several

recommendations for future research. Firstly, apart from a teacher survey and semi-structured individual interviews, other methods of data collection, such as classroom observations and field notes, can be included in future studies to depict a complete picture of teachers' actual teaching behaviour. Alternatively, future studies can involve a broader range of data, such as students' and policymakers' voices. Thirdly, a larger sample of participants can be recruited in future studies to validate findings further, and if possible, the balance of gender should be achieved. Fourthly, the research model in this research explained 32%, 26%, 30% and 29% of the variance in predicting Chinese ELT teachers' ELT objectives, the perceived importance of ICC components, attitudes towards ICC and teaching techniques. That is to say, a series of other variables remain unnoticed in the current study. Therefore, future studies can address more variables, such as teachers' pre-service training in the analytical model. Furthermore, as diverse contextual factors have a bearing on teacher beliefs and teaching behaviour regarding ICC, a deeper look into the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices of ICC and more university and students related factors, such as professional teacher development and students' English language proficiency, should be added into the future analysis.

To sum up, employing a mixed-method design, this study adds to the existing knowledge about ICC teaching, which not merely entails teachers' cognitive engagement but also intertwines with teachers' affective, behavioural, and sociocultural experiences in intercultural teaching circumstances in the Chinese ELT context. The present study sheds light on the complexities of teaching ICC in Chinese universities concerning teachers' SA experience and their pedagogical competence underpinning the integration of ICC in Chinese ELT classrooms.

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a summary of the main findings of four research questions and the relevant studies that helped to analyse those results. This was followed by the limitations of the present study and some suggestions for future

research.

This study explored intricate relations between teacher beliefs, practices of ELT teachers and their SA experience in two Chinese universities. It also investigated differences between NSA and SA teacher participants in terms of ICC beliefs and instructions. The findings suggest that SA and NSA teachers do not have significant differences in perceptions of teaching ICC, while SA teachers were more able to adopt ICC-related teaching practices than their NSA counterparts. That is, SA teachers' ICC beliefs belonged to core beliefs and mostly resonated with their ELT objectives and pedagogies. This finding confirmed Zheng's argument that "in most cases, the core beliefs corresponded to the teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching objectives and the way to achieve these objectives" (Zheng 2015: 162). Nonetheless, NSA teachers' beliefs about ICC seemed peripheral. Thus, their ICC beliefs tended to be rejected in their teaching practices.

Moreover, this study examined the explanatory power of teachers' SA experience in teacher beliefs and teaching practices. It confirmed the significant predictive power of teachers' SA experience on their perceived ELT objectives and teaching practices. Nonetheless, teachers' SA experience could not significantly predict their perceived importance of ICC components, attitudes towards ICC and teaching cultural topics. In this sense, I argue for a critical understanding and re-evaluation of SA programmes in Chinese higher education and other similar contexts. By rejecting the simple cause-and-effect relationship of SA experience, teacher beliefs and practices, it would make sense to promote teachers' engagement with different cultures before and during SA programmes and to involve teachers in deeper reflection about their intercultural experiences after they return (see Chapter 8 for implications in detail).

The last research question led me to probe into the underlying reasons for the disparity between teachers' beliefs and the teaching practices of ICC. Chapter 6 described various macro, meso and micro factors that brought about (in)congruence between teacher beliefs about ICC and teachers' instructional behaviour. From this point, I argue for effective communication between practising teachers, policymakers,

and university administrators. Bottom-up voices from teachers should serve as essential venues for the formulation of educational policies and needs-based ELT curricula.

Although there are still unexplored research areas (see 9.3 for limitations of this study), the present study obtained valuable data informing how Chinese ELT teachers understand the concept of ICC and the differences between SA and NSA teacher participants regarding their ICC beliefs and teaching practices, as well as the factors that influenced the success of the implementation of ICC in Chinese ELT classrooms. This study makes contributions to identifying the impacts of teachers' SA experience and various individual and contextual factors on teacher beliefs about ICC and teaching strategies that aim to equip students to effectively and appropriately interact in the world characterised by cultural diversity.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Online questionnaire 在线调查问卷

Dear teacher,

this survey is conducted to investigate ELT teachers' study abroad experience and their beliefs towards teaching intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in the classroom. The purpose of this survey is only for research. All the information you provide below will be kept confidential and will be stored until my study ends. The researcher will make every effort to preserve anonymity (Please give consent for further analysis). Thank you for your time and cooperation.

尊敬的老师，您好：

本调查旨在调查我国大学英语教学教师的海外学习经历以及他（她）们对在课堂上教授跨文化交际能力（ICC）的信念。本次调查的目的只用于学术研究。您所提供的信息都将被保密。研究者将尽一切努力保持所有数据的匿名性（请勾选以下选项以便同意做一步的数据分析）。感谢您的时间和合作。

I give my consent to participate: I will take the survey.

我同意填写此答卷

I do not consent to participate: I will not take the survey.

我不同意填写此答卷

Section 1. Personal Background

1. What best describes your gender? 您的性别？

Female 女性

Male 男性

Prefer not to say 不愿意透露

2. Your age? 您的年龄？

20-25 20-25 岁

26-30 26-30 岁

31-35 31-35 岁

36-40 36-40 岁

41-45 41-45 岁

46 and over 46 岁及以上

3. Your highest academic degree? 您的最高学历？

Bachelor 本科

Master 硕士

Ph.D. 博士

4. Your English teaching experience? 您的教学经验有多久?

Within 5 years 不到 5 年

5-10 years 5-10 年

11-15 years 11-15 年

More than 15 years 15 年以上

5. Type(s) of the course you teach (you may respond to more than one answer).

Undergraduate non-English major courses

Undergraduate English major courses

Graduate non-English major courses

Graduate English major courses

6. How many credit hours do you teach per week?

5-10

11-15

16-20

21-25

26-30

31+

7. The length of stay abroad for academic purposes (e.g., exchange programs, study abroad or as a visiting scholar)?

0 month

1 - 6 months

7 - 12 months

Above 12 months

8. In which country have you stayed for the academic purpose?

UK

USA

Japan

Germany

Australia

New Zealand

France

Others, please specify:

9. Which format(s) of abroad program(s) did you attend?

Visiting scholar

Finished academic degree abroad

University exchange programs

Others, please specify:

Section 2: There are several cultural teaching objectives. Please indicate the importance of each in your opinion.

10. Helping students acquire knowledge about target culture(s) such as history, politics, and geography 帮助学生获得有关目标文化的知识, 如历史、政治和地理

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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11. Providing students with information about shared values and beliefs in the target culture(s) 向学生提供有关目标文化中共同价值观和信仰的信息

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
----------------------	-------------------------------	---------------	-------------------	------------------------

12. Providing students with information about a wide variety of cultural expressions (e.g., literature, music, film) 为学生提供有关丰富的文化表现形式的信息 (如文学、音乐、电影)

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
----------------------	-------------------------------	---------------	-------------------	------------------------

13. Assisting students to acquire skills that will be useful in other subject areas and in real life (e.g., giving a presentation, formulating ideas accurately or putting thoughts into words) 协助学生获得在其他学科领域和现实生活中有用的技能 (例如, 做演讲, 准确地拟定想法或将想法付诸于文字)

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
----------------------	-------------------------------	---------------	-------------------	------------------------

14. Improving students' ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds 提高学生与其他文化背景的人沟通的能力

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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15. Promoting the acquisition of an open mind and a positive disposition towards other

cultures 促进获得一种开放的心态和对其他文化的积极态度

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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16. Assisting students in developing a better understanding of their own culture and identity 协助学生更好地了解自己的文化和身份

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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17. Facilitating students to reflect on cultural differences 促进学生对文化差异进行反思

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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18. Improving students' intercultural communicative awareness and intercultural communicative competence 提高学生的跨文化交际意识和跨文化交际能力

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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19. Developing students' cultural literacy 培养学生的文化素养

Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
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Section 3: There are 15 components mentioned towards improving students' ICC. Please respond to each of them within your teaching practice 在提高学生的 ICC 方面，有 15 项要素被提及。请在您的教学实践中对这些内容一一作出回应

20. How important are the following components of Intercultural Communicative Competence as listed? 您认为，所列的跨文化交际能力的以下组成部分的重要性如何？

	Not important 不重要	Somewhat unimportant 有点不重要	Neutral 中立	Somewhat Important 有点重要	Very important 非常重要
Adaptability and adjustment to other cultures 对其他文化的适应性和调整能力					
Listening and observation skills 倾听和观察能力					
Culture-specific knowledge 特定文化知识					
An open attitude toward cross-cultural learning and people from other cultures 对跨文化学习和来自其他文化的人持开放态度					
Ability to conduct different genres of communication/interactions 进行不同类型的交流/互动的能力					
Ability to critically interpret and/or relate to documents/events from other cultures 可以批判性地解释和/或联系来自其					

他文化的文件/ 事件					
Tolerating and engaging with ambiguity 容忍 度和解决文化 模糊的能力					
Deep knowledge and understanding of own and others' cultures 对自己 和他人的文化 有深刻的认识 和理解					
Respect for other cultures 尊 重其他文化					
Understanding others' views, feelings and motives 了解他 人的观点、感 受和动机					
Cross-cultural awareness 跨文 化意识					
Withholding judgement 不评 价其他文化					
Curiosity and skills of discovering 好 奇心和发现技 能					
Understanding from others' cultural frame of reference and cultural lens 从 他人的文化参 照系和文化视 角来理解					

Section 4 Teachers' beliefs regarding teaching ICC 教师对 ICC 教学的信念

21. Teaching culture is as important as teaching the target language in English language classes 在英语课堂上，文化教学与目标语言教学同样重要

Strongly disagree	强烈不同意	Somewhat disagree	有点不同意	Neutral	中立	Somewhat agree	有点同意	Strongly agree	强烈同意
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22. English teachers should focus on developing students' attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures 英语教师应注重培养学生对其他民族和文化的开放和宽容态度

Strongly disagree	强烈不同意	Somewhat disagree	有点不同意	Neutral	中立	Somewhat agree	有点同意	Strongly agree	强烈同意
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23. English language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity 英语教学应加强学生对自身文化身份的理解

Strongly disagree	强烈不同意	Somewhat disagree	有点不同意	Neutral	中立	Somewhat agree	有点同意	Strongly agree	强烈同意
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24. English language and its associated cultures can be taught in an integrated way 英语语言及其相关文化可以以综合方式进行教学

Strongly disagree	强烈不同意	Somewhat disagree	有点不同意	Neutral	中立	Somewhat agree	有点同意	Strongly agree	强烈同意
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25. English teaching should touch upon both English-associated cultures and Chinese cultures in order to help students mediate between two cultures 英语教学应该同时触及与英语相关的文化和中国文化，以帮助学生在两种文化之间进行调解

Strongly disagree	强烈不同意	Somewhat disagree	有点不同意	Neutral	中立	Somewhat agree	有点同意	Strongly agree	强烈同意
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26. Besides cultures associated with the English language, teachers should also touch upon cultures of other countries 除了与英语有关的文化，教师还应该接触其他国

家的文化

Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 Somewhat disagree 有点不同意 Neutral 中立 Somewhat agree 有点同意 Strongly agree 强烈同意

27. Students should possess a high level of proficiency in English before they can address their intercultural communicative competence 在解决跨文化交际能力之前，学生应具备较高的英语水平

Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 Somewhat disagree 有点不同意 Neutral 中立 Somewhat agree 有点同意 Strongly agree 强烈同意

28. When you have a limited amount of teaching time, teaching culture has to give way to language teaching 当教学时间有限时，文化教学必须要让位于语言教学

Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 Somewhat disagree 有点不同意 Neutral 中立 Somewhat agree 有点同意 Strongly agree 强烈同意

29. Teachers should present a realistic image of another culture and therefore touch upon various sides of another culture 教师应该展现另一种文化的真实形象，因此要触及其他文化的各个方面

Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 Somewhat disagree 有点不同意 Neutral 中立 Somewhat agree 有点同意 Strongly agree 强烈同意

Section 5 Teaching practices regarding ICC in the classroom 课堂上关于 ICC 的教学实践

30. How often do you touch upon the following (inter-)cultural aspects in the classroom? 您在课堂上多久谈论以下（跨）文化话题？

	Never 从无	Rarely 很少	Sometimes 有时	Frequently 经常	Always 总是
Living conditions, daily life, food and drinks 生活、日常生活、食物和饮料					

Ethnic and social groups 民族和社会群体					
Educational, professional life 教育、职业生活					
History, geography and political systems 历史、 地理和政治制度					
Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions 传统、 民俗、旅游景点					
Literature, music and movies 文学、音乐和电 影					
Values and beliefs 价值 观和信仰					
Religious beliefs 宗教信 仰					
Technological development 技术发展					
International relations with students' own country and other countries 与学生自己的 国家和其他国家的国际 关系					

31. I ask students to think about the image that the media promote of the foreign country

我要求学生思考媒体所宣传的外国形象

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

32. I tell students what I have heard/read/experienced about other countries or cultures

我告诉学生我所听到/读到/体验到的其他国家或文化

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

33. I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about other cultures 我

请学生分享他们认为其他文化的魅力或奇怪之处

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

34. I ask students to explore an aspect of the foreign culture independently 我要求学生独立探索外国文化的一个方面

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

35. I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic 我使用电子技术来说明一个文化主题

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

36. I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures 我要求学生利用他们的文化知识和技能来解释英语文化中的文件/事件

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

37. I invite a person originating from a foreign country to my classroom 我邀请外国人来到我的教室进行交流

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

38. I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss or debate over a cultural topic 我把学生分成小组就一个文化话题进行讨论或辩论

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

39. I ask students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures regarding a particular topic 我要求学生就某一文化主题对比中国和他国文化

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

40. I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet 我要求学生进行角色扮演模拟不同文化的人进行交流

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

41. I encourage students to question their own values, beliefs and perspectives, which are perceived differently by people from other cultures 我鼓励学生质疑他们自己的价值观、信仰和观点，而这些价值观、信仰和观点在其他文化的人看来是不同的

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

42. I talk with students about stereotypes regarding particular cultures/countries or the inhabitants 我与学生谈论有关特定文化/国家或居民的刻板印象

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

43. I ask students to explore cultural events independently 我要求学生独立探索文化事件

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

44. I ask students to explore cultural implications in teaching materials 我要求学生探讨教材中呈现的文化内涵

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

45. I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communication between Chinese people and people from other cultures and explain the causes 我要求学生探讨中国人和其他文化背景的人在交流中存在误解的地方并解释潜在原因

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

46. I ask students to explore values, beliefs and ideological perspectives implied in documents/events 我要求学生探讨文件/事件中隐含的价值观、信仰和意识形态观点

Never 从无 Rarely 很少 Sometimes 有时 Frequently 经常 Always 总是

47. I'd like to learn more about your views on this issue. Are you willing to attend a 30 mins individual interview? 我想进一步了解您对跨文化教学的看法。您是否愿意参加 30 分钟的单独采访?

Yes 我愿意

No 我不愿意

48. Please leave your email address/WeChat/telephone number. I will contact you and schedule the meeting at your convenience 请留下您的电子邮件地址/微信/电话号码。我将与您联系并在您方便的时候安排会议时间

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet for Interviews (in English)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to invite you to participate in an individual interview regarding your experience with teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms. Please take one or two minutes to read the following information carefully before participating in this research. Also, please read carefully and sign the Participant Consent Form.

Title: Study Abroad Experience as a Factor in English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence in Chinese Universities

The purpose of this study is to investigate English language teachers' beliefs towards ICC based on their reflections on study abroad experience or previous teacher education. It aims to offer a deeper understanding of what teachers have experienced in teaching ICC and how they make sense of such experience.

If you are willing to participate in the interview, you will be invited to a one-hour semi-structured interview. There is no compulsion, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences caused to you. Likewise, you have the right to refuse to respond to any question the interviewer has raised.

This interview will be digitally recorded and then transcribed in order to conduct the data analysis. All records and transcriptions of the interview will be kept confidential and private. It will be the researcher who can access the data.

Please note that you will be identified by a pseudonym in any publications resulting from this research. That means that there will be no way to connect you to your responses at any time during and after the study. These results will be accessed until the completion of this project, after which all of the data will be deleted from the electronic files. The research findings will be provided upon your request via the email address provided below. You will not be identified in any report.

This study has been approved by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. If you have any questions,

requests or concerns in terms of this research, you can contact me at any time:

Xiao, Zhang, PhD candidate

Email: zhangxiao201310@gmail.com

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet for Interviews (in Chinese)

参与者信息表

尊敬的各位老师，

我想邀请您参加一次关于您在英语语言教学（ELT）课堂上教授跨文化交际能力（ICC）经验的个人访谈。在参与本研究之前，请花一到两分钟时间仔细阅读以下信息。另外，请仔细阅读并签署《参与者同意书》。

研究题目：Study Abroad Experience as a Factor in English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence in Chinese Universities

本研究的目的是基于英语教师对留学经历或以前的教师教育的反思来调查其对跨文化交际能力的认知和信念，希冀能更深入地了解英语教师在教授 ICC 方面的经验以及他（她）们对这种体验的理解。

如果您愿意参加访谈，您将被邀请参加大约一个小时的半结构性访谈，您可以自由决定是否参与该项访谈，您也可以在任何时候选择退出，并且不会对您产生任何负面后果。同样地，您也有权拒绝回答采访者提出的任何问题。

本次访谈将会被录音然后进行转录，以便进行数据分析。访谈的所有记录都将被私密保存并且只有采访者可以访问这些数据。

所有包含您个人信息的数据都将得到保护并且在此项研究的任何相关出版物中使用化名。这意味着在研究期间和之后，在任何发表的报告中都无法将您和您的回答联系起来。这些研究数据及结果将会一直使用到该项目结束，之后所有的数据将从电子文件中删除。研究结果将根据您的要求通过下面提供的电子邮件地址提供，并在任何报告中都不会透露您的身份。

本研究已得到慕尼黑大学外国语言文学系审核批准。如果您对本研究有任何问题、要求或想法，您可以随时与我邮件取得联系：

张潇，在读博士生

电子邮件：zhangxiao201310@gmail.com

Appendix 4: Consent Form for Interviews (in English)

Title: Study Abroad Experience as a Factor in English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence in Chinese Universities

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the information provided.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to decline to answer any questions or withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- I understand that data collection will involve the use of recording devices.
- I understand that all my responses will be kept confidential and secure and that I will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.
- I understand that the researcher will answer any question regarding the study and its procedures, and I may contact the researcher if I require further information about the research.
- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.
- I agree to take part in the above study.

Date

Location

Signature

Appendix 5: Consent Form for Interviews (in Chinese)

访谈者知情同意书

研究题目: **Study Abroad Experience as a Factor in English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence in Chinese Universities**

- 我已经阅读了《参与者信息表》并理解其中的内容。
- 我明白我的参与是自愿的,我可以在任何时候拒绝回答任何问题或退出,而无需给出任何理由。
- 我明白访谈过程将被录音。
- 我明白我所有的回答都将被保密和安全,我的身份不会在任何报告或本研究的其他出版物中出现。
- 我明白研究者将回答任何有关研究及其程序的问题,如果我需要有关研究的进一步信息,我可以联系研究者。
- 我将得到一份本表的复印件作为记录。
- 我同意参加上述研究。

日期

地点

参与者签名

Appendix 6: Interview protocol (in English)

1. Academic degree?
2. Your age?
3. Which type of English courses do you teach? Teaching experience?
4. Have you been abroad for academic purposes? In which country?
5. How long have you stayed abroad? Which programs did you attend?
6. Do you think you have a comprehensive understanding of target cultures?
7. How frequently did you interact with people when you were abroad?
8. What difficulties did you confront when you were abroad regarding ICC development and ICC teaching methodologies?
9. How do you define ICC?
10. How do you allocate the teaching time in terms of culture teaching and language teaching?
11. What factors affect your ICC beliefs?
12. Experience in in-service teacher training.
13. What are your sources of knowledge about ICC teaching?
14. How did your abroad experiences improve your professional skills and ICC teaching?
15. What factors influence your choices in your ICC teaching?
16. As an instructor, do you believe that it is possible to develop the ICC of your learners in the context of this institution with:
 - a. the curriculum of the institution
 - b. the materials and activities used in the class
 - c. the student profile
 - d. the resources provided at the institution
17. What do you see as the main challenges related to teaching ICC?
18. What do you see as priorities related to ICC?
19. What are your expectations for in-service teaching training?
20. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix 7: Interview protocol (in Chinese)

1. 您的学位？
2. 你的年龄？
3. 您教哪种类型的英语课程？（多久）教学经验？
4. 您是否因学术目的出过国？在哪个国家？
5. 您在外国呆了多长时间？您参加的是哪个项目？
6. 您觉得您了解目的国家文化吗？
7. 您在外国时与人交流的频率如何？
8. 您在外国时，在 ICC 发展和 ICC 教学方法方面遇到了什么困难？
9. 您如何定义 ICC？
10. 在文化教学和语言教学方面，您如何分配教学时间？
11. 哪些因素影响了您的 ICC 信念？
12. 在职教师培训的经验。
13. 您对 ICC 教学的知识来源是什么？
14. 您的国外经历是如何提高你的专业技能和 ICC 教学的？
15. 哪些因素影响了您在课堂中的 ICC 教学？
16. 作为一名教师，您认为在您工作场所中，是否有可能通过以下方式来发展学习者的 ICC：
 - a. 课程
 - b. 在课堂上使用的材料和活动
 - c. 学生情况
 - d. 大学提供的资源
17. 您认为与 ICC 教学有关的主要挑战是什么？
18. 您觉得 ICC 的哪些教学方面应当作为优先事项？
19. 您对在职教学培训的期望是什么？
20. 您还有什么要补充的吗？

Appendix 8: Sample of teachers' interview transcripts

Example S7: ELT teacher with 2 years of teaching experience and 3 years of study abroad experience in Hong Kong.

Researcher: how do you understand the concept of culture?

S7: I think culture is actually a very broad concept that includes the culture of each country, the way of doing things, and the behaviour of the people of each country. Language, habits, communication, and the sum of all of these would be culture. The broad concept of culture may include political culture, economic culture, and religious culture. Yes, it is a very, very general concept.

Researcher: How do you understand the concept of intercultural communicative competence?

S7: I think ICC is to enable students in the process of learning foreign languages and then understand how to better go for very good and appropriate communication. And then you know your own culture as well as the culture of the other side. Well, that's it. That's it. Yes, the most general.

Researcher: How do you divide your time between teaching culture and language in the classroom?

S7: I don't think there's a specific ratio. In most of the films, for example, if the article you're talking about happens to have a lot of cultural connotations, I'll add more cultural discussion, mainly based on the text. Recently, I have been teaching one article about the history of English. The whole article is about culture, so the entire class may be ninety per cent talking about culture. It's really dependent on the textbook content. Um right. I think it's important for Chinese students to have the ability to communicate across cultures.

Researcher: In your opinion, how important is ICC to Chinese students?

S7: I think it is very important. Many students in my university have not been abroad ah, but there is also the impact of the epidemic. Therefore, we as English teachers are actually a very good carrier, and then most of the teachers in our school actually have been abroad. Right. And then actually the students are very much looking forward to

hearing about teachers' overseas experience. For example, how people abroad communicate. Teachers also talk about foreign holidays and so on. Students are quite interested. A few days ago, I compared about the Chinese and Western, such as good luck, bad luck of some Chinese and Western comparison. Students are also very interested.

Researcher: Was there ICC training courses when you were a pre-service teacher?

S7: I think not too much, but we have a lot of foreign teachers, we had French teachers and American teachers, and then that class I think naturally there is a little bit of intercultural program in it, and then many teachers also have foreign experience, but not many classes specifically to talk about intercultural communication.

Researcher: Do you have any relevant ICC courses in your working university?

S7: No, we didn't have any classes on intercultural communication at that time. Now we don't have a particular class for that. Oh, I see.

Researcher: Does the university provide any cross-cultural training for in-service ELT teachers?

S7: Actually, there is no such training, but there is a group of foreign teachers from Israel, Portugal, Spain and France. I can learn something about foreign cultures by interacting with my foreign colleagues. Yes, there is no particular cross-cultural encounter.

Researcher: What factors do you think to limit your practice of teaching ICC?

S7: Challenges, I think, maybe. Not enough time. There are many teaching contents required by the ELT curriculum. Thus, I do not have so much time to design this cross-cultural handover. On the other hand, my students do not have a cross-cultural experience. In fact, it's actually quite difficult to do these activities. Our students are not like those in Shanghai. They are given little opportunity to contact foreign students. Anyway, it's still a geographical constraint, and maybe economic development is not equal. Oh yes, there is the student factor, and then there is the time factor. The school has a lot of resources to offer, like the foreign teacher, but there are constraints, like the foreign teacher, now we have a class that is divided into classes of A, B and C. It is

based on the level of the students.

Researcher: There is a placement test?

S7: Yes. Class A has a foreign teacher, but Class B and C do not have a foreign teacher.

Researcher: How do you think the textbook you are using?

S7: I think the current textbooks are okay, I think. We I now have two textbooks. I think the textbooks are all written by foreigners. And then they involve different cultures. For example, there is an American writer who wrote the introduction to the American library. And then another textbook is the textbook from the Beijing Waiyanshe. It is also basically written by foreigners. Well, it has Chinese culture and Chinese and foreign cultural comparisons. For example, it has Chinese quotes, such as which celebrity said what. Another example about the opening time of stores in other countries. For example, the store is closed on public holidays in other foreign countries, but my students do not understand. The reason is that Chinese stores are generally open during public holidays. Therefore, I need to tell them the cultural fact.

Researcher: Are there any other factors which limit your ICC teaching practices?

S7: I think the real problem is really associated with the exam in China. I have to teach students to pass different exams first. Afterwards, I can get the opportunity to cultivate their ICC.

Researcher: Well, do you think that the biggest challenge in your practice of teaching ICC comes from the students, from yourself, or the school, or from which side?

S7: Well, I think the biggest challenge is that I think the geographical location of our students limits a lot of intercultural communication. Well, I still believe that the students' own comprehensive quality is similar to the lack of eh, or from the lack of intercultural communication experience. This may still be the result of unequal economic development. Maybe it's because of unequal economic development. Therefore, our students may lack cross-cultural communication experience.

Researcher: What are your expectations for in-service teaching about ICC training?

S7: My suggestion is that it would be good if our university could really be more international. I hope that the university can organise some online project activities.

Many of the students do not have such opportunities abroad. Yes, in fact, I think we can think more about how to use digital technology to allow domestic and foreign students to establish a connection with each other and do some common projects. Yes, I think we can do that. Well it's in the practical experience to improve the intercultural experiences of the students. It is true that there are too many discrepancies between your reality and this assumption.

Researcher: What do you think about the ELT syllabus for ICC?

S7: I know that the curriculum asks teachers to cultivate students' awareness of Chinese and Western cultures. Well, but if you say that teachers really do, I think it is still quite tricky. The curriculum only talks about improving students' intercultural communication skills, but there are problems. There are no specific suggestions on how to. Um it's just making rules. Um.... the advice is not very clear, and it just tells a result. There's no process advice.

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