

# EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Intercultural Competence and Policy Support in Chinese International Senior High Schools

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**Abstract:** This dissertation investigates the viewpoints of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Chinese international senior high schools about intercultural competence (IC) and policy support. The study seeks to comprehend the perception of EFL teachers regarding their own and their students' intercultural competence (IC), as well as evaluate the efficacy of existing educational practices in promoting these abilities. I used a qualitative approach to conduct semi-structured interviews with four English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The purpose was to investigate their experiences, difficulties, and approaches to teaching intercultural competence (IC) in a Chinese education system focused primarily on exams. The findings indicate that teachers acknowledge the significance of intercultural competence (IC) in adapting students to a new environment. However, there are substantial obstacles to successfully incorporating these concepts into classroom methodologies. The issues include insufficient policy backing, poor resources, and an overemphasis on language ability rather than intercultural competence (IC). The study emphasises the necessity for more extensive educational policies and improved teacher training programs to effectively facilitate the growth of intercultural competence (IC). The dissertation ends by suggesting that government and schools should give high importance to intercultural competence (IC) education in EFL teaching. This would help students develop the required skills to negotiate varied cultures and different settings.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Competence, Classroom Methodologies, Language Ability.

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## 1. Introduction

This empirically-oriented dissertation reports my study on what English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Chinese international senior high schools think about intercultural competence (IC) (both their own and their students) and the educational policies in China that support its development[1]. I have been teaching at international senior high schools in China for three years, and during this time, as well as the year I studied abroad, I noticed significant differences between Chinese students and those from other cultural and educational backgrounds[2]. For example, Chinese students tend to prefer passive learning and individual problem-solving, while students from other cultural backgrounds are more inclined toward methods of free and logical thinking, as well as democratised education systems that encourage student initiative.

Another difference I have observed is that Chinese high schools still predominantly use exam-focused methods in teaching English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with the primary goal being to prepare students for various types of written tests. With increasing globalisation, more and more people realise the importance of international competence (IC), especially in education, and specifically in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), in supporting students' development of international competence (IC)[3]. In an international environment, teachers and students often come from different ethnic backgrounds, which makes intercultural competence (IC) particularly important, as it can help overcome barriers to communication[4]. While studying in Britain, I noticed significant differences between Eastern and Western teaching methods. Western countries emphasise cultivating

international skills in students because the internationalisation of higher education has recognized benefits. The reason Western countries prioritise developing international skills is that they need to prepare students for a globalised world, providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to thrive in diverse cultural and professional environments[5]. The education systems of China and Britain exhibit different approaches in terms of teaching focus and student skill development. In China, the education system is traditionally teacher-centred, emphasising the authority of teachers and focusing heavily on foundational knowledge and exam-oriented learning [6]. In contrast, the British education system prioritises student-centred learning, encouraging exploration, personal interests, and the development of analytical and critical thinking skills [7]. The goal of this dissertation is to help understand how Chinese international high schools perceive and develop the intercultural competence (IC) of teachers and students, as well as how to improve educational policies.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter primarily introduces the research background and foundational knowledge. It then explores English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perspectives on students' intercultural competence (IC) and explains how educational policies support the enhancement of intercultural competence (IC)[8]. The second chapter discusses the concept of intercultural competence (IC) and its role in international education. The third chapter outlines the research methodology employed, mainly qualitative research methods, with data generated through semi-structured interviews. The fourth chapter describes the process of data transcription and analysis. The final chapter summarises the discussion of the research, delving into the research questions based on the

previous analysis, and provides an overall summary of the study in the conclusion.

## 2. Research Design and Methodology

This research follows a well-organized process consisting of three main stages: designing the interview questions, conducting the interviews, and addressing ethical considerations. Each of these stages is crucial to ensure the study is structured and respects the rights of the participants.

### 2.1. Designing Interview Questions

To ensure the interviews are thorough and organized, the interview questions are divided into four categories: introductory, transition, key, and closing questions. These categories help structure the interview, making it easy to guide the conversation from general to more specific topics.

**Introductory Questions:** These are basic questions that help the participant feel comfortable at the beginning of the interview. They focus on gathering basic background information, such as the participant's name, job title, and professional experience. These questions create a rapport between the interviewer and participant, easing them into the conversation[9].

For example:

Can you tell me a little about yourself and your current role?

How long have you been working in this field?

These questions help build a relationship and set a friendly tone, which is essential for creating a comfortable environment during the interview.

**Transition Questions:** These questions are used to smoothly move from one topic to another during the interview. They act as bridges to guide the conversation in a natural way. Transition questions are important because they prevent the interview from feeling disconnected and help maintain the flow of the discussion.

For example:

Earlier, you mentioned your experience with teaching intercultural competence. Could you elaborate more on that?

You spoke about the challenges teachers face in integrating intercultural competence in the classroom. How do you think these challenges affect students?

These questions help keep the conversation going without awkward pauses and ensure that the participant remains engaged.

**Key Questions:** These are the core questions that directly address the research topic. For this study, the key questions focus on how teachers integrate intercultural competence (IC) in their teaching and the role that policies play in supporting IC education. These questions are designed to provide valuable insights into the participants' experiences with IC and its practical application in teaching.

For example:

How would you define intercultural competence in your teaching context?

Can you share any experiences where you have actively integrated intercultural competence into your lessons?

These questions are essential for gathering the data needed to answer the research questions.

**Closing Questions:** At the end of the interview, closing questions are used to summarize the key points discussed and allow the participant to add anything they might have left out. They also provide an opportunity to clarify any ambiguous responses, ensuring the data collected is accurate.

For example:

Is there anything else you think is important to mention about teaching intercultural competence?

Do you have any final thoughts or suggestions for improving the integration of intercultural competence in education?

These questions help wrap up the interview, ensuring that all necessary information has been gathered.

### 2.2. Participant Selection

The study involves four participants who were selected based on specific criteria to ensure they have the relevant experience and expertise to contribute valuable insights. The participants were fully informed about the research and provided their consent for the interview to be recorded and used for academic purposes.

The selection criteria include:

The participants must have taught English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses at international high schools in China. This ensures they have direct experience with the education system in question.

They must have studied or worked abroad. This is important because their international experience will likely give them a broader perspective on intercultural competence.

The participants should have at least three years of teaching experience in EAP courses. This experience ensures they have a strong foundation in teaching and a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the field[10].

Each of the selected participants meets these criteria and brings valuable insights based on their personal experiences with intercultural competence. The interviews will be conducted online, lasting approximately 30 to 40 minutes. This format is chosen to create a comfortable and confidential environment for the participants, where they can share their thoughts freely.

The participants' backgrounds are diverse, adding richness to the data. One participant has a PhD from a leading UK university, while another holds dual master's degrees and a PhD. A third participant has teaching experience in both Britain and Hong Kong, and the fourth is fluent in multiple languages, with dual master's degrees in finance and education.

To make the participants feel at ease, I start each interview with casual conversation. I ask them about their recent work and experiences, which helps them relax before we begin the main interview. This approach creates a more comfortable environment and encourages them to be open during the interview, leading to more meaningful data.

## 3. Data Analysis

### 3.1. Data Transcription Process

Data transcription is an essential process in managing and analyzing data, converting spoken information into written text. This chapter focuses on the process of transcribing audio recordings into written text, as discussed in Chapter 3. The data is initially collected from participants, recorded using a mobile recording feature, and then transcribed with the free transcription software "Tongyi Zhiwen AI." This software, similar to other tools like "Otter.ai" and "Google Docs Voice Typing," offers real-time recording and can convert audio files in most languages into text documents. "Tongyi Zhiwen AI" was chosen because it uses precise techniques and algorithms to minimize data loss and maintain a low error rate. While transcription tools offer significant benefits in terms of

speed and scalability, they still require careful calibration and validation to ensure accuracy. After transcribing the document using “Tongyi Zhiwen AI,” each word will be carefully checked during the proofreading process to ensure there are no errors. The decision to exclude irrelevant words from the transcription, particularly in tonal and modal contexts, is complex and depends on the specific situation. Identifying and removing filler words can enhance transcription accuracy and reduce the risk of data loss[11]. However, with advancements in transcription processes, it is now possible to exclude filler words and focus on the meaningful elements of language. In this research, thematic analysis is used, a qualitative approach that identifies and examines patterns in data. Thematic analysis does not consider filler words since its main goal is to uncover patterns and themes, rather than analyze the emotional tone conveyed by the language.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis phase is a crucial step in qualitative research, as it examines the gathered data to produce significant insights. The data collected from semi-structured interviews were analysed to ensure the dependability and accuracy of the study’s conclusions. The process commences with the collection and processing of data, which is then subjected to various analytical techniques to interpret the information and derive conclusions.

#### 3.2.1. Coding Data

Generating initial codes and organising data are key processes in data management, as illustrated by the provided data (See Table 1, 2, 3, and 4).

**Table 1. Participant 1 Coding Data**

Participant 1	
I think enhancing students' intercultural competence is vitally important in a classroom. It ensures that every student feels included within the course structure and learning. It also helps in adapting different learning techniques to suit students' backgrounds and their prior teaching structures. This inclusivity is crucial for effective learning. If students can develop strong intercultural abilities, the classroom will become more harmonious, and interactions between students will improve.	Improving students' intercultural competence is crucial in the classroom, which contributes to students' inclusiveness and learning efficiency and improves the harmonious atmosphere of the classroom.
Chinese education is more dogmatic and exam-oriented, which restricts students' creativity. Western education, on the other hand, tends to focus more on extracurricular development and encourages open-mindedness. In Western Education, private schools might focus more on intercultural competence because they have more resources and a higher number of international students.	Chinese education is more dogmatic and exam-oriented, limiting students' creativity, while Western education focuses more on extracurricular development and open-mindedness.
In terms of teaching strategies, I believe it is important to give students time and space to voice their experiences. However, I can not pinpoint specific strategies right now. The idea is to encourage open discussion and sharing among students to build their intercultural understanding.	Give students time and space to share their experiences and encourage open discussion and sharing between students to promote intercultural understanding.
If I understand correctly, you are asking whether experience with different cultures enhances critical thinking. I would say yes. Exposure to different cultures broadens your horizons and allows you to understand diverse ways of expressing thoughts and ideas. This, in turn, can lead to better critical thinking as you learn to approach problems and concepts from multiple perspectives.	Exposure to different cultures can broaden your horizons, promote multi-angle thinking, and thus enhance critical thinking skills.
Yes, one activity could be splitting the classroom into small groups and having them watch a video from a specific part of the world, like a cultural documentary from Africa. After watching, the groups can discuss the similarities and differences with their own cultures, and then share these insights with the class. This kind of visual and group learning can be very effective.	Watching documentaries about different cultures in groups and discussing cultural differences can help enhance students' intercultural abilities.
Teachers' perspectives on whether resources and support are sufficient are crucial. If teachers feel that they lack the necessary tools, training, or support from the school, it may indicate a deficiency in policy or resource allocation.	Teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of resources and support are critical; if teachers feel they lack the necessary tools, training, or school support, this may indicate inadequacies in policy or resource allocation.
Absolutely. A teacher's intercultural competence is crucial in teaching students. If a teacher understands the history and background of different cultures, they are better equipped to teach and relate to students from those cultures. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to effectively address the diverse needs of students. Teachers should continuously develop their understanding of different cultures to be more effective teachers.	Teachers' intercultural competence is essential for teaching, and teachers should continuously develop their understanding of different cultures in order to educate students more effectively.

**Table 2. Participant 2 Coding Data**

Participant 2	
I think intercultural competence in the classroom is very important for students. Learning about cultures from other parts of the world can help them in their own lives and broaden their understanding of various subjects.	Intercultural competence is very important for students, and learning about cultures from other parts of the world can help them better understand various subjects and develop respect for other cultures.
I would define intercultural competence as not only being competent in your studies in your own country but also understanding the significance of those topics in another culture. It gives you a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of the subject as a whole.	Intercultural competence is not only about excelling in studies in one's own country, but also about understanding the significance of these topics in other cultures, thereby gaining a broader perspective and deeper understanding.
Schools that, through their policies, require or encourage the integration of intercultural competence across various subjects, rather than treating it as an add-on, demonstrate a strong support system.	The school supports the teaching of intercultural competence through policies that integrate it into the curriculum rather than viewing it as an add-on, which shows a strong support system.
The class I taught had built-in activities in the textbooks and PDF documents. These activities were self-guided, allowing students to learn individually by following step-by-step instructions to test the system.	Classroom built-in activities help students learn the system independently through step-by-step instructions. These activities are provided in the textbook and PDF document.
The assessment was based on whether the students could use the system competently. It was a pass/fail situation—either they could manage the software independently or they required further support.	Assessment is based on whether students can use the system independently, which is a pass/fail assessment method that judges students' ability by whether they can complete tasks independently.
Language is the most important aspect. Having a good grasp of the language where you are studying is crucial. Beyond language, it is important to be open-minded and receptive to the new culture you are experiencing.	Language is the most important aspect of intercultural competence. Mastering the language you learn is crucial, but it is also important to maintain an open mind and be receptive to new cultures.

**Table 3. Participant 3 Coding Data**

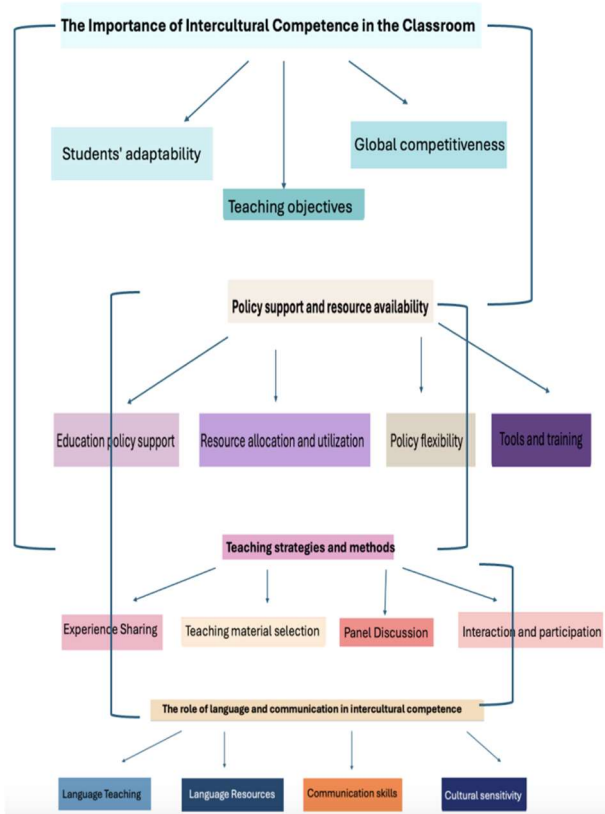
Participant 3	
It is very important. In an international environment, whether or not students plan to go abroad, it is essential for them to have intercultural knowledge. Even if students do not go abroad, for future possibilities like working in foreign companies, they need these skills. For students planning to study abroad, it is crucial to understand and adapt to the culture and social customs of the destination country.	Intercultural competence is very important for students, whether they plan to go abroad or not, having intercultural knowledge in an international environment is essential. Even if they do not go abroad, these skills are very important for students who may work in foreign companies in the future.
Intercultural competence is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences between countries. It is not just about knowing the differences between educational systems and learning environments of different countries but more importantly, being able to adjust your own cognition and behavior based on this knowledge.	Intercultural competence is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences between countries. It requires not only understanding the differences in education systems and learning environments in different countries, but more importantly, being able to adjust one's own cognition and behaviour based on this knowledge.
The biggest difference lies in how children and students are inspired. In China, education tends to be more exam-oriented, and teachers hold authoritative positions, with students accustomed to obeying. In contrast, Western education is open and respectful of students, positioning teachers more as supporters and inspirers.	Chinese education focuses more on exams, teachers are authoritative, and students are accustomed to obeying; while Western education is more open, respects students, and positions teachers as supporters and inspirers.
Yes, we discuss differences between various cultures, such as Eastern and Western, first explaining to students the reasons behind certain practices, like critical thinking. This helps students better adapt to life and studies abroad.	Discuss the differences between Eastern and Western cultures in teaching, and first explain to students the reasons behind certain practices, such as critical thinking, to help students better adapt to living and studying abroad.
The availability of teaching resources such as textbooks, digital resources, and cultural exchange programs is also important. Adequate resources should include diverse and inclusive materials that reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.	The availability of teaching resources, such as textbooks, digital resources, and cultural exchange programs, is very important. Adequate resources should include materials that reflect diverse and inclusive cultural perspectives.
I set up specific classes to address intercultural differences, such as classes on critical thinking. In teaching, I guide students to not only stack arguments but also to add their own views and discussions about these arguments.	Establish special courses to deal with intercultural differences, such as critical thinking courses, and guide students in teaching not only to pile up arguments but also to add their own opinions and discussions.

**Table 4. Participant 4 Coding Data**

Participant 4	
It is very important. Most of my students will study abroad in the future in countries like Britain, the USA, and Australia. Therefore, I should not only teach them language skills in class but also improve their intercultural awareness. They need to know that each country's culture and learning methods, including language usage habits, are different. This awareness will help them adapt quickly to the classroom and life from China to the target country, which is crucial for their future studies and happiness.	Intercultural competence is very important for students, especially for those who are going to study abroad in the future. They need not only language skills, but also improve their intercultural awareness to help them quickly adapt to foreign classrooms and life.
I incorporate my own experiences into the teaching process, discuss cultural differences, and design targeted teaching materials. For example, I might compare the requirements for writing papers in China and abroad to enhance their intercultural abilities.	By combining personal experience, discussing cultural differences, and designing targeted teaching materials, we can enhance students' intercultural competence. For example, we can compare the requirements for writing essays in China and abroad.
The main criterion for selecting teaching materials and resources is to fulfil one of my main goals in the class. However, to make my materials more international, or more in line with the goal of studying abroad, I choose materials that involve real-life scenarios of foreign students, like dialogues. For example, I might use teaching materials that discuss group discussions abroad, including how to use leadership skills, which are rarely taught to Chinese students but are important from an early age in Western countries.	The main criteria for selecting materials were to achieve the main objectives of the class and to make the materials more international, involving real scenarios of foreign students, such as group discussions and leadership skills.
The challenge is that some students have no idea of their own and wait for the teacher to provide the answers, similar to the educational system in China. To deal with this, I encourage them to think, find topics they are interested in, and provide them with some directions and strategies to think independently.	Some students do not have their own ideas and rely on teachers to provide answers. The solution is to encourage them to think independently, find topics of interest, and provide thinking directions and strategies.
It is also crucial for school leadership to promote the development of intercultural competence through school-wide initiatives, policies, and practices. Support from the administration can significantly influence the effectiveness of intercultural competence education.	It is important for school leadership to promote the development of intercultural competence through school-wide initiatives, policies, and practices. Management support can significantly impact the effectiveness of intercultural competence education.

**3.2.2. Identifying and Organising Themes**

**Table 5. Organising Themes**



The research summary illustrates that identifying and organizing themes is a complex process that can be approached from multiple perspectives. Thematic analysis involves identifying and categorizing themes derived from initial codes and data generated through coding. The initial approach typically includes comparing and organizing color themes and word tag correlations[12]. This strategy uses the

calculated distance between color schemes to propose related tags or themes, providing a systematic method to arrange both visual and textual data based on similarity metrics.

**3.3. Findings**

The thematic analysis of the data reveals four key themes regarding intercultural competence (IC) in the classroom. First, the importance of IC in the classroom is emphasized by teachers who believe that fostering an inclusive environment through sharing cultural experiences can improve student interactions and broaden perspectives[13]. Second, the availability of resources and policy support plays a crucial role in promoting IC education. Teachers highlight the need for adequate tools, training, and culturally diverse materials to effectively integrate IC into the curriculum. Third, teaching strategies that encourage critical thinking and engagement with different cultures, such as group activities and specialized courses, are identified as essential in developing IC[14]. Finally, the role of language and communication is highlighted as critical for understanding and engaging with diverse cultures. Teachers emphasize the importance of accurate language use, the role of communication in fostering intercultural understanding, and the integration of language learning with intercultural awareness.

**3.3.1. Theme I - The Importance of Intercultural Competence in the Classroom**

Intercultural competence (IC) is highly influential in the classroom. Alex's focus is on improving students' inclusion and involvement, specifically by promoting the sharing of their cultural experiences. By engaging in the act of sharing and engaging in discussions, students have the opportunity to enhance and reinforce their comprehension and appreciation of different cultures. He expressed:

"I think enhancing students' intercultural competence is vitally important in a classroom. It ensures that every student feels included within the course structure and learning."

"If students can develop strong intercultural abilities, the classroom will become more harmonious, and interactions between students will improve."

"One way to foster this is by giving students opportunities to share their backgrounds and key cultural experiences."

Conversely, TJ holds the belief that intercultural competence (IC) can engage the expansion of students' perspectives, enhance their comprehension of diverse subjects, and foster personal and academic growth. The individual stated:

"I think intercultural competence in the classroom is very important for students. Learning about cultures from other parts of the world can help them in their own lives and broaden their understanding of various subjects."

Teacher Tina believes that engaging in discussions and comprehending the cultural disparities among nations within the classroom setting can assist students in adapting more effectively to studying abroad and improving their intercultural proficiency. She stated:

"It is very important. In an international environment, whether or not students plan to go abroad, it is essential for them to have intercultural knowledge."

"Intercultural competence is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences between countries."

Alice believes that the intercultural competence (IC) of teachers has a direct impact on the growth of students' intercultural competence (IC). Teachers who have multicultural experience are able to transmit practical skills

and ideas more effectively. She asserted:

“It is very important. Most of my students will study abroad in the future in countries like Britain, the USA, and Australia. Therefore, I should not only teach them language skills in class but also improve their intercultural awareness.”

“They need to know that each country’s culture and learning methods, including language usage habits, are different. This awareness will help them adapt quickly to the classroom and life from China to the target country.”

### **3.3.2. Theme II - Policy Support and Resource Availability**

The adequacy of resources and support, whether provided by the government or the school, has a direct influence on the efficiency of teachers’ intercultural competence education. Alex held the belief:

“Teachers’ perspectives on whether resources and support are sufficient are crucial. If teachers feel that they lack the necessary tools, training, or support from the school, it may indicate a deficiency in policy or resource allocation.”

TJ acknowledges that the availability of teaching resources in several languages engages the implementation of intercultural education[15]. TJ emphasised the crucial role of policy and resources in supporting intercultural teaching.

“The extent to which intercultural competence is integrated into the curriculum is also an indicator. Schools that, through their policies, require or encourage the integration of intercultural competence across various subjects, rather than treating it as an add-on, demonstrate a strong support system.”

“Language is the biggest barrier. Ensuring that the definitions of words translate accurately across cultures is always a challenge.”

Policy support should guarantee the availability of a wide range of teaching tools that are inclusive and develop critical thinking and comprehension of cultural differences. Tina stated:

“The availability of teaching resources such as textbooks, digital resources, and cultural exchange programs is also important. Adequate resources should include diverse and inclusive materials that reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.”

“Adequate resources should include diverse and inclusive materials that reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.”

Alice believed that policy should guarantee teachers’ access to internationalised textbooks that are pertinent to real-life situations, in order to students adapt to intercultural settings. She stated:

“To make my materials more international, or more in line with the goal of studying abroad, I choose materials that involve real-life scenarios of foreign students, like dialogues.”

“To deal with this, I encourage them to think, find topics they are interested in, and provide them with some directions and strategies to think independently.”

### **3.3.3. Theme III - Teaching Strategies and Methods**

Teaching practices aimed at fostering intercultural competence (IC) and the development of students’ critical thinking skills by urging them to analyse situations and concepts from many viewpoints. Alex stated:

“Yes, one activity could be splitting the classroom into small groups and having them watch a video from a specific part of the world, like a cultural documentary from Africa. After watching, the groups can discuss the similarities and differences with their own cultures, and then share these insights with the class. This kind of visual and group learning can be very effective.”

“Exposure to different cultures broadens your horizons and allows you to understand diverse ways of expressing thoughts and ideas. This, in turn, can lead to better critical thinking as you learn to approach problems and concepts from multiple perspectives.”

TJ thought that teachers should use targeted ways to tackle language hurdles in intercultural competence (IC) teaching, and assuring students’ proper comprehension and utilisation of language within an intercultural framework. The individual stated:

“I think it is crucial to ensure that the language used in teaching is accurate, and that translations are correct. Understanding how a topic is perceived in different cultures is essential, so I focus on making sure the definitions and concepts are clearly communicated and understood across cultures.”

By implementing specialised courses in critical thinking, teachers can cultivate students’ critical thinking skills while improving their communication aptitude in new settings. Tina stated:

“I set up specific classes to address intercultural differences, such as classes on critical thinking. In teaching, I guide students to not only stack arguments but also to add their own views and discussions about these arguments.”

“The availability of teaching resources such as textbooks, digital resources, and cultural exchange programs is also important. Adequate resources should include diverse and inclusive materials that reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.”

Teachers can enhance students’ independent learning and intercultural adaption capacities by giving tools and instructions to assist them overcome reliance. Alice stated:

“To make my materials more international, or more in line with the goal of studying abroad, I choose materials that involve real-life scenarios of foreign students, like dialogues.”

“But, if a student interacts a lot in class and thinks critically, I consider their intercultural competence to be strong.”

### **3.3.4. Theme IV - The Role of Language and Communication in Intercultural Competence**

Alex considered that linguistic communication is crucial in comprehending and engaging with diverse cultures. The individual stated:

“Exposure to different cultures broadens your horizons and allows you to understand diverse ways of expressing thoughts and ideas. This, in turn, can lead to better critical thinking.”

“If a teacher understands the history and background of different cultures, they are better equipped to teach and relate to students from those cultures.”

Language is fundamental to intercultural learning and communication. TJ stated:

“Language is the biggest barrier. Ensuring that the definitions of words translate accurately across cultures is always a challenge.”

“Communication is a key part of intercultural competence. Understanding and accurately translating the definitions of words between cultures is vital.”

“The software we used came with pre-made materials... The materials were available in different languages, which made it easier to teach.”

Tina thought that language in education serves not merely to transmit information, but also to articulate perspectives and cultivate the growth of analytical thinking. Her statement was as follows:

“In teaching, I guide students to not only stack arguments

but also to add their own views and discussions about these arguments.”

“I incorporate my own experiences into the teaching process, discuss cultural differences, and design targeted teaching materials.”

“We discuss differences between various cultures, such as Eastern and Western, first explaining to students the reasons behind certain practices, like critical thinking.”

The development of critical thinking is linked to the acquisition of intercultural communication abilities, with language playing an important role in this progression. Alice stated:

“I should not only teach them language skills in class but also improve their intercultural awareness. They need to know that each country’s culture and learning methods, including language usage habits, are different.”

“If a student interacts a lot in class and thinks critically, I consider their intercultural competence to be strong.”

“For example, I use models of intercultural communication, and students are quick to understand and apply these models.”

“I choose materials that involve real-life scenarios of foreign students, like dialogues.”

## 4. Discussion

This study explores the significance of intercultural competence (IC) in education, particularly in diverse and multilingual classrooms. Teachers highlighted that IC improves student engagement, fosters inclusivity, and creates a harmonious learning environment. The research indicates that IC helps students navigate complex intercultural situations, especially in the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where it is essential for adapting to multicultural environments. It also shows that IC broadens students' perspectives, promotes global awareness, and develops critical thinking. However, teachers emphasized the need for more extensive integration of IC into curricula, accompanied by adequate resources and support [16].

The study further emphasizes the crucial role of policy support and resource availability in the effective implementation of intercultural competence (IC). Teachers noted that government and school policies are vital for successfully teaching IC. However, many participants pointed out that the lack of resources, particularly in multilingual and multicultural educational settings, limits the effectiveness of IC education. While policies provide a framework, there is still a gap between policy goals and actual classroom support, requiring a more comprehensive policy structure and resource allocation. The study also discussed various effective teaching strategies, such as group discussions, critical thinking exercises, and culturally appropriate teaching materials, all of which contribute to enhancing students' intercultural understanding. Overall, the research concludes that integrating IC into curricula and teaching methods is essential for students' success in a globalized world.

## 5. Conclusion

This dissertation explores the perspectives of EFL teachers on intercultural competence (IC) and the role of educational policies in supporting its development within Chinese international senior high schools. The research emphasises the significance of intercultural competence (IC) as a critical skill in the educational setting, particularly in the context of EFL teaching. Through a qualitative approach using semi-

structured interviews. The findings indicate that the current Chinese education system, with its strong focus on exam-oriented learning, often prioritises language ability over the development of intercultural competence (IC) skills. This emphasis limits opportunities for students to engage in activities that foster critical thinking, critical understanding and critical analysis. Teachers also face challenges related to limited policy support, inadequate resources, and a lack of comprehensive training on intercultural education. Despite these challenges, the study finds that teachers are willing to adapt and incorporate intercultural elements into their teaching, highlighting the potential for growth in this area.

To bridge the gap between policy and practice, the dissertation suggests a more robust framework for intercultural education, including policy reforms, resource allocation, and targeted teacher training programs. It advocates for an educational approach that balances language ability with intercultural competence (IC), ensuring that students are not only linguistically competent but also culturally aware and adaptable. The research calls for a shift in Chinese education towards a more inclusive and international-oriented curriculum that prepares students for success in diverse cultural and professional environments.

In conclusion, by prioritising intercultural competence (IC) as a core component of EFL education, teachers can better prepare students to thrive in a multicultural environment. Future research should further explore the long-term impacts of intercultural competence (IC) on students' academic and professional success, as well as examine the comparative effectiveness of different teaching methodologies across diverse educational contexts.

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