# Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Setting: A Systematic Review

**YUSEVA ARIYANI ISWANDARI**
*English Language Education Study Program, Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia*
**PRIYATNO ARDI\***
*English Language Education Study Program, Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia*
**Corresponding author email: priyatnoardi@usd.ac.id**

| Article information | Abstract |
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| **Article history:**<br>*Received: 10 Dec 2021*<br>*Accepted: 28 Jun 2022*<br>*Available online: 1 Jul 2022*<br><br>**Keywords:**<br>*Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)*<br>*English as a Foreign Language (EFL)*<br>*EFL teachers*<br>*EFL pre-service teachers* | *Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a paramount issue in EFL teaching and learning. This paper intends to systematically review the existing research on EFL teachers' and pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The authors reviewed a total of 19 peer-reviewed studies on teachers' and pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence in EFL settings published in 2011 to 2021. The results revealed five major themes emerging from the studies, namely teachers' cognition (attitudes/ beliefs/ perceptions/ understanding) of (the implementation of) ICC, ICC assessment, teacher development of ICC, ICC training, and ICC-related factors. Drawing on the findings, the writers discuss topics that need further explorations.* |

## INTRODUCTION

In the globalized world, English plays a pivotal role in facilitating intercultural communication among people from diverse local cultures. It is spoken by millions of native as well as non-native speakers, and widely used in global communication among speakers with different first languages as a lingua franca (Baugh & Cable, 2002; Munezane, 2019; Ryan, 2012; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020). Even, the emergence of World Englishes (WE), which is mainly developed by non-native English speakers due to globalization and cultural encounters, strongly indicates that the language is currently owned by the world's different cultural communities (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2022).

Given the aforementioned, the notion of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and World Englishes (WE) has posed a new challenge to English teachers to introduce their students with English varieties and communication across cultures so as to successfully and effectively communicate in today's interconnected world. The different varieties need to be incorporated into English language teaching to reflect the actual use of the language in different social and cultural contexts (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Sharifian, 2012). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has also emphasized the cultural dimensions of language teaching, envisaging that the goal of teaching modern languages, including English, is to ground

learners with intercultural competences and skills (Council of Europe, 2001). This assures that teaching a foreign language or a second language is not just teaching an academic subject, but also teaching a means of intercultural communication (Zheng, 2014). Exposing multicultural issues, including the global shifting of linguistic and cultural forms, in the classroom could hence prepare students to participate and use the language appropriately in global communication (Hua, 2014; Kelly, 2012; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020; Tedick & Walker, 1994). This multicultural endeavor provides the opportunity and experience to cultivate one's own culture and other cultures in order to promote a positive attitude towards people of different cultures (Köşker & Erdoğan, 2020, p. 49).

Accordingly, the teaching of English as a foreign language needs to instigate intercultural learning as well. As foreign language education is currently emphasizing communicative skills as well as cross-cultural competencies, it is of paramount importance for English teachers to promote students' communicative and intercultural competence in EFL classrooms (Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020; Hua, 2014; Mahon & Cushner, 2012; Meyer, 1991; Toscu & Erten, 2020). Intercultural communicative competence (henceforth ICC) generally refers to the ability of a person to interact efficiently and effectively with linguistically and culturally different people, and respond flexibly and appropriately to their behaviors, attitudes and expectations (Byram, 1997; Byram, 2021; Fantini, 2012; Meyer, 1991). Regarding the pivotal role of ICC, EFL teachers are expected to master not only the subject knowledge and pedagogies but also cross-cultural views. EFL teachers with good ICC can deal with the differences encountered in the classroom and respond more effectively to minimize cultural differences (Byram, 2000; Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020; Hua, 2014, Megawati et al., 2020).

To equip EFL teachers with ICC knowledge and experience, training on ICC should be initiated in the pre-service teaching stage (Atay, 2005; Bayyurt, 2006; Byram & Risager, 1999; Duisembekova, 2021; Sercu, 2005; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020) and then be continued in teacher professional development programs to achieve the expected levels of ICC in their teaching practices (Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020; Kelly, 2012). However, in EFL contexts, both pre-service and in-service teachers often suffer setbacks to the development of ICC and take it as an integral part of their teaching. ELT teacher education is often perceived as a challenging stage since ELT students still have limited knowledge of English and teaching pedagogies. As they are also English learners, much of their time is devoted to learning the subject matter and its pedagogy, instead of explicit courses on ICC (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020). Similarly, in-service training and teacher professional development programs do not explicitly introduce English teachers with ICC (Kelly, 2012). Most EFL teachers also rarely get the chance to go or stay abroad to experience intercultural encounters (Barletta-Manjarrés, 2009).

Considering the importance of ICC in ELT and challenges faced by pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, this paper intends to systematically review the existing empirical studies on pre-service and in-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence conducted in EFL contexts. It seeks to reveal ICC themes emerging from the research articles, which can inform the promotion of ICC in EFL classrooms. The results are expected to give a clearer insight into the existing theoretical and pedagogical issues on pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' ICC and thus to contribute to EFL teacher education and in-service teacher professional development

programs in EFL settings. Hence, a research question is formulated as follows: "What are the emergent themes from the empirical studies on pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence?"

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Culture and foreign language teaching

The nature of culture is complex, but it is generally associated with aspects of human life, including the characteristics and way of life and thinking of a group of people, history, religion, tradition and norms as social habit, and arts (Çakir, 2006). Regarding the complex nature of culture, Hua (2014) has articulated four approaches to understanding culture, namely the compositional approach, viewing "culture as a collection of things," the interpretive approach, considering "culture as symbols that can only be captured through thick description," the action approach, seeing "culture as a meaning making process," and the critical approach, regarding "culture as a site of power and ideological structure" (p. 196). In this study, culture is viewed as a means of socialization, interactions, and communication, which determines the success of students' linguistic and non-linguistic learning performance in their classrooms.

It is widely accepted that language and culture are interrelated. However, the notion of culture related to a second/foreign language has shifted its focus from the cultures that belong to the target language to the wider concepts of world cultures (Cheng et al., 2009; Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020; Dooly & Vinagre, 2021; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020). Kumaravadivelu (2008) suggests that there should be a change in EFL/ESL teaching and learning focusing on "global cultural awareness" (p. 46). Teaching a foreign or second language is hence not only about teaching the language but also the cultures which situate the language use in its context (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Hua, 2014; Matsuda, 2002; Noels et al., 2012; Sercu, 2005; Toscu & Erten, 2020).

As to the use of culture in language teaching and learning, Hua (2014) highlights three approaches to language teaching. The first approach is culture-as-content approach, which views culture as "another dimension of language learning in addition to pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar" (p. 6). It introduces the students to the language community and their cultural awareness is fostered through finding facts. In this regard, culture functions as a pedagogic tool to attract students' interest. The second approach is an integrated approach, encompassing the incorporation of culture into language teaching. The last one is an intercultural approach, which suggests teaching culture through language. While the first and second approaches encourage learners to behave like native speakers and to fully understand the target culture, the third approach promotes students' cross-cultural knowledge so that the students are exercised to develop their intercultural competence to deal with people from different cultures. Thus, it takes both learners' and others' cultures as an integral part of language teaching. As a result, learners are able to conduct themselves in a way that is open and flexible towards attitudes and responses of foreign culture that is different from theirs (Meyer, 1991).

In this more globalized world, the multifaceted relationship between culture and language teaching has led to the idea of bridging language teaching in classrooms and intercultural contexts. In doing so, Johnson and Golombek (2020) highlight that crucial attention should be given to language teaching education (LTE) pedagogy. It should emphasize "the social situation of professional development by creating safe structured mediational spaces where L2 teachers are supported as they grow into becoming and being L2 teachers" (Johnson & Golombek, 2020, p. 2). Hence, it is important for L2 (both ESL and EFL) teachers to view the learning of their L2 teaching, including intercultural communicative teaching, and learning as a social practice resulting from their participation in the social and dialogic practice as it is in accordance with Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective (Johnson, 2015). As a result, teachers are able "to defy their unfounded views of culture, ascribed in mainstream communicative-oriented views they have traditionally followed, and to move to a more intercultural communicative-oriented perception that leads them to meet the current educative, social, and cultural demands of an increasingly intertwined world" (Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020, p. 87).

**Intercultural communicative competence**

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has significantly attracted greater attention from ELT scholars and educators around the world within the last decade (e.g., Atay et al., 2009; Byram, 2021; Cheng, 2012; Cuartas Álvarez, 2020; Hua, 2014, Megawati et al., 2020; Olaya & Rodriguez, 2013; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020). The notion of ICC is underpinned in two major types of competence, namely communicative competence and intercultural competence. The former has to do with the ability to appropriately use the target language based on the contexts, which consist of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, socio-cultural competence and social competence (Byram, 1997, 2021; Hua, 2014). Meanwhile, the latter refers to "the ability to interact in their own language with people from another culture" (Byram, 2021, p. 96). It is worth noting that even though the communicative competence is crucial in foreign language teaching and learning, critiques are addressed to this model since it still emphasizes the ideal native speaker as a model that is unrealistic to be achieved by foreign language learners (Byram, 1997, 2008, 2021; Hoff, 2020; Hua, 2014).

To interact with other people with diverse cultures, foreign language learners need to develop not only communicative competence but also intercultural competence. Byram (1997, 2021) proposes the idea of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the combination of communicative competence and intercultural competence, as a model to achieve an intercultural speaker who is able to use the foreign language appropriately in the intercultural communication. ICC is defined as the ability "to interact with people from another social group in another language" (Byram, 2021, p. 97). Thus, foreign language learners who have good ICC are able to communicate using the target language with other culturally-diverse people well because they have better understanding of both their own and other people's cultural perspectives and integrate their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competencies in the language use.

An initial model of intercultural communicative competence by Byram (1997), which is later revisited in Byram (2021), is widely acknowledged and used to guide foreign language teachers

to promote students' ICC. The model conceptualizes intercultural communicative competence, which includes the dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for successful intercultural communication. Byram's (1997, 2021) model consists of interlinked components, namely *savoir* (knowledge of self and other, of interaction), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating), *savoir apprendre/faire* (skills of discovering and/or interacting), *savoir être* (relativising self, valuing other) and *savoir s'engager* (political education, critical cultural awareness).

The knowledge dimension is reflected in the first component, i.e., *savoir*, which is defined as the understanding 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" (Byram, 2021, p. 85). It is important for learners to understand their own culture and other cultures. Their understanding is gained through the process of socialization in their family, society, and formal education. The dimension of skills comprises the second and third component, which seeks to interpret and relate cultures (Sercu, 2005). The second component, i.e., *savoir comprendre*, has to do with skills to "interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own" (Byram, 2021, p. 87). These skills of interpreting and relating depend on learners' existing understanding about their own and other cultures. As a result, they can identify the common similarities and differences among cultures. The third one, namely *savoir apprendre/faire*, comprises the skills "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" (Byram, 2021, p. 88). Learners use the skills of discovery and interaction to find out the cultural meanings and values. Sercu (2005) argues that the skill of interaction becomes central as it depicts "the overall ability to act in an interculturally competent way in intercultural contact situations" (p. 4). *Savoir être* and *savoir s'engager* portray the dimension of attitudes as they refer to a general disposition. The former involves "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram, 2021, p. 84), while the latter is related to education, which seeks "to evaluate, critically and on the basis of a systematic process of reasoning, values present in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 2021, p. 90). In light of *savoir s'engager*, language education should hence strive for intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008), encouraging learners to actively take part in the society, either local, national, or international levels (Byram, 2012).

Drawing on Byram's (1997) model, Sercu (2005, p.3) summarizes the components of ICC in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Components of intercultural communicative competence**

| Knowledge | Skills/ behavior | Attitudes/traits |
|---|---|---|
| ● Culture specific and culture general knowledge<br>● Knowledge of self and other<br>● Knowledge of interaction: individual and societal<br>● Insight regarding the ways in which culture affects language and communication<br><br>*Savoirs* | ● Ability to interpret and relate<br><br>*Savoir-comprendre*<br><br>● Ability to discover and/or interact<br>● Ability to acquire new knowledge and to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction<br>● Metacognitive strategies to direct own learning<br><br>*Savoir-apprendre/faire* | ● Attitude to relativize self and value others<br>● Positive disposition towards learning intercultural competence<br><br>*Savoir-etre*<br><br>● General disposition characterized by a critical engagement with the foreign culture under consideration and one's own<br><br>*Savoir-s'engager* |

## The incorporation of ICC into EFL teaching: Teacher-related factors

Due to globalization, the number of non-English speaking students who study English as a second or foreign language is increasing (Ryan, 2013). One fact that cannot be neglected is that the students come from different cultural backgrounds and unavoidably bring their home cultures into their English classrooms. Accordingly, EFL teachers play a pivotal role in fostering students' communicative skills as well as their intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness so that the students can cultivate their own and others' culture (Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020; Hua, 2014; Mahon & Cushner, 2012; Meyer, 1991; Toscu & Erten, 2020). Bryam (1997, 2021) notes that teachers should not change learners' values, emphasizing that reflection is a key in promoting ICC in the classroom as the learners look at themselves first to develop their awareness of other cultures.

Incorporating intercultural communicative practices into the EFL classes should take some factors into consideration. Prior to its implementation, teachers' cognition about ICC and its teaching, including their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, needs to be first taken into account as what teachers know, perceive, believe, and think shapes their teaching practices (Borg, 2015, 2019). Nevertheless, Sercu (2005) argues that there is still confusion among EFL teachers about the meaning and the concept of ICC although there is a willingness to integrate intercultural competence to their teaching environments. Many teachers believe that teaching ICC means transmitting their ICC knowledge to their students, instead of helping them to be intercultural reflective speakers (Gu, 2016; Sercu, 2005). Reviewing existing studies on teachers' cognition about ICC in EFL contexts, Gong et al. (2018) reveal that teachers view teaching ICC as merely providing cultural facts and are more familiar with the target language culture. Consequently, they tend to teach linguistic aspects, instead of intercultural aspects. Studies by Megawati et al. (2020) and Safa and Tofighi (2022) have reported the discrepancy between teachers' perceived importance of ICC and their classroom practices. Even though the teachers believe that ICC is important in EFL teaching, they do not fully incorporate it into student learning activities. Thus, the extent to which they understand the concept of ICC and its implementation in the classroom are still debatable.

As teachers' cognition on ICC and its teaching is influenced by their life experiences (Peiser & Jones, 2014), teachers' development of ICC knowledge and ICC pedagogy plays a crucial factor in the integration of ICC into ELT classrooms. It is undeniable that teachers' concepts and perceptions of culture are heavily influenced by the way they perceive culture from what they learned from home and at schools when they were language students themselves. They are unable to realize that their knowledge input is still limited and that they obtain the knowledge mostly from what they learned and observed from their previous states when they learned the language. As a result, their intercultural communicative teaching practices are more about being intuitive and imitative (Borg, 2014).

As part of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, teachers' knowledge of ICC assessment contributes to the success of the integration of ICC into EFL teaching. As assessment aims to measure the extent to which the learners achieve the objectives of ICC, it should cover the domains of ICC, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, 2021). This leads to an idea that assessing ICC means simultaneously evaluating linguistic, communicative, and intercultural aspects at the same time (Wilberschied, 2015). As regards, appropriate assessment methods should be chosen to gauge its components. Bryam (1997, 2021) underlines that the assessment should be conducted over time to see the development of ICC. In this regard, EFL teachers can use reflective self-assessment and portfolios to identify what the students know and can do, as well as to direct the steps they can take (Wilberschied, 2015). To evolve students' intercultural communicative behaviors, authentic assessment and performance-based assessment can also be applied, which require the students to demonstrate meaningful intercultural communicative tasks (Byram, 1997, 2021; Lazarevic, 2018; Marwa et al., 2018). Hence, the assessment of ICC strives for "eliciting performance and making considered judgments on their comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application to determine how well they are progressing, areas for improvement and ways of assisting them to make further progress" (Gu, 2016, p. 265).

Given the idea that the development and growth of teachers' cognition are under the influence of their initial teacher education and professional experiences (Borg, 2015), ICC training in the EFL pre-service teacher education and in the teacher professional development programs helps to equip and continuously improve teachers' ICC knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge about ICC. The introduction and enhancement of ICC in the initial teacher education and professional development programs can also address various issues in the classroom, such as classroom diversity, literacy, and relation with other social groups (Kelly, 2012). In so doing, ICC training should be integrated in the EFL teacher education curriculum and professional development program. Finding that ELT students' ICC skills are enhanced throughout the study years, Sevimel-Sahin (2020) argues that explicit instruction on ICC should be conducted in ELT undergraduate programs to enhance pre-service teachers' cultural knowledge. Similarly, workshops and seminars in the teacher professional development program could refresh and give new insights into ICC knowledge and pedagogy to EFL teachers (Kelly, 2012). Investigating the involvement of EFL teachers in study groups, Cuartas-Álvarez (2020) finds that EFL teachers change their understanding about ICC and their instructional practices. The study group functions as a professional space that instigates collaborative dialogues and reflections among the teachers, which lead to more intercultural-communicative endeavors.

**METHOD**

Focusing on the existing empirical studies on pre-service and in-service teachers' ICC that have been conducted in EFL contexts within the past decade (2011-2021), this systematic review intends to reveal the emerging ICC themes which are related to EFL teachers and pre-service teachers. The writers followed Norris and Ortega's (2007) methodological steps of conducting a systematic review. The first step was to search sufficient studies using three online databases, namely Scopus, ERIC and EBSCOhost, and two search engines, namely Ohio State University library and Google Scholar. Considering the research focus, the writers used five key terms for the library database search, namely "intercultural communicative competence", "EFL", "teachers", "pre-service", and "EFL university". The search resulted in 35 research articles. In the next step, the writers developed inclusion criteria for screening relevant articles. The eligibility criteria are as follows:

1. The articles reported empirical studies.
2. The articles focused on EFL pre-service and in-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence (ICC).
3. The studies were conducted in EFL contexts.
4. The articles were published between 2011 and 2021.
5. The articles limited the discussion on EFL pre-service and in-service teachers.

The writers excluded any theses, dissertations, and unpublished research reports. Articles investigating ICC at the EFL university level, of which the participants were not pre-service teachers and/or university teachers, were not also taken into account in this systematic study. As a result, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 19 empirical articles were identified relevant to the focus of the study. Table 2 presents the 19 empirical articles used in this study.

**Table 2**
**Empirical articles related to teachers' ICC in EFL setting (2011-2021)**

| No. | Author(s) | Context | Participants | Methodology |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Duisembekova (2021) | Turkey | EFL pre-service teachers | Quantitative |
| 2 | Cuartas-Álvarez (2020) | Colombia | In-service EFL teachers | Qualitative |
| 3 | Megawati, Widodo, Ashadi, & Anita Triastuti (2020) | Indonesia | EFL teachers | Mixed method |
| 4 | Mighani & Moghadam (2019) | Tehran, Iran | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 5 | Yücel & Yavuz (2019) | Turkey | EFL teachers | Qualitative |
| 6 | Tosuncuoglu (2019) | Turkey | EFL teachers and students | Mixed method |
| 7 | Baz & Isisag (2018) | Turkey | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 8 | Genç (2018) | Turkey | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 9 | Lazarevic (2018) | Serbia | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 10 | Marwa, Cahyono, Latief, Prayogo (2018) | Indonesia | EFL teachers | Qualitative |
| 11 | Tajeddin & Rezanejad (2018) | Iran | EFL teachers | Qualitative |

| No. | Author(s) | Context | Participants | Methodology |
|-----|-----------|---------|--------------|-------------|
| 12 | Eken (2015) | Turkey | EFL university teachers | Qualitative |
| 13 | Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014) | Turkey | EFL pre-service teachers | Mixed method |
| 14 | Saricoban & Oz (2014) | Turkey | EFL pre-service teachers | Quantitative |
| 15 | Rodriguez (2013) | Colombia | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 16 | Olaya & Rodriguez (2013) | Colombia | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 17 | Xiaole, Meng, & Manli (2012) | China | EFL teachers | Qualitative |
| 18 | Lazar (2011) | Hungary | EFL pre-service teachers | Qualitative |
| 19 | Xiaohui & Li (2011) | China | EFL teachers | Quantitative |

The writers then examined each article and created an annotated table consisting of important information from each article, including the titles, years of publication, authors, database/ search engines, research settings, research focus, research questions, methodology and participants, and findings. The writers developed descriptive codes for any key themes on ICC that emerged from the articles by color coding. In addition, the writers compared their codes with each other during the process of coding to maintain the validity and reliability of the analysis. The color-coded themes were then iteratively coded and grouped again based on the similarity of the themes and the years where the studies were conducted. The presentation of the detailed classification and emerging themes is presented in the findings and discussion section.

The annotated table also helped the writers analyze the predominant methodologies for the emerging themes. In Table 2, it was identified that 13 out of 19 empirical studies were conducted qualitatively. Meanwhile, three studies used quantitative methods and the other three studies used mixed-method research design. Table 3 presents the predominant methodologies.

**Table 3**
**The predominant methodologies and topics in the empirical studies**

| No. | Methodology | Number of studies | Topics |
|-----|-------------|-------------------|--------|
| 1 | Qualitative | 13 | ICC Training, Beliefs & Practice of ICC, Perception & Attitudes of ICC, and ICC assessment |
| 2 | Quantitative | 3 | Factors related to ICC including gender, level of ICC and students' achievement, time study abroad |
| 3 | Mixed-method | 3 | Perception of ICC, Knowledge & Attitude in Teacher Training Program |

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

From the 19 empirical research publications, the writers found five major research themes on EFL teachers' and pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence, namely teachers' cognition (attitudes/beliefs/perceptions/understanding) of (the implementation of)

ICC, ICC assessment, teachers' development of ICC, ICC-related factors, and ICC training. Table 4 presents the classification of the emerging research themes.

**Table 4**

**The classification of the emerging research themes on ICC**

| No. | Research Themes | Number | The Authors & Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Cognition: attitudes/beliefs/perceptions/understanding of (the implementation of) ICC<br>- EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of ICC<br>- EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the ICC course<br>- EFL pre-service knowledge of ICC<br>- Impacts of intercultural communicative efforts on EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the ICC course<br>- EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs about their role in the development of ICC<br>- Teachers' attitudes toward ICC and ICC teaching<br>- Teachers' knowledge of ICC and ICC teaching<br>- Teachers' beliefs about ICC in ELT<br>- Efforts changing teachers' knowledge, attitude, and beliefs about ICC. | 13 | Duisembekova (2021)<br>Megawati et al. (2020)<br>Cuartas-Álvarez (2020)<br>Mighani & Moghadam (2019)<br>Yücel & Yavuz (2019)<br>Tosuncuoglu (2019)<br>Marwa et al. (2018)<br>Tajeddin & Rezanejad (2018)<br>Eken (2015)<br>Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014) Olaya & Rodriguez (2013)<br>Lazar (2011)<br>Xiaohui & Li (2011) |
| 2. | ICC Assessment<br>- The organization of ICC assessment strategies<br>- The status quo of ICC assessment in English program<br>- The application of ICC assessment in ELT classroom | 3 | Lazarevic (2018)<br>Marwa et al. (2018)<br>Xiaole et al. (2012) |
| 3. | Teachers' development of ICC | 2 | Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014)<br>Olaya & Rodriguez (2013) |
| 4. | ICC-Related Factors (gender, age, achievement level & study abroad experience) | 2 | Genç (2018)<br>Saricoban & Oz (2014) |
| 5. | ICC Training<br>- Intercultural training through mediating speaking tasks | 1 | Mighani & Moghadam (2019) |

The detailed explanation and discussion about the themes emerging from the analysis are presented in the following subsections.

**Teachers' cognition: Attitudes/beliefs/perceptions/understanding of (the implementation of) ICC**

Among the five major themes, teachers' cognition, including attitudes/beliefs/ perceptions/ understanding of (the implementation of) ICC, has attracted most of the researchers in this study. As in Table 4, 13 of 19 empirical studies investigated the issue. Of those studies, seven focused on EFL pre-service teachers, while the other six on EFL teachers. The growing interest

in teachers' cognition indicates that the enhancement of ICC in EFL teaching is highly influenced by what teachers know, perceive, believe, and think about ICC (Borg, 2015, 2019). It is interesting that the empirical studies took the cognition of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers into account as both have distinctive characteristics.

The writers found three main reasons why the seven studies focused on EFL pre-service teachers. The first reason stemmed from the researchers' arguments that the implementation and integration of ICC in EFL teacher education was still implicit and had not been noticed although the role of ICC was often considered lauded in language education (Baz & Isisag, 2018; Mighani & Moghadam, 2019; Olaya & Rodriguez, 2013; Yücel & Yavuz, 2019). Olaya and Rodriguez (2013) further stated that the dominating focus of language learning content was on the study of language forms and communicative functions of the language. Similarly, Baz and Isisag (2018) pointed out that teaching of those two language learning components has resulted in teachers' lack of time teaching and accessing materials on cultures. The second reason is related to the fact that EFL teachers did not demonstrate the expected intercultural awareness; therefore, it was considered important to raise their awareness since they were in the pre-service stage (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2014). This resonates with Atay's (2005) findings that EFL pre-service teachers perceived themselves as lacking the essential knowledge of other cultures. Third, it is vital to explore EFL teachers' perceptions/attitudes/beliefs about the role of teaching culture and the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence in ELT teaching as in-service teachers' perceptions and beliefs were dependent on their previous studies and experiences at the teacher education (Lazar, 2011). Indeed, the growth of teachers' cognition is influenced by their initial teacher education (Borg, 2015).

Language teacher education should equip teacher candidates with ICC during their study (Atay, 2005; Bayyurt, 2006; Byram & Risager, 1999; Duisembekova, 2021; Sercu, 2005; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020). The results of the empirical studies on pre-service EFL teachers yielded that their attitudes towards the implementation of ICC in the teacher training were positive. Mighani and Moghadam (2019) reported that the explicit teaching of intercultural components in teacher education, which provided EFL teacher candidates with interesting and thought-provoking tasks, could encourage them to raise their intercultural sensitivity and view their own and others' cultures positively. Learning various cultural contents also enabled them to increase their knowledge of cultures and to perform intercultural skills (Lazar, 2011). However, it is also important to note that the knowledge of ICC, including its components, should be comprehensively explored because, as Olaya and Rodriguez's (2013) study revealed, EFL pre-service teachers could grasp the general idea of ICC but could not concretely refer to its components. For this reason, an instrument to scrutinize pre-service teachers' ICC beliefs needs to be developed. Duisembekova (2021) designed Beliefs about Intercultural Communicative Competence Inventory (BICCI) to gauge student teachers' beliefs about ICC, which was based on Byram's (1997) model. The findings suggested that the instrument could assess ICC components, such as attitudes, knowledge, awareness and skills.

Pre-service EFL teachers' exposures to concrete intercultural communicative experiences during their teacher education were also impactful to their beliefs and attitudes. The findings revealed that intercultural communicative efforts in EFL teacher education included the incorporation

of social media in the teaching, which enabled the teacher candidates to meet and interact with people around the world (Baz & Isisag, 2018) and the implementation of cultural content instruction, which increased their cultural awareness (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2014; Olaya & Rodriguez, 2013). The intercultural exposures and experiences affected their beliefs and attitudes towards ICC in their teaching practices. Lazar (2011) found that the teacher candidates exposed to ICC in the teacher education incorporated the dimensions of ICC in their teaching practicum. They started to think about integrating intercultural and communicative aspects and addressing multicultural issues in their teaching (Kelly, 2012). Yücel and Yavuz (2019) argued that peer collaboration in lesson planning and observing peer microteaching and in-class discussion helped EFL teacher candidates to shape their ICC pedagogy in the teaching practicum. To monitor the development of pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes, Duisembekova's (2021) BICCI can be implemented over time in their initial teacher training.

The other six empirical studies scrutinized EFL teachers' cognition related to ICC and ICC teaching (Cuartas-Álvarez, 2020; Eken, 2015; Megawati et al., 2020; Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018; Tosuncuoglu, 2019; Xiaohui & Li, 2011). The findings suggested that EFL teachers understood the concept and importance of ICC as well as the need of integrating it into their EFL courses (Eken, 2015; Megawati et al., 2020; Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018; Tosuncuoglu, 2019). In this regard, the teachers generally had positive attitudes toward ICC and ICC teaching. Tosuncuoglu (2019) centered his research on exploring and comparing the perceptions of Turkish EFL instructors towards ICC with the students' perceptions, revealing that the instructors had positive attitudes towards ICC although students' awareness did not yet reach the expected level.

Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018) revealed that teachers' beliefs about the ICC inclusion in language learning encouraged the students to learn English and culture at the same time. However, the teachers claimed that they lacked time and facilities and had different concepts and interpretations on ICC. Xiaohui and Li (2011) also reported that teachers' conceptualization of ICC and its relevance to ELT was still ambiguous. The teachers were unfamiliar with the specific aspects of target cultures and they found limited cultural elements in the teaching materials. This resonates with what Byram and Risager (1999) state that teachers have no "common framework for deciding what is an appropriate concept of culture for their teaching context" (p. 83). Consequently, they became confused about what can be taught and what are considered taboos and cannot be taught.

Despite teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and positive attitudes toward the importance of ICC and its teaching, a study by Megawati et al. (2020) found that teachers did not put them into teaching practices. The discrepancy between their cognition and classroom practices has led to the idea of continuously integrating ICC and ICC pedagogies in teacher professional development programs. The systematic integration of ICC into teacher professional development programs provided teachers with more adequate knowledge and tools to enhance students' ICC in the classroom (Tosuncuoglu, 2019). Cuartas-Álvarez (2020) reported teachers' changes in the understanding of ICC and its teaching principles due to a study group of EFL teachers, in which they collaboratively discuss and reflect on their understanding and practices to enhance ICC.

**ICC assessment**

Assessment of ICC becomes the second theme, which was found in three empirical research articles (Lazarevic, 2018; Marwa et al., 2018; Xiaole et al., 2012). The three studies on ICC assessment were conducted based on two main interests. First, although studies on ICC have grown extensively, themes focusing on ICC assessment were still underexplored. As ICC has become the focus of foreign language teaching in the past decade, knowledge and information about ICC assessment are considered crucial in order to provide teachers with valid and reliable feedback. Therefore, the three studies reported the urgency to conduct research on ICC assessment and develop tools that could assess all domains of ICC. Marwa et al.'s (2018) study explored the application of ICC assessments in ELT classrooms. Their findings revealed that teachers' ICC teaching activities served as both teaching and assessment. Xiaole et al. (2012) focused their research on finding out the status quo of ICC assessment in Chinese English programs, which was still far from satisfactory. They came up with the suggestions on the importance of teacher training on ICC assessment. Meanwhile, Lazarevic (2018) conducted a study on the organization of ICC assessment strategies. The study reported that common classroom performance assessment formats and strategies like essays or presentations were chosen so that students' achievement could be reliably measured.

The second interest came from the idea that ICC is an ongoing and dynamic process. It means that students' cultural competence cannot be measured from just taking one English class. Therefore, it is necessary to explore ICC assessment and revisit the already existing assessment tools that are used in order to see the benefits and drawbacks. Lazarevic (2018) examined the assessment organization that was specifically related to the selection and implementation of different assessment strategies within a 10-year time period, evaluated how the three ICC domains were equally implemented, and analyzed any backwash resulting from its implementation in the teaching context of EFL pre-service teachers in a monocultural setting. It is highlighted in the findings that assessing ICC in EFL context was challenging and complicated since it should maintain the balance between cognitive and affective domains. In addition, only few teachers had tried to objectively assess their students' ICC knowledge and skills (Xiaole et al., 2012). The results of the studies suggested that assessment tools for ICC should be developed to measure the students' lifelong learning outcomes that balance cognitive and affective domains.

**Teacher development of ICC**

Teacher development of ICC was the third theme emerging in this review. The increasing awareness and the necessity of understanding and incorporating ICC into EFL classroom became the rationale why Olaya and Rodriguez (2013) as well as Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014) centered their research on the importance of teacher development programs to prepare EFL pre-service teachers' better understanding on cultural knowledge and cultural content instruction. Their choice of focusing on EFL pre-service teachers was based on the results of previous studies which demonstrated EFL teachers' low level of ICC awareness. Therefore, it is crucial for EFL pre-service teachers to become knowledgeable about teaching methods and theories on culture and ICC. This is mainly because they are going to be future teachers who teach in the era of globalization. This idea is in line with the perspective that ICC training for EFL teachers

should begin since they are in the pre-service teaching stage in order for them to achieve the expected levels of ICC in the future teaching (Atay, 2005; Bayyurt, 2006; Byram & Risager, 1999; Duisembekova, 2021; Sercu, 2005; Sevimel-Sahin, 2020).

Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014) and Olaya and Rodriguez (2013) reported that EFL pre-service teachers still had insufficient knowledge and concepts of culture and how it contributes to foreign language communications. Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014) stated that in the beginning of the program, the pre-service teachers could not provide clear explanations on the concepts of culture because their idea of teaching was merely about teaching the language. Similarly, Olaya and Rodriguez's (2013) findings showed that pre-service teachers' concepts of culture were still on the surface level limiting it only about things that can be seen, heard, and touched such as "historical facts, food, landmarks, "special days," the arts, important people, and traditions in general" (p. 57). To this end, it is crucial to train pre-service teachers to recognize various levels of culture and their significance in language teaching and learning.

The studies highlighted that better awareness and knowledge of culture would help to increase pre-service teachers' ability to recognize as well as decrease any "stereotypes and misconceptions of other cultural groups" (Olaya & Rodriguez, 2013, p. 62). This ability is indispensable when they are teaching or interacting with people from other countries. Furthermore, Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014) pointed out that cultural content programs using Byram's (2007) Intercultural Competence model framework and the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue evidently yielded good results in improving pre-service teachers' ICC in the classroom. These studies implied that teacher education programs should provide systematic teacher development activities and/or training to help pre-service teachers have better understanding of ICC content and knowledge. It is also suggested that teacher education programs incorporate ICC into class materials and conversations with pre-service teachers. This implication shows the importance of ICC in pre-service teachers' future teaching career as ICC is one of the teaching demands in the globalization era.

**ICC-related factors (gender, age, and study abroad experience)**

Two empirical articles specifically focusing on ICC-related factors were found in this study. First, Saricoban and Oz's (2014) study in a Turkish setting aimed to find out if gender, overseas experience, and academic achievement were related to the EFL pre-service teachers' ICC levels. Drawing on previous studies, they found the necessity of providing further research that revealed the relationship. Second, Genç (2018) examined the relationship between Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' personal factors, such as age, gender, year of study, and overseas experience, and their ICC. However, different from Saricoban and Oz (2014), Genç's (2018) study concentrated on the three ICC predictors, namely ambiguity tolerance, empathy, and open-mindedness. These predictors are indicators of the affective aspects of ICC (Chen & Starosta, 1996) and factors that notably affect individuals' capacity of ICC (Fantini, 2000).

The two studies reported both similarities and differences in findings. With respect to gender-related factors, the studies reported different results. Saricoban and Oz (2014) argued that gender did not influence pre-service teachers' ICC levels as the data from the questionnaire

showed that both female and male pre-service teachers performed in the same way. Unlike Saricoban and Oz's (2014) findings, Genç's (2018) results revealed the statistically significant difference between males and females in the level of ambiguity tolerance. The male participants showed higher levels of tolerance compared to the female pre-service teachers. However, the results indicated that there was no difference in the other ICC predictors between the two genders.

Overseas experience was claimed to have a strong influence on the pre-service teachers in both studies. Those who had the experiences of going abroad and interacting with people from different countries developed their ICC better. The findings resonate with several previous studies, which argued that the opportunity to go abroad could expose students with openness and acceptance towards other cultures and different perspectives (Engle & Engle, 2004; Olaya & Rodríguez, 2013; Patterson, 2006). It implies that overseas experience provided the great enhancement of ICC dimensions. However, while Saricoban and Oz (2014) addressed the time spent in other countries and stated that a longer period abroad would bring positive impacts of pre-service teachers' ICC, Genç's (2018) did not specifically examine the time spent abroad. The findings imply the importance of encouraging and facilitating pre-service teachers to participate in student exchange programs.

**ICC training**

ICC training was the theme found in Mighani and Moghadam's (2019) study in the Iranian setting. This study specifically proposed an explicit ICC training in ELT and teacher training program through interactive culture-focused speaking tasks. This study was conducted due to two main reasons. First, teaching and learning language cannot be separated from culture. This is in line with Sercu (2005), who states language teaching and learning is intercultural. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate intercultural skills and knowledge into classrooms in order to enhance intercultural sensitivity. However, studies revealed that many teachers still integrate interculturality implicitly and it has not become part of curriculum and teachers' pedagogical decisions (Canagarajah, 2016). Second, Mighani and Moghadam (2019) viewed that the key to the successful integration of interculturality in language classrooms is teachers. One way to enhance teachers' interculturality competence is by providing ICC formal training for teacher candidates or pre-service teachers.

Mighani and Moghadam (2019) proposed intercultural training for EFL pre-service teachers through mediating speaking tasks in order to enhance these pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity. Framing their study from the lens of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity, they developed a task-based syllabus which included several interactive speaking tasks and activities guided by interculturality-related topics, such as diversity, discrimination, identity, tolerance, and world view and values. Using these topics, pre-service teachers were exposed to speaking activities through discussions, critical thinking activities, and role plays.

Their findings yielded that ICC training through culture-focused speaking tasks could enhance EFL pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity. After joining the training, they could gain a

better understanding of their own culture as well as a global view of culture. In addition, they could appropriately behave and respond to others when they are situated in intercultural interactions. This training could serve as a model for pre-service teachers on how to explicitly integrate ICC into their language teaching syllabus, and to consider ICC into their pedagogical decisions when they teach their students in the future. Thus, it is emphasized that teacher training on ICC is critical prior to impelling teachers to ICC integration in their language classrooms.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This systematic review showcases the five major themes related to pre-service and in-service teachers' ICC in the EFL contexts. The emerging themes are teachers' cognition (attitudes/beliefs/perceptions/understanding) of (the implementation of) ICC, ICC assessment, teachers' development of ICC, ICC-related factors, and ICC training. The issues stem from the need of integrating ICC into English language teaching and learning in this globalization, in which English is used for intercultural communication. For this reason, teachers need to understand ICC and its teaching pedagogies to assist their students in understanding their own and other cultures. The understanding will be crucial for bringing about effective and efficient communication with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The findings also revealed that most empirical studies were conducted in the Turkish setting. One reasonable argument to explain is the intercultural encounters in Turkey as it is demographically located in the borders of Europe and Asia. In this regard, rich exposures to ICC have received attention from the researchers.

This study has potential limitations. First, the writers only include the studies that took place in EFL settings. Future synthesis could investigate studies conducted in any setting, including English as a first and second language, to see how the teaching of English accommodates the issue and components of ICC. Second, the present review only focuses on pre-service and in-service teachers. In fact, the success of the implementation of ICC in the classroom is under the influence of other educational supports, such as policies, curriculum, and leadership. Further research should address the issues to give insight into the general picture of ICC implementation in EFL settings. Third, this synthesis research identifies challenges in the integration of ICC. However, they were not discussed thoroughly. Therefore, future researchers are called to investigate the challenges, which will be useful for raising EFL teachers' awareness in the implementation of ICC.

The findings of this review indicate the importance of EFL teachers' cognition about ICC and ICC teaching. It is also found that teachers' initial education and professional development programs play an important role in equipping them with better knowledge and skills of ICC and its pedagogy. In this case, teachers' ICC training is central to the successful implementation of ICC. Accordingly, it is essential for teacher education and teacher professional development programs to conduct and integrate a systematic ICC training in their curriculum. As a result, the training could produce intercultural communicative teachers.

**THE AUTHORS**

*Yuseva Ariyani Iswandari* is a Ph.D. candidate in foreign, second and multilingual language education at the Ohio State University, USA, and a lecturer at the English Language Education Study Program of Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Her research focuses on EFL teacher professional development, extensive reading, and reading-writing connections.
*yuseva@usd.ac.id*

*Priyatno Ardi* is a lecturer at the English Language Education Study Program of Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. His research interests include learner autonomy, student engagement, learning strategies, technology in language learning, and applied linguistics.
*priyatnoardi@usd.ac.id*

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