LLT Journal, e-ISSN 2579-9533, p-ISSN 1410-7201, Vol. 28, No. 2, October 2025, pp. 687-714

LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/LLT
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

EFL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF CHALLENGES AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Eleftheria Beazidou[1*], Katerina Tsatzali[2], and Georgia Stavropoulou[3]
University of Thessaly, Greece
University of Thessaly, Greece
University of Thessaly, Greece
liliabe@uth.gr[1], katerina.tsatzali@gmail.com[2], and
georginastavropoulou@yahoo.com[3]
*correspondence: liliabe@uth.gr
https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v28i2.12812
received 21 June 2025; accepted 8 September 2025

Abstract
This study systematically reviews EFL teachers' attitudes toward integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in English language teaching, focusing on the gap between their positive perceptions and actual classroom practices. Thirty studies published between 2014 and 2024, representing diverse educational contexts, were analyzed in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. The findings show that although EFL teachers globally acknowledge the importance of ICC, its practical implementation varies significantly. Influencing factors include limited understanding of ICC, deeply rooted linguistic priorities, inadequate professional development, rigid curricula, lack of authentic teaching materials, and time constraints. Despite these challenges, several studies report that teachers who actively integrate ICC employ practices such as the use of authentic cultural materials, critical discussions on cultural stereotypes, project-based intercultural activities, and comparisons between students' own cultures and those of English-speaking contexts. However, these practices remain sporadic and largely depend on individual initiative rather than systemic support. The review highlights the need for targeted teacher professional development, flexible curricula, the development of intercultural teaching resources, and opportunities to enhance learners' active participation. These measures are essential for bridging the gap between beliefs and practice, fostering learners' ICC, and promoting a more inclusive and globally responsive approach to English language education.

Keywords: EFL teachers, intercultural communicative competence, language teaching practices, teacher attitudes

Introduction
Globalization, technological advancements, and increasing cross-border mobility have led to a growing demand for intercultural global citizenship and effective intercultural speakers (Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018), as modern societies, more than ever, are marked by a strong multicultural and multilingual presence. As

This work is licensed under CC BY-SA.
Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

such, school classrooms have turned into places where learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds meet, interact, and communicate (Peskoller, 2025). In this regard, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) plays a vital role, as it facilitates communication and fosters connections among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022; Yan & Tananuraksakul, 2023). This global landscape requires language education to focus not only on developing learners' linguistic proficiency but also on nurturing them with the ability to value cultural diversity and appreciate global perspectives, thereby navigating meaningful intercultural encounters (Byram, 2021; Fang, McConachy, & Yuan, 2024; Nafisah et al., 2024).

On that account, foreign language education has experienced a cultural shift in its pedagogy over the past few years, embracing interculturality as an essential learning objective (Council of Europe, 2020; Iswandari & Ardi, 2022; Petosi & Karras, 2020). In this regard, integrating intercultural learning in foreign language teaching yields great potential for the foreign language classroom as it goes beyond the mastery of a foreign language, involving both teachers and learners in cultural plurality (Peskoller, 2025). In this sense, learners, rather than being simply acquainted with factual cultural knowledge, are equipped with the knowledge and competencies needed to shape open-minded and respectful global citizens, capable of conceptualizing cultural variations and embracing broad cultural perspectives (Echcharfy, 2019; Peskoller, 2025; Petosi & Karras, 2020).

Intercultural learning constitutes a continuous educational process that fosters active engagement and promotes harmonious coexistence within diverse, pluralistic societies (Council of Europe & European Commission, 2018; Echcharfy, 2020; Kalogerogianni, 2025; Peskoller, 2025). This pedagogical approach upholds social diversity, civil rights, equity, and respect for cultural heterogeneity, while explicitly rejecting stereotypes and discrimination. It entails acquiring knowledge and skills that enhance learners' capacity for cross-cultural understanding and communication with individuals from varied cultural backgrounds (Lane, 2012).

The theoretical foundation for intercultural learning integration in foreign language education is grounded in seminal models of communicative competence. Hymes (1972) reconceptualized language proficiency by extending it beyond grammatical accuracy to include the social and cultural contexts of language use. He posited that true competence involves not only knowledge of grammatical rules but also an understanding of the appropriate use of language depending on situational context, interlocutor, and purpose. He identified four components of communicative competence: possibility, feasibility, appropriateness, and occurrence. Drawing on his foundational idea, Canale and Swain (1980) distinguished among grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. These dimensions encompass linguistic knowledge, appropriate social usage, coherent text production, and the use of communication strategies to manage interactions effectively.

Rooted in the concept of communicative competence introduced by Hymes (1972) and later expanded by Byram (1997), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is defined as the ability to interact effectively across cultural boundaries. (Byram, 1997). Byram (1997), further elaborated on and reinforced by Fantini (2019), describes ICC as a multifaceted set of skills essential for successful intercultural interaction. In the context of increasing globalization, fostering

intercultural speakers and embedding ICC within foreign language education has become a critical objective given that English is used for global communication along with the pluralistic structure of contemporary societies and, by extension, school classrooms, to shape global citizens for lifelong participation in democratic intercultural societies (Echcharfy, 2019; Estaji & Rahimi, 2018; Kalogerogianni, 2025; Mostafaei & Nosrati, 2018).

Building on Hymes's (1972) framework, Byram (1997) developed the concept of ICC, specifically addressing the demands of communication across cultural boundaries. Byram (1997) argued that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient; communicators must also possess cultural knowledge and the ability to mediate between different cultural perspectives. His model delineates five *savoirs*: *savoirs* (cultural knowledge), *savoir être* (attitudes of openness and curiosity), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating cultural phenomena), *savoir apprendre*/*faire* (skills of discovery and interaction), and savoir s'engager (critical cultural awareness). This framework underscores the necessity of critical reflection on one's own and others' cultures, promoting empathy and intercultural mediation.

In this light, the integration of ICC in foreign language teaching draws upon various pedagogical frameworks (Baker, 2012; Deardorff, 2006). Byram's (1997) model emphasizes the interrelation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness necessary to cultivate interculturally competent speakers. In this respect, language learning extends beyond grammatical proficiency to encompass a deep understanding of cultural nuances (Wang et al., 2024). This paradigm shift has transformed teaching methodologies by encouraging active engagement with cultural diversity and critical reflection on cultural ideologies, enabling learners to become more open toward alternative ways of thinking, living, and doing (Council of Europe, 2020; Peskoller, 2025). This way, learners acquire the ability to show respect toward diverse cultural identities, cultivate empathy, reject stereotypes or racist viewpoints, and acknowledge the cultural value of all identities equally (Salih & Omar, 2022). Consequently, foreign language educators are encouraged to foster learning environments that nurture empathy, challenge stereotypes, and respect diversity. Such an approach requires English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers themselves to develop intercultural competence, equipping them to guide learners through complex intercultural interactions (Li, 2016). As Cuartas Álvarez (2020, p.87) underscores, teachers need 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."

In response to these evolving demands, numerous countries have restructured foreign language curricula to embed intercultural elements, aiming to cultivate intercultural speakers (Gu, 2015). Thus, EFL teachers are required to adapt their instructional practices, integrating intercultural competencies to enrich learners' educational experiences and equip them to navigate cultural diversity effectively (Nafisah et al., 2024; Salih & Omar, 2022). However, adopting or adapting such intercultural teaching practices in EFL teaching requires more than teacher cognition and training. It necessitates an exploration of their attitudes toward interculturality, as these are often mirrored in their classroom practices (Borg, 2015, 2019; Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018). Contemporary language education may emphasize embracing Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching (ICLT) to

foster learners' intercultural awareness and communicative competence (Petosi & Karras, 2020); however, examining and understanding educators' attitudes should be a determining factor in the successful implementation and application of any educational reform or policy. Accordingly, despite widespread recognition of ICC's significance, gaps remain in its practical classroom implementation. Investigating teachers' attitudes and practices offers valuable insights to enhance ICC integration and foster learners' development as global citizens.

Prior relevant research in the field (Breka & Petravic, 2015; Bon, 2022; Leão, 2017; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Tran & Dang, 2014) has revealed EFL teachers' positive attitudes and perceptions toward the integration of intercultural learning into their teaching practices. Nevertheless, most of these studies reveal quite contradictory findings regarding EFL teachers' positive attitudes and their actual classroom practices, as they end up emphasizing language teaching over integrating intercultural learning into their teaching instruction (Ghavamnia, 2020; Megawati et al., 2020). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand the factors underlying this inconsistency between teachers' attitudes and teaching practices. Only when teachers' attitudes are thoroughly examined and understood can ICLT be effectively and meaningfully implemented in their EFL instructional practices, aiming to cultivate genuine intercultural speakers, transforming therefore the conventional EFL classroom into a culturally inclusive and effective learning environment (Hossain, 2024).

Few systematic reviews (e.g., Iswandari & Ardi, 2022; Nafisah et al., 2024; Permatasari, 2023) have attempted to address this issue; however, despite being narrow in scope or context, their findings are quite superficial, as they do not reflect on the actual factors impeding teachers' implementation of ICLT, despite their exhibited positive attitudes. For instance, Iswandari and Ardi's (2022) systematic review examined how in-service and pre-service EFL teachers' understanding of ICC influences their pedagogical practices, emphasizing the need for teacher education programs to incorporate training on ICC, as significant challenges persist in their practical application within the classroom, without going into further detail on the conditions that impact these encountered challenges. Similarly, Permatasari (2023) identified emerging trends in integrating ICC in English language teaching (ELT) contexts, highlighting both successes and challenges that educators face in adapting their curricula to include intercultural competencies, reflecting broader shifts in global educational paradigms. Yet, the review is context-specific, with studies stemming solely from the Asian educational context. Additionally, Nafisah et al. (2024) reviewed EFL teachers' perceptions and instructional practices related to ICC integration in the classroom, focusing on how teachers approach ICC and the barriers encountered, such as a lack of resources or institutional support, without delving deeper into the profound discrepancy between their perceptions and their instructional practices.

Hence, although the theoretical value of ICC in foreign language teaching is widely recognized, a significant gap persists between theory and classroom practice. Within this context, this systematic literature review addresses the existing research gap concerning EFL teachers as pivotal mediators between theoretical ICC frameworks and classroom practice. While teachers' perspectives on ICC have been underexplored (Cancino & Nunez, 2023), this review synthesizes extant studies to understand attitudes, challenges, and facilitating factors influencing ICC

incorporation in EFL teaching across diverse contexts and periods. By doing so, it seeks to identify key challenges and opportunities that can contribute to more effective incorporation of intercultural competence in language education. Therefore, conducting a systematic literature review is necessary to provide a comprehensive, thorough, and unbiased synthesis of existing studies, offering valuable insights and implications for foreign language education. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the attitudes of EFL teachers from diverse cultural and geographic settings toward integrating ICC in their classrooms?
2. What factors influence EFL teachers' attitudes toward integrating ICC into their classrooms?

Method

A systematic literature review was conducted to gather existing relevant research, following the guidelines for the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021) to address the aim and objectives of the study. Previous literature reviews in this field are either limited in scope or context, leaving ample important issues to be further explored. As such, a systematic literature review was preferred as it allows for in-depth investigation of even complex research questions, allowing researchers to delve deeper into some topics, identify common patterns, behaviors, or attitudes, and provide more significant insight, justifications, and interpretations, enriching the previous studies and therefore, contributing significantly to the relevant literature (Bangdiwala, 2024). Since this literature review attempts to shed light on EFL teachers' attitudes and explain the factors affecting these attitudes and their implementation of ICC, drawing on a broad range of studies across diverse geographic contexts, employing a systematic process, based on PRISMA guidelines, is necessary to draw accurate conclusions and interpretations of the research questions.

Moreover, PRISMA is widely acknowledged and validated for carrying out systematic reviews (Shortt et al., 2023), constituting a powerful approach for a comprehensive, thorough, and transparent synthesis and analysis of a broad spectrum of study findings and perspectives (Snyder, 2019). In this study, the PRISMA process aligned with the research objective of understanding teachers' attitudes toward ICC, the challenges underlying these attitudes, and the implications for the educational process when ICC is effectively integrated into the classroom. The procedure followed four essential steps outlined in the PRISMA (2020) guidelines: (1) a thorough search and identification, (2) systematic screening, (3) setting eligibility criteria, and (4) determining inclusion studies (Moher et al., 2010; Page et al., 2021) (Fig.1). Regarding the analysis and synthesis of the results, qualitative thematic analysis was employed to identify any recurring patterns and themes of the inclusion studies (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Search strategy

The search was conducted in three high-impact scientific databases, namely Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar, to ensure that only studies of the highest rigor and credibility were included in the review. Specifically, Scopus was selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research globally, ERIC for its wide access

to educational research and resources, and Google Scholar was chosen to locate further scholarly sources not commonly indexed in the previous databases. The research was limited to studies published between 2014 and 2024, as the specific ten-year timeframe was considered sufficiently relevant and recent to observe and explore EFL teachers' attitudes and classroom practices regarding ICC progress. Language was restricted to studies written in English. The references of the collected articles were also reviewed for further relevant studies. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied in the 'advanced search' feature of these databases as search terms, after an iterative trial and error procedure. The search strings selected are presented as follows, with minor adjustments to adapt to the databases' specific search requirements.

- SCOPUS ("EFL teacher*" OR " English as a foreign language teacher*" AND ("intercultural communicative competence" OR "ICC" OR "culture teaching" AND (" attitude*" OR "perception*" OR "practice*") AND ("culture teaching in ELT*" OR "intercultural teaching in ELT" OR "teaching ICC in ELT" AND ("kindergarten" OR "primary education" OR "primary school" OR "secondary education" OR "university")
- ERIC ("EFL teacher*" OR " English as a foreign language teacher*" AND ("intercultural communicative competence" OR "ICC" OR "culture teaching" AND (" attitude*" OR "perception*" OR "practice*") AND ("culture teaching in ELT*" OR "intercultural teaching in ELT" OR "teaching ICC in ELT" AND ("kindergarten" OR "primary education" OR "primary school" OR "secondary education" OR "university")
- GOOGLE SCHOLAR ("EFL teachers" OR "English as a foreign language teacher") AND ("intercultural communicative competence" OR "ICC" OR "culture teaching" AND (" attitudes" OR "perceptions" OR "practices") AND ("culture teaching in ELT*" OR "intercultural teaching in ELT" OR "teaching ICC in ELT" AND ("kindergarten" OR "primary education" OR "primary school" OR "secondary education" OR "university")

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The second phase of the systematic literature review involved screening based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria (Fig. 1). Studies would be considered for inclusion if they met the following criteria:

- Studies published within a specific timeframe (within the last decade, 2014-2024).
- Studies written in English.
- Studies regarding EFL teachers' attitudes toward Intercultural English Language Teaching implementation in the EFL classroom.
- Studies regarding EFL teachers' perceptions and beliefs toward Intercultural English Language Teaching implementation in the EFL classroom.
- Studies regarding EFL teachers' perceptions and beliefs of ICC in ELT.
- Studies regarding EFL teachers' practices to integrate ICC in the EFL classroom.
- Studies that include all levels of education (preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary education).

On the contrary, studies would be considered for exclusion according to the following criteria:

- Non-empirical studies, systematic reviews, case studies, book reviews, editorials, posters, dissertations, and presentations.

- Studies regarding pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of ICC and their beliefs about their prominent ICC practices.
- Studies regarding pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of integrating Intercultural English Language Teaching in the EFL classroom.

Data extraction

Database research was conducted from May to July 2024. Initially, 189 articles from various databases were identified to meet the specific search criteria (see Figure 1). The first screening involved removing 12 duplicate papers. In the second screening, the abstracts of the remaining 177 articles were reviewed for relevance, resulting in 133 papers selected for further analysis. After thorough screening, 44 studies were excluded for being unrelated to the scope. Specifically, 18 studies examined pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and practices, while 26 studies focused on either EFL learners' attitudes toward ICC integration or EFL teachers' perceptions of culture teaching through literature and textbook adaptation for EFL learners. Additionally, 8 papers were excluded due to the language restriction criterion during this phase. This left 125 studies for the third screening, which involved reviewing the full texts of the articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Ultimately, 30 articles aligned with the objectives of our study (Appendix).

Data analysis and trustworthiness

Regarding data extraction, the researchers decided to use a standardized form to gather the relevant information. The form included details about the study's authors, publication date, country, methodological approach, research aims, and key findings. The researchers' collaborative efforts ensured the accuracy of the data extraction process, providing thorough and comprehensive information. It was based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Higgins et al., 2022) to ensure a complete, transparent, and systematic literature review. Because a meta-analysis was not conducted in this review due to the diverse methodological approaches of the included studies, a narrative synthesis of the findings through systematic qualitative analysis was considered the most appropriate method. Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, the steps followed included: (1) familiarization with the collected articles with careful reviewing to sort them into categories, (2) developing initial codes (i.e., teachers' attitudes, challenges, influencing factors), (3) identifying common codes and patterns, (4) grouping these codes into themes (e.g., teachers' attitudes toward ICC and implementation, geographical variation, temporal evolution, challenges, influencing factors), (5) critically refining to ensure coherence, consistency, and transparency, in line with the research aim and objectives, and (6) producing the analysis.

In the appendix, the researchers present the key characteristics for the final set of 30 publications that meet the inclusion criteria for this scoping literature review. Most studies of them focus on EFL teachers in secondary or tertiary education, indicating a need for future research to prioritize exploring the primary education context. Furthermore, the collected studies span diverse geographical contexts, including Vietnam, Croatia, Turkey, Indonesia, Thailand, Portugal, Iran, Algeria, Kazakhstan, Greece, Poland, Morocco, Cambodia, Oman, Malaysia, and

China. This demonstrates that interculturality has emerged as a topic of significant interest in educational research globally. Most of the research has been conducted since 2017, with only three studies having been published before that year, all of which aimed to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes toward integrating ICC in their classrooms.

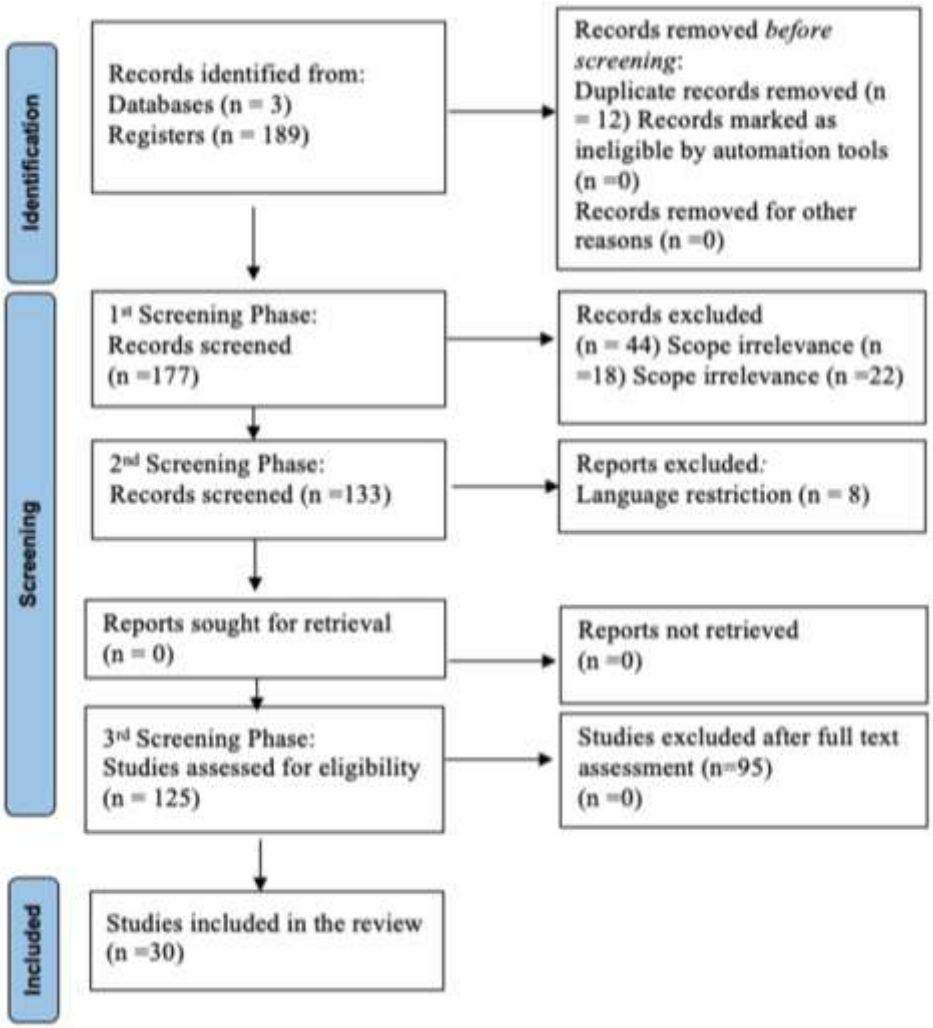


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for study selection

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The analysis yielded two overarching themes and multiple sub-themes, offering a structured response to the research questions, namely, EFL teachers' attitudes toward the integration of ICC and the factors influencing their attitudes toward integrating ICC into their classrooms.

EFL teachers' attitudes toward the integration of ICC

The findings regarding the EFL teachers' attitudes toward the integration of ICC are presented based on the following five subthemes: Asian contexts, where attitudes are mixed but predominantly positive, Middle Eastern and North African contexts, where teachers show recognition of ICC but their knowledge is limited,

European contexts, where attitudes are positive but ICC implementation is superficial, and cross-contextual patterns over time, which portrays the evolution of EFL teachers' attitudes over time, and lastly, attitudes versus practices, which summarizes and underscores the persistent gap among teachers' attitudes and their actual teaching practices.

Asian contexts: Mixed but predominantly positive attitudes

Several of the reviewed studies originate from Asian educational contexts, providing significant insights into EFL teachers' attitudes toward implementing Intercultural English Language Teaching (IELT). In Vietnam, teachers displayed mixed attitudes toward intercultural learning. While many recognized its importance, cultural education was often seen as secondary to linguistic competence. Tran and Dang (2014) identified inconsistencies in EFL teachers' perspectives due to insufficient intercultural knowledge, while Chau and Truong (2019) found that, despite positive attitudes, culture was treated merely as a facilitator in English teaching, with practices limited to tourism-related cultural topics. Nguyen et al. (2016) further highlighted that teachers perceived language and culture teaching as distinct, a view reinforced by inadequate professional training. On a more positive note, Phuong (2020) reported that Vietnamese EFL teachers valued cultural teaching, adapted materials, and actively engaged learners in cross-cultural learning.

Across other Asian contexts, namely Thailand, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Cambodia, similar patterns emerged, indicating that EFL teachers were favorably disposed toward ICC integration, although classroom implementation remained limited or superficial due to insufficient conceptualization of ICC and the absence of explicit, structured guidelines. In Thailand, studies by Boontharika and Atipat (2018) and Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) demonstrated teachers' general support for ICC but noted that their perceptions were vague and lacked depth. Teaching strategies remained surface-level, often tourism-related, while the absence of structured guidelines hindered implementation. In the Turkish context, research across tertiary and secondary education (Cirpan & Sabuncuoglu, 2020; Eken, 2015; Onursoy & Zaimoğlu, 2024; Sert & Özkan, 2016; Taşdemir & Gürbüz, 2021) indicated strong support for integrating culture. Yet, systemic issues such as exam-driven curricula constrained classroom practice. Cultural teaching largely reflected textbook representations of English-speaking countries, limiting intercultural breadth. Kazakhstani teachers, as shown in Smakova and Paulsrud's study (2020), emphasized the necessity of intercultural learning but lacked opportunities and resources for meaningful implementation. Similarly, Cambodian teachers in Bon's (2022) study appreciated culture teaching and employed strategies to raise ICC, yet faced challenges that prevented success.

Findings from Indonesia revealed more controversial perspectives. Vo (2017) observed positive attitudes but noted barriers including inadequate knowledge, curriculum constraints, and time limitations. Anggraini et al. (2021), however, reported that nearly all teachers viewed intercultural teaching negatively, perceiving it as complex and confusing. In contrast, Rohmani and Andriyanti (2022) documented teachers' recognition of ICC's importance and efforts to integrate cultural practices, such as comparing cultural similarities and differences.

In Malaysia, Ning and Soekarno (2024) showed that primary school teachers held positive perspectives, demonstrated intercultural awareness, and successfully engaged learners in intercultural pedagogy. Emerging studies in China (Qian, 2023; Wang et al., 2024) also suggested growing interest in ICC, though practical challenges remained due to institutional constraints. Moreover, Iranian teachers displayed supportive attitudes but faced barriers including insufficient training, limited knowledge, rigid curricula, and traditional teaching methods (Estaji & Rahimi, 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018; Tavassoli & Ghamoushi, 2023).

Middle Eastern and North African contexts: Recognition with limited knowledge

In Algeria, Bouslama and Benaissi (2018) reported that teachers acknowledged the value of intercultural teaching but lacked training and awareness, resulting in inconsistent practices. Barebzi (2021) found that Moroccan teachers held positive views and were eager to integrate intercultural learning, yet systematic implementation was hindered by vague understanding and insufficient knowledge. In Oman, Salih and Omar (2022) observed differing teacher perspectives on intercultural teaching, reflecting limited intercultural awareness and contextual constraints.

European contexts: Positive attitudes with superficial implementation

In Croatia, Breka and Petravic (2015) found that primary school teachers generally expressed positive views but applied intercultural teaching superficially, focusing on fostering tolerance rather than deep intercultural understanding. Similarly, in Portugal, Leão (2017) showed that teachers valued ICC but prioritized linguistic skills in practice. Contradictions between teachers' positive perceptions and minimal integration of ICC were also evident in Poland (Sobkowiak, 2021), where cultural elements were only marginally included. In contrast, Greek teachers demonstrated higher awareness of the interrelation between language and culture. Petosi and Karras (2020) showed that they held strong positive attitudes and integrated intercultural teaching more substantially than their European counterparts.

Cross-contextual patterns: Evolution of attitudes over time

The findings also highlight an evolution of EFL teachers' attitudes and practices regarding ICC across three phases: an early period (before 2017), a transitional period (2017-2020), and a more recent period (2020-present). In the early period, teachers often held vague or inconsistent views, perceiving ICC as complex, unnecessary, or difficult to implement (Anggraini et al., 2021; Salih & Omar, 2022; Sobkowiak, 2021). Cultural learning was acknowledged but rarely applied in practice. During the transitional period, teachers displayed a clearer positive stance, but a persistent gap between attitudes and practice remained. Curriculum constraints and time limitations hindered deeper integration (Bon, 2022; Taşdemir & Gürbüz, 2021), with language teaching continuing to dominate over cultural objectives. In the recent period, studies show that teachers increasingly recognize the deep interconnection between language and culture, with their positive attitudes more frequently reflected in classroom practices (Ning & Soekarno, 2024; Rohmani & Andriyanti, 2022). However, barriers such as a lack

of training and institutional constraints still limit systematic integration (Barebzi, 2021; Onursoy & Zaimoğlu, 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Attitudes versus practices: The persistent gap

Across contexts, most teachers expressed positive attitudes toward intercultural teaching and acknowledged its educational value. However, practices often prioritized linguistic competence over intercultural development. This discrepancy reflects the influence of internal and external factors, including limited teacher knowledge, inadequate professional training, rigid curricula, exam-oriented education systems, and restricted opportunities for intercultural exchange.

Factors influencing EFL teachers' attitudes toward integrating ICC into their classrooms

Following the analysis of EFL teachers' attitudes toward ICC implementation in their instructional practices, this section focuses on the factors affecting such implementation. These factors impeding intercultural English language teaching are grouped into two categories: internal and external factors.

Internal factors impeding intercultural English language teaching

Internal factors refer to individual and personal barriers inherently affecting EFL teachers. These comprise knowledge, abilities, and ideologies (Wang, 2017), such as a limited understanding of ICC, prejudices, entrenched beliefs, insufficient personal experience in intercultural teaching, and limited ongoing professional development.

A limited understanding of ICC is a significant factor contributing to the gap between EFL teachers' attitudes and their actual practices. Many educators demonstrate a superficial grasp of this concept in various educational contexts, often due to insufficient professional training and the absence of clear guidelines for effectively implementing intercultural pedagogy in their classrooms. Research by Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017), as well as Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018), consistently highlights this knowledge deficit as a critical barrier to the meaningful integration of intercultural education. Specifically, Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak's study (2017) revealed that EFL teachers had a general understanding of ICC, exhibiting a profound lack of awareness of its theoretical background, leading them to ineffective practical applications, inconsistent with key principles of intercultural teaching pedagogy. Similarly, Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018) found that EFL teachers held diverse misconceptions of ICC and IELT, which challenge the application of intercultural pedagogical practices in their English language teaching. Likewise, Barebzi (2021) unveiled Moroccan EFL teachers' unclear misinterpretations of interculturality, as reflected in their uncertainty about whether to portray the English culture positively to their learners.

Consequently, EFL teachers' insufficient or restricted understanding of ICC and the principles underlying intercultural learning directly influence their successful and practical implementation in the EFL classroom. Hence, ongoing professional training on intercultural learning and undergraduate courses dedicated to intercultural English language teaching would enhance EFL teachers' comprehension, providing a strong and comprehensive theoretical background,

while enriching them with the necessary knowledge and skills for successful implementation (Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018).

Many teachers report that their limited knowledge, lack of practical guidelines, and experience with intercultural pedagogy hinder their ability to consistently and regularly apply these concepts in their teaching. Based on Eken's study (2015), EFL teachers struggle to embrace ICC in their English teaching instruction, as they lack familiarity with proper intercultural teaching methods, practices, and activities. As a result, they tend to apply ICC incorrectly or even neglect it in their instructional practices, perceiving it as difficult and time-consuming. Iranian EFL teachers' insufficient cognition in intercultural English language learning restricted their actual teaching practices to engaging only with intercultural issues regarding factual information presented in the textbooks (Tavassoli & Ghamoushi, 2023). Qian's study (2023) retrieved similar findings with Chinese EFL teachers' lack of theoretical awareness of the notion of culture, its constituents, and guidelines for its implicit integration in the teaching of English, affecting their inadequate culture-based instructional practices. Corresponding results were also reported by Wang et al. (2024) as Chinese EFL teachers, due to their inadequate knowledge of cultural learning practices, focused mainly on exposing their learners to factual cultural information, presenting a more tourist aspect of culture, instead of instilling in them the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy toward culturally diverse identities. Nguyen et al. (2016) resulted in equivalent outcomes indicating that Vietnamese EFL teachers' inadequate intercultural awareness led them to perceive language and culture teaching as two distinct concepts in their teaching, prioritizing, therefore, learners' linguistic development over cultivating their intercultural skills and ICC.

This situation underscores the urgent need for comprehensive teacher training programs that provide specialized guidance, both theoretical and practical, on intercultural teaching. Researchers such as Chau and Truong (2019) and Salih and Omar (2022) emphasize that these programs should not only address educators' practical challenges but also the theoretical gaps in their understanding. In this light, several researchers (Eken, 2015; Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018) identify the insufficient understanding of ICC as the main hindering factor to implementing intercultural English language teaching, emphasizing EFL teachers' superficial comprehension of the concept. Although advanced educational qualifications in TESOL may enhance teachers' intercultural instructional methods, these do not necessarily lead to a significant change in EFL teachers' perceptions of the importance of intercultural teaching (Chau & Truong, 2019). This observation aligns with Byram's (2008) assertion that specialized training can equip teachers with the necessary skills but may not result in a transformative shift in beliefs about the role of intercultural education.

Therefore, pedagogical training should not only focus on skill acquisition but also on developing a deeper understanding of the importance of ICC in language learning, which includes both theoretical and practical training in ICC (Byram & Feng, 2006). By addressing these educational and perceptual gaps, EFL teacher training can become more effective in enhancing teachers' understanding of cultural differences and promoting the integration of intercultural elements into teaching practices. Chau and Truong (2019) emphasize the necessity for EFL teachers' professional development to strengthen intercultural education in ELT.

Prejudices and entrenched beliefs are also highly influential in shaping teachers' attitudes and their pedagogical behaviors in intercultural and inclusive contexts, as revealed by a growing body of recent research. For instance, Dierendonck et al. (2024) applied the Theory of Planned Behavior and demonstrated that teachers' intentions to adopt recommended instructional practices strongly predicted actual classroom implementation. However, despite generally positive attitudes toward intercultural education, many teachers still prioritize linguistic content over cultural integration due to deeply embedded beliefs and educational ideologies. This tension is further supported by Yaprak and Özmen (2025), who found a marked incongruence between teachers' professed values and their practical behaviors in critical intercultural teaching contexts. This inconsistency has been extensively documented in research by Breka and Petravic (2015) and Ghavamnia (2020), pointing out that linguistic competence frequently dominates teaching priorities, often at the expense of fostering intercultural awareness. Barebzi's (2021) findings align with the abovementioned studies, showing that many educators continue to prioritize language instruction due to deeply ingrained beliefs, despite holding favorable views on the significance of intercultural education. This underscores the urgent need for educational reforms emphasizing the relevance of intercultural education within EFL curricula, fostering a more integrated approach to intercultural learning in EFL settings.

Teachers' insufficient personal experience in intercultural teaching is an additional internal challenge impeding successful ICC integration. Many EFL teachers find it difficult to incorporate intercultural learning into their lessons due to inadequate hands-on experience. Consequently, they tend to avoid such teaching practices or, in some cases, they implement them incorrectly, whereas at times they focus on their learners' linguistic skills (Barebzi, 2021; Bon, 2022; Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018; Breka & Petravic, 2015; Chau & Truong, 2019; Sert & Özkan, 2016). Deardorff (2006) highlights the critical importance of personal experiences and reflections in shaping educators' understanding of ICC, arguing that experiential learning opportunities can be more influential than formal educational qualifications alone. This perspective aligns with the idea that EFL teachers' involvement in diverse cultural contexts and their reflective practices significantly contribute to their professional development.

Therefore, teacher training workshops focused on intercultural learning, which equip teachers with practical knowledge and hands-on experience, are essential for promoting and facilitating intercultural English language teaching in the EFL context (Vo, 2017). Familiarizing EFL teachers with relevant resources and materials for intercultural learning would further encourage the integration of these practices into their instructional methods. Thus, EFL teachers' pedagogical training would not only enhance their intercultural awareness but also support their professional development (Byram & Feng, 2006).

Limited ongoing professional development is identified as a key barrier for the successful integration of intercultural learning within EFL teaching across various studies (Bon, 2022; Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2016; Sert & Özkan, 2016; Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018). Vietnamese EFL teachers reported that teacher professional development programs failed to provide thorough practical training on approaching intercultural learning in foreign language teaching, relying solely on approaches associated with linguistic development (Nguyen et al., 2016).

In addition, Estaji and Rahimi (2018) found no significant correlation between teachers' academic education and their perceptions of ICC, suggesting that formal education alone does not guarantee the development of ICC and intercultural awareness. This indicates that a robust belief in the importance of ICC is more influential than mere academic qualifications in facilitating the incorporation of cultural teaching into lessons.

Such findings suggest that professional development should not only focus on formal qualifications but also on cultivating teachers' intercultural awareness. Thus, teacher professional development programs should reevaluate and redefine their aims and objectives to adjust to foreign language educators' needs in today's globalized world by providing ongoing professional support and training (Sert & Özkan, 2016).

External factors impeding intercultural English language teaching

Several external factors have been prominently documented in the reviewed studies to significantly hinder the effective application of intercultural English language teaching in EFL contexts. These external barriers relate to constraints beyond teachers' authority, imposed by the educational environment or systemic factors (Xie et al., 2021). Many educators in diverse educational settings claim to frequently face challenges such as rigid curricula restricting intercultural education, time constraints, an over-reliance on textbooks, and a lack of appropriate instructional materials (Nguyen et al., 2016; Sert & Özkan, 2016).

School curriculum limitations frequently hinder intercultural English language teaching. Wang et al. (2024) and Leão (2017) highlight that education curricula in some countries (i.e., China and Portugal) follow a superficial approach to the integration of intercultural learning in ELT. In particular, they often limit the incorporation of interculturality to merely presenting superficial cultural aspects, such as factual or touristic information about foreign countries, rather than fostering deeper intercultural values like empathy, tolerance, and respect.

Research has also revealed that such superficial cultural insight is illustrated in most textbooks, which teachers tend to over-rely on in their teaching (Leão, 2017; Wang et al., 2024). Nguyen et al. (2016) and Sert and Özkan (2016) stress that EFL teachers in the Southeast Asian and Turkish regions are affected by restrictive curricula that prioritize language development over the incorporation of interculturality in the EFL classroom. Strict curriculum constraints do not allow for flexibility in culturally responsive teaching in ELT, reducing EFL teachers' opportunities to implement teaching strategies that promote intercultural understanding. Time constraints further impede effective intercultural teaching, limiting learners' engagement in cross-cultural interactions and dialogue. Thus, modernizing school curricula to encompass flexibility in intercultural learning and its components would offer EFL teachers the chance to integrate intercultural elements into their lessons without deviating from the existing school curricula. Furthermore, establishing platforms for continuous teacher professional development, including seminars and workshops designed to train and equip teachers with time and content management strategies that would facilitate and enhance teaching instruction.

Time and material limitations are identified as educational environment-related factors that hinder the effective teaching of culture in ELT across several

studies (Bon, 2022; Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2016; Sobkowiak, 2021; Taşdemir & Gürbüz, 2021). Many EFL teachers claimed that insufficient classroom time impedes the consistent implementation of intercultural learning into their teaching, as rigid syllabi and learner exam-dependent evaluation systems allow little room for engagement with culture (Sert & Özkan, 2016). Moreover, inadequate instructional materials that promote intercultural education can also impact intercultural English language teaching, as observed in several of the reviewed studies (Nguyen et al., 2016; Sobkowiak, 2021; Taşdemir & Gürbüz, 2021). Zhang (2021) highlights the need for supportive educational systems and resources that facilitate cultural teaching, emphasizing the importance of professional development tailored to meet teachers' specific needs within their educational contexts.

This lack of appropriate instructional materials supporting authentic intercultural learning prevents EFL teachers from applying teaching strategies that promote cultural understanding, inclusion, and tolerance, resulting in learners only acquiring superficial knowledge instead of developing genuine intercultural skills. Therefore, creating and promoting educational resources that focus on enhancing intercultural comprehension, such as educational videos, literature, and online platforms with various authentic intercultural materials easily accessible by EFL teachers, would facilitate and encourage the integration of intercultural English language teaching. Zhang (2021) and Leão (2017) suggest strengthening professional social networks to support mutual sharing of educational resources, materials, and best practices regarding intercultural teaching.

Limited professional support and guidance for teachers constitute additional contextual barriers within educational systems that often obstruct the effective integration of intercultural teaching. Smakova and Paulsrud's study (2020) revealed the necessity of teacher education programs to provide EFL teachers with assistance and guidance to effectively leverage the potential of intercultural learning into their English language teaching practices. Such teacher professional development is considered essential for in-service EFL teachers, providing them with guidance on ICC and access to culture-based resources and materials to enhance intercultural English language teaching (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020). Additionally, fostering teacher professional development would encourage EFL teachers' self-reflection on their employed intercultural teaching practices and beliefs, helping them raise awareness and improve their intercultural teaching instruction in the EFL classroom (Peiser & Jones, 2014).

Discussion

This review aimed to explore the challenges of integrating intercultural learning into EFL teaching, with a particular focus on teachers' attitudes and practices in different cultural contexts. The findings suggest that while there is a general agreement among EFL teachers worldwide regarding the importance of intercultural learning in language education, various factors—both internal and external—significantly hinder its effective implementation in classrooms.

In light of the findings, it is quite evident that recent research on incorporating intercultural learning in ELT is quite limited in Western contexts compared to Asian settings. Since the English language usually dominates in the West, either as a country's first or second language, individuals are considered to have been

inherently acquainted with English-speaking cultures. Also, several of these countries teach English as their home language, and consequently, research attention is mostly linguistically rather than culturally oriented. In addition, Western countries have been mostly affected by globalization, with immigrant mobility, since the beginning of the new century, and research regarding intercultural learning gained significant popularity in these contexts during that time (Qian, 2023; Salih & Omar, 2022). As such, recent studies in Western contexts focus more on immigrant inclusivity within educational contexts. On the contrary, in non-Western countries, English is mainly taught as a lingua franca for international communication or meetings, and therefore, embedding cultural learning in English language instruction is important for raising intercultural understanding and fostering effective cross-cultural interactions (Hapsari et al., 2022).

Furthermore, most of the abovementioned studies were undertaken in secondary and tertiary education, while primary education yielded a fundamental research gap. This is probably because EFL primary education teachers mostly prioritize developing learners' linguistic abilities (i.e., vocabulary and grammar), oracy, and literacy skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking) while teaching a foreign language to learners of this context. Additionally, EFL teachers often consider primary school learners quite immature to be engaged in more challenging issues regarding interculturality. In contrast, secondary and tertiary learners are considered to be more prepared to delve deeper into interculturality and intercultural learning, as at this level, they have adequate knowledge of world issues and enhanced critical thinking skills required for engagement in meaningful intercultural learning within their English lessons. Moreover, most research has probably been conducted in tertiary education, as universities are usually rich in students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, which makes embracing interculturality more natural at this level (Salih & Omar, 2022).

Additionally, the reviewed studies indicate a strong consensus regarding EFL teachers' generally positive attitudes toward integrating intercultural learning into their teaching practices, recognizing its critical role in enhancing learners' ICC. EFL teachers from diverse contexts, including Vietnam, Turkey, and Indonesia, acknowledge the educational value of intercultural instruction. However, a notable discrepancy between EFL teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices remains a persistent challenge, regardless of their cultural and geographic contexts or the education levels they teach. As observed, in Asian contexts such as Vietnam, Kazakhstan, and Thailand, a lack of ICC cognition, curricula constraints, and exam-oriented syllabi significantly affect the integration of interculturality in ELT. Likewise, in Western countries such as Croatia, Portugal, and Poland, challenges were identified regarding EFL teachers' main instructional priority on linguistic development instead of the incorporation of the intercultural dimension in their classroom practices. These findings stress an urgent need to bridge the gap between EFL teachers' attitudes and their classroom practical implementations to enhance effective intercultural English language teaching and develop global citizens of tomorrow's world.

According to the results, the integration of intercultural learning faces both internal and external challenges. Internally, many teachers lack a comprehensive understanding of ICC, often due to inadequate training or a lack of clear guidelines

for implementation (Eken, 2015; Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018). Even teachers with advanced TESOL qualifications do not always exhibit transformative changes in their attitudes or practices (Chau & Truong, 2019). On the external front, systemic barriers such as rigid curricula, time constraints, and limited access to appropriate resources further impede the effective integration of intercultural elements into teaching. Additionally, the focus on "touristic" cultural knowledge in certain regions, such as China and Portugal, limits the depth of cultural understanding promoted in classrooms (Leão, 2017; Wang et al., 2024). Addressing the above challenges requires comprehensive reforms at both the teacher and institutional levels. Specifically, the rigid curricula must be addressed, and effective strategies and materials should be applied. For example, reforming curricula to incorporate global citizenship and intercultural awareness would ensure that teachers have the time and resources to include cultural content in their lessons (Sert & Özkan, 2016).

Additionally, establishing comprehensive EFL teacher development programs that emphasize the educational value of intercultural learning is essential (Çirpan & Sabuncuoğlu, 2020; Iswandari & Ardi, 2022). These programs should not only focus on skill acquisition but also promote reflective practices and foster a deeper awareness of intercultural education (Byram & Feng, 2006). Furthermore, experiential learning, as suggested by Deardorff (2006), can be particularly effective in enhancing teachers' intercultural competence and encouraging its application in diverse classroom contexts. Lastly, developing authentic teaching materials that reflect real-world intercultural contexts can greatly enhance learners' understanding and engagement with intercultural issues (Sobkowiak, 2021). These materials should encourage self-reflection and enable learners to critically assess cultural stereotypes and biases, thereby fostering the development of ICC among EFL learners (Nafisah et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Implications for intercultural English language teaching

The reviewed literature shows that, although teachers generally have positive attitudes toward intercultural learning, implementation remains inconsistent due to systemic, contextual, and pedagogical barriers. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, specific strategies are needed that integrate intercultural goals into EFL teaching. A key implication is teacher professional development. Educators need not only classroom techniques but also opportunities to reflect on their cultural placement and pedagogical choices. Training should combine practical task design with reflective dialogue, enabling teachers to address stereotypes, challenge assumptions, and facilitate sensitive discussions (Byram, 1997; Wang et al., 2024). Curriculum design is another critical factor. Intercultural learning should be integrated across language skills rather than treated as an optional "add-on." Reading activities can include authentic intercultural texts, while speaking and writing tasks can focus on global issues like equality, justice, and diversity, fostering language skills and intercultural competence at the same time (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Sert & Özkan, 2016). Finally, learner agency is essential. Students are most effective as active participants rather than passive recipients. Reflection journals, digital exchanges with international peers, and collaborative projects can help learners build knowledge through dialogue, negotiation, and empathy (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022; Nafisah et al., 2024). Promoting learner autonomy

transforms classrooms into spaces for linguistic development, intercultural awareness, and critical global citizenship.

Based on the reviewed studies, Table 1 summarizes effective teaching practices that can foster intercultural awareness and competence within the EFL classroom. These practices have been extracted or inspired directly from empirical and theoretical research included in this review:

Table 1. Teaching practices for integrating intercultural learning in English as a foreign language (EFL)

Teaching Practice	Description	Source(s)
Experiential learning activities	Activities such as role-plays, simulations, and community engagement projects that allow learners to actively experience and reflect on intercultural situations.	Deardorff (2006)
Critical incident analysis	Students analyze real-life intercultural misunderstandings to develop awareness and empathy for different perspectives.	Byram & Feng (2006)
Use of authentic intercultural materials	Integrating culturally rich content such as interviews, articles, videos, or stories from different cultural backgrounds.	Sobkowiak (2021)
Intercultural reflection journals	Learners write regular reflections on cultural topics or experiences to encourage critical thinking and personal engagement.	Nafisah et al. (2024)
Collaborative intercultural projects	Students work with peers (locally or globally) on tasks requiring them to explore cultural themes and negotiate meaning.	Iswandari & Ardi (2022)
Global citizenship education activities	Lessons that incorporate themes like equality, justice, and diversity while linking them to language use and intercultural understanding.	Sert & Özkan (2016); Çirpan & Sabuncuoğlu (2020)
Teacher-guided reflection and discussion	Facilitated classroom discussions where teachers guide learners to question stereotypes, challenge assumptions, and express intercultural insights.	Wang et al. (2024); Leão (2017)

These practices emphasize the need for learner-centered, reflective, and culturally responsive pedagogies that transcend surface-level cultural exposure. When implemented intentionally and systematically, they can help learners not only develop linguistic proficiency but also acquire the critical intercultural skills necessary for active and empathetic participation in globalized societies. Teachers and teacher educators are thus encouraged to adopt a transformative approach that embeds intercultural objectives throughout the curriculum and instructional design.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while EFL teachers worldwide acknowledge the critical importance of integrating intercultural learning into their classrooms, significant

challenges persist related to both teacher preparedness and systemic institutional barriers. Addressing these issues necessitates comprehensive and targeted interventions, including sustained professional development, curriculum reforms that embed intercultural competence as a core component, and the development of authentic, contextually relevant teaching materials. Such measures can bridge the gap between teachers' positive attitudes and their actual classroom practices, ultimately fostering more effective intercultural learning in ELT. By doing so, educators will better equip learners to navigate and contribute positively to an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world, thereby supporting the development of global citizenship and intercultural understanding.

This literature review acknowledges several limitations. First, the studies reviewed predominantly focus on in-service EFL teachers' attitudes and teaching practices regarding the integration of interculturality in English Language Teaching. Therefore, conducting a literature review on pre-service EFL teachers would yield valuable comparative findings, enhancing our understanding of how attitudes and practices may differ between these two groups. Additionally, many of the identified studies only superficially explored the various factors influencing EFL teachers' attitudes and practices.

References

Anggraini, D., Hidayah, J., Edy, S., & Ariani, D. (2021). Indonesian EFL teachers' attitudes and perceptions of interculturality in English learning. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding (IJMMU)*, *8*(2), 435-451. https://ijmmu.com/index.php/ijmmu/article/view/2398

Baker, W. (2012). From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT Journal*, *66*(1), 62-70. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccs067

Bangdiwala, S. I. (2024). The importance of systematic reviews. *International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion*, *31*(3), 347–349. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457300.2024.2388484

Barebzi, J. (2021). Intercultural communicative competence teaching: Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices. *International Journal of Advance Study and Research Work*, *4*(7), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5205557

Bon, S. (2022). Developing Cambodian secondary school students' intercultural competence: Strategies and challenges. *Issues in Educational Research*, *32*(3), 887–905. https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.776657158756350

Borg, M. (2015). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Borg, S. (2019). Language teacher cognition: Perspectives and debates. In X. Gao (Ed.), *Second handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 1149-1170). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58542-0_59-1

Bouslama, A., & Benaissi, F. B. (2018). Intercultural competence in ELT contexts: A study of EFL teachers' perceptions. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, *9*(4), 122-135. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3308264

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Breka, O., & Petravić, A. (2015). Foreign language teachers and the intercultural dimension in primary education. *Croatian Journal of Education*, *17*(2), 27–41. https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v17i0.1529

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2008). *From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship: Essays and reflections*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., & Feng, A. (2006). Intercultural competence in foreign languages: A review of the literature. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *6*(2), 152-166. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470600652774

Byram, M., & Wagner, M. (2018). Making a difference: Language teaching for intercultural and international dialogue. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*(1), 140-151. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12319

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, *1*(1), 1-47. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/I.1.1

Cancino, M., & Nuñez, I. (2023). EFL teachers' perceptions towards multicultural classrooms: The role of intercultural sensitivity in developing intercultural communicative competence. *rEFLections*, *30*(3), 620–646. https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v30i3.267833

Chau, T. H. H., & Truong, V. (2019). The integration of intercultural education into teaching English: What Vietnamese teachers do and say. *International Journal of Instruction*, *12*(1), 441-456.

Cheewasukthaworn, K., & Suwanarak, K. (2017). Exploring Thai EFL teachers' perceptions of how intercultural communicative competence is important for their students. *PASAA*, *54*, 1-28.

Çirpan, M., & Sabuncuoğlu, O. (2020). Attitudes of EFL teachers towards intercultural communicative competence: A Turkish foundation university case. *İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *6*(1), 107-132. https://doi.org/10.17932/IAUEFD.2020.003/iauefd_v06i1002

Council of Europe & European Commission. (2018). *T-Kit 4: Intercultural learning* (2nd ed.). Council of Europe Publishing. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-4-intercultural-learning

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing. https://www.coe.int/lang-cefr

Cuartas Álvarez, L. F. (2020). Intercultural communicative competence: In-service EFL teachers building understanding through study groups. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *22*(1), 75-92. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v22n1.76796

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *10*(3-4), 241–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002

Dierendonck, C., Poncelet, D., & Tinnes-Vigne, M. (2024). Why teachers do (or do not) implement recommended teaching practices? An application of the theory of planned behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15,* Article 1269954. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1269954

Echcharfy, M. (2019). Intercultural Learning: A Promising Pedagogy in the New Millennium. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, *4*(3), 361-377. http://dx.doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v4i3.309

Echcharfy M. (2020). Intercultural learning in Moroccan higher education: A comparison between teachers' perceptions and students' expectations. *IJREE*, *5*(1), 19-35. https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.5.1.19

Eken, D. T. (2015). Intercultural communicative competence: EFL teachers' beliefs and practices. *Journal of Teaching and Education*, *4*(3), 61-71. https://doi.org/10.20472/JTE.2015.4.3.005

Estaji, M., & Rahimi, A. (2018). Exploring teachers' perception of intercultural communicative competence and their practices for teaching culture in EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *6*(2), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2018.544214

Fang, F., McConachy, T., & Yuan, R. (2024). Intercultural learning and identity development as a form of teacher development through study abroad: Narratives from English language practitioners. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 37*(2), 247–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2024.2323453

Fantini, A. E. (1997). Checking teacher culture/intercultural competencies: The YOGA form. In A. E. Fantini (Ed.), *New ways in teaching culture* (pp. 36–39). TESOL, Inc.

Fantini, A. E. (2019). *Intercultural communicative competence in educational exchange: A multinational perspective*. Routledge.

Ghavamnia, M. (2020). Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and perspectives on incorporating culture in EFL classes. *Intercultural Education*, *31*(3), 314–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2020.1733862

Gu, X. (2015). Assessment of intercultural communicative competence in FL education: A survey on EFL teachers' perception and practice in China. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *15*(4), 586-601. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2015.1083575

Hapsari, Y., Sari, R., & Lengkanawati, N. (2022). Indonesian EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Language, Literature and Culture (ICOLLEC 2021)* (pp. 9–10). EAI. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.9-10-2021.2319693

Higgins, J., Thomas, J., Chandler, J., Cumpston, M., Li, T., Page, M., & Welch, V. (2022). *Cochrane handbook for systematic reviews of interventions* (6th ed.). Cochrane Training. https://www.training.cochrane.org/handbook

Hossain, K. (2024). Reviewing the role of culture in English language learning: Challenges and opportunities for educators. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *9*, Article 100781. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100781

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–285). Penguin Books.

Iswandari, Y. A., & Ardi, P. (2022). Intercultural communicative competence in EFL setting: A systematic review. *rEFLections*, *29*(2), 361–380. https://doi.org/10.2298/REF2202361I

Kalogerogianni, F. (2025). Teaching in multicultural classrooms through an intercultural perspective on citizenship. *Frontiers in Education*, *10*, Article 1581833. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1581833

Lane, H. C. (2012). Intercultural learning. In N. M. Seel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning* (pp. 1618–1620). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_242

Leão, A. P. (2017). Interculturality in English language teaching – A small study with Portuguese teachers. *E-TEALS*, *8*(1), 107–125. https://doi.org/10.2478/eteals-2018-0005

Li, Y. (2016). Intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching: A Chinese perspective. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *7*(4), 768-772. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0704.18

Megawati, I., Widodo, P., Ashadi, & Triastuti, A. (2020). Teacher's cognition of intercultural communicative competence in Indonesia EFL context. *Elementary Education Online*, *19*(2), 42-49.

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D. G., & PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *PLoS Medicine*, *6*(7), Article e1000097. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000097

Mostafaei Alaei, M., & Nosrati, F. (2018). Research into EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *47*(2), 73-86. https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2018.1424020

Nafisah, S. L., Oktarina, I., Santri, D., & Suwartono, T. (2024). Teachers' perception and practices of intercultural communicative competence integration in EFL classroom: A systematic literature review. *Educalitra: English Education, Linguistics, and Literature Journal*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10596576

Nguyen, L. T. T., Biebricher, C., & Ward, G. (2021). The intercultural dimension in English language teaching: Vietnamese university English teachers' voices. *Journal of Foreign Studies*, *37*(6), 63-78. https://doi.org/10.37569/jfs.37.6.2021.4923

Nguyen, L. V., Harvey, S., & Grant, L. (2016). What teachers say about addressing culture in their EFL teaching practices: The Vietnamese context. *Intercultural Education*, *27*(2), 165-178. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2016.1144921

Ning, S. J., & Soekarno, M. (2024). Intercultural communicative competence among Malaysian primary ESL learners from teachers' perspective. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *13*(2), 414-429. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i2/21128

Onursoy, B., & Zaimoğlu, S. (2024). EFL instructors' approaches and practices of intercultural communicative competence. *Erciyes Akademi*, *38*(1), 310-329. https://doi.org/10.48070/erciyesakademi.1432134

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., McGuinness, L. A., Stewart, A. L., Thomas, J., Tricco, A.C., Welch, V. A., Whiting, P. & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, *372*(71), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Peiser, G., & Jones, M. (2014). The influence of teachers' interests, personalities and life experiences in intercultural languages teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *20*(3), 375-390. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2013.848525

Permatasari, I. (2023). The integration of intercultural communicative competence in ELT settings: A systematic review. *LingTera*, *10*(1), 54-63. https://doi.org/10.21831/lt.v10i1.59885

Peskoller, J. (2025). The intercultural potential of language activities: Investigating the implementation of intercultural learning in three Austrian EFL textbooks. *Intercultural Communication Education*, *8*(1), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v8n1.2313

Petosi, E., & Karras, I. (2020). Intercultural communicative competence: Are Greek EFL teachers ready? *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *8*(1), 7-22. https://doi.org/10.2478/eujal-2020-0001

Phuong, D. L. (2020). Vietnamese English teachers' perceptions of culture in ELT materials in Vietnamese universities. *Education and Human Development Journal*, *5*(2), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.33086/ehdj.v5i2.1540

Qian, L. (2023). Chinese EFL university teachers' perceptions of culture teaching and their pedagogical practices. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *24*(6), 679–692. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2023.2283702

Rohmani, L., & Andriyanti, E. (2022). Culture teaching in EFL classes: Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practices. *Studies in English Language and Education*, *9*(1), 237-257. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v9i1.21834

Salih, A., & Omar, L. (2022). An investigation of teachers' perceptions and practices of interculturality in ELT. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *10*(2), 50-63. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2022.556618.2680

Sert, S., & Özkan, Y. (2016). Culture integration into ELT: English language instructors' perceptions and their teaching practices. *International Journal of Language Academy*, *4*(4), 98-110. https://doi.org/10.18033/ijla.390

Shortt, M., Tilak, S., Kuznetcova, I., Martens, B., & Akinkuolie, B. (2023). Gamification in mobile-assisted language learning: A systematic review of Duolingo literature from public release of 2012 to early 2020. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *36*(3), 517–554. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1933540

Smakova, K., & Paulsrud, B. (2020). Intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching in Kazakhstan. *Issues in Educational Research*, *30*(2), 691-708. http://www.iier.org.au/iier30/smakova.pdf

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, *104*, 333-339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Sobkowiak, P. (2021). Developing intercultural identity on a sojourn abroad: A case study. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, *56*(1), 149-179. https://doi.org/10.2478/stap-2021-0029

Tajeddin, Z., & Rezanejad, A. (2018). Intercultural teaching in L2 classrooms: Exploring English language teachers' beliefs. *International Journal of Humanities*, *25*(3), 79-97. https://doi.org/10.22059/ijh.2018.257361.1824

Taşdemir, H., & Gürbüz, N. (2021). An investigation into the cultural dimension in EFL classes: Turkish instructors' views and practices. *Canadian Journal of*

Applied Linguistics / Revue Canadienne de Linguistique Appliquée, *24*(1), 54–74. https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2021.30667

Tavassoli, K., & Ghamoushi, M. (2023). Exploring Iranian EFL teachers' cognition, attitude, and practice in teaching intercultural issues. *Interchange*, *54*(2), 173–201. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-023-09487-7

Thome-Williams, A. C. (2016). Developing intercultural communicative competence in Portuguese through Skype and Facebook. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Studies*, *25*(1), 213-233. https://doi.org/10.9707/2167-9653.1147

Tran, T. Q., & Dang, H. V. (2014). Culture teaching in English language teaching: Teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *4*(2), 92-101. https://doi.org/10.18844/gjflt.v4i2.148

Tran, T. Q., & Duong, T. M. (2018). The effectiveness of the intercultural language communicative teaching model for EFL learners. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *3*(6), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-018-0050-x

Vo, Q. P. (2017). Rethinking intercultural communication competence in English language teaching: A gap between lecturers' perspectives and practices in a Southeast Asian tertiary context. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, *7*(1), 20–30. https://doi.org/10.31002/gelt.v7i1.488

Wang, T. (2017). Overcoming barriers to 'flip': Building teacher's capacity for the adoption of flipped classroom in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, *12*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-017-0047-7

Wang, H., Xu, T., & Zhong, Z. (2024). A qualitative study on Chinese primary school EFL teachers' beliefs about incorporating intercultural competence into foreign language teaching. *Heliyon*, *10*(12), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32635

Xie, K., Nelson, M. J., Cheng, S. L., & Jiang, Z. (2021). Examining changes in teachers' perceptions of external and internal barriers in their integration of educational digital resources in K-12 classrooms. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, *55*(2), 281–306. https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2021.1951404

Yan, Z., & Tananuraksakul, N. (2023). Exploring intercultural communication competence perceptions and integration into classroom practices of Chinese English teachers at a Chinese middle school in Shanxi. *Journal of Modern Learning Development*, *8*(7), 306–319. https://doi.org/10.53944/jomld.v8i7.260388

Yaprak, Z., & Özmen, K. S. (2025). A more critical approach to the intercultural competence: Teacher beliefs, practices, and training. *Interchange: A Quarterly Review of Education*, *56*(2), 159–186. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-025-09542-5

Zhang, Y. (2021). Professional development for EFL teachers: A focus on intercultural competence. *Language Teaching Research*, *25*(4), 543-560. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820987163

Appendix

Collection of 30 publications (articles in a journal)

Author(s)	Year	Context	Methodology	Findings
Tran & Dang	2014	Vietnam	Mixed methods	EFL Ts expressed inconsistent views on including culture teaching in ELT. Most of them have positive attitudes towards its implementation, but their teaching practices mainly focus on foreign language development.
Breka & Petravic	2015	Croatia	Quantitative approach	EFL Ts' positive perceptions of integrating culture teaching in their English lessons do not align with their actual teaching practices.
Eken	2015	Turkey	Qualitative	EFL Ts adopted a positive stance towards intercultural learning as well as ICC and try to include it in their teaching instruction.
Sert & Özkan	2016	Turkey	Qualitative	EFL Ts recognize the importance of culture learning, but fail to implement it in the EFL classroom.
Nguyen, Harvey & Grant	2016	Vietnam	Qualitative	EFL Ts' lack of intercultural awareness leads them to prioritize learners' linguistic development.
Vo	2017	Indonesia	Mixed methods	EFL Ts are favorably dispositioned towards ICC and eager to implement it, but claimed to occasionally applying it due to several internal and external inhibiting factors.
Cheewasukthawor & Suwanarak	2017	Thailand	Mixed methods	EFL Ts' vague perceptions of ICC and insufficient knowledge on the concept lead them to neglect its application in ELT, despite Ts' positive views on intercultural learning.
Leão	2017	Portugal	Mixed methods	EFL teachers acknowledge the merits of ICC, but focus on developing their learners' language skills and linguistic competence.
Tajeddin Rezanejad	2018	Iran	Mixed methods	Despite EFL Ts' favorable stance on the inclusion of the intercultural dimension in

				ELT, their inadequate knowledge on interculturality, leads them to constraints during its implementation.
Bouslama & Benaissi	2018	Algeria	Qualitative	Ts' lack of theoretical background on culture teaching and in-depth understanding affects negatively their culture-based instructional practices.
Boontharika & Atipat	2018	Thailand	Qualitative	Despite EFL Ts' different conceptualizations of ICC, they recognized its significance and employed diverse teaching strategies for its effective incorporation in the English lessons.
Estaji & Rahimi	2018	Iran	Mixed methods	EFL Ts' positive perceptions of intercultural learning in ELT are not influenced by their education or teaching experience. However, their perceptions affect their classroom teaching practices.
Chau & Truong	2019	Vietnam	Mixed methods	Despite EFL Ts' adequate knowledge on culture teaching and their supportive perspectives towards its integration, it played a secondary role in their instructional practices. Correlation was revealed between Ts' education and their perceptions as well as culture-based practices.
Smakova & Paulsrud	2020	Kazakhstan	Quantitative	A mismatch was revealed between EFL Ts' positive attitudes as well as beliefs and the incorporation of culture learning practices in the EFL classroom with internal and external factors possibly affecting them.
Cirpan & Sabuncuoglu	2020	Turkey	Mixed methods	Culture teaching focuses mainly on factual cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries and its implementation depends on how frequently it is encountered in textbooks.
Petosi & Karras	2020	Greece	Quantitative	EFL Ts deeply understand the interconnection between culture and language and prioritize its equal inclusion in their teaching.

Ghavamnia	2020	Iran	Mixed methods	Language teaching was prioritized over culture in the Ts instructional practices, despite their positive claims and attitudes of culture teaching in ELT.
Phuong	2020	Vietnam	Qualitative	EFL Ts adopted a positive stance towards cultural teaching in the teaching of English, recognized its potential for the EFL classroom and attempted to engage their ls in cross-cultural learning.
Sobkowiak	2021	Poland	Qualitative	Contradicting findings between Ts' actual practices and their mentioned positive stance of including an intercultural approach to English teaching.
Anggraini, Hidayah, Edy & Ariani	2021	Indonesia	Mixed methods	EFL Ts expressed their negative attitudes towards the inclusion of cultural teaching in the teaching of English, considering it a complex, confusing, unnecessary and rather difficult concept to apply in the EFL classroom, which signifies their lack of intercultural awareness and cognition.
Rohmani & Andriyanti	2022	Indonesia	Mixed methods	Ts' positive views of culture teaching were portrayed in their actual teaching practices.
Barebzi	2021	Morocco	Quantitative	Correlation between Ts' perceptions of culture and the frequency of its incorporation as well as promotion of ICC in their EFL classes.
Taşdemir & Gürbüz	2021	Turkey	Mixed methods	Culture teaching played a subordinate role to linguistic development and practice due to different constraints that impede its effective implementation.
Bon	2022	Cambodia	Mixed methods	Ts showed great appreciation of integrating culture teaching in the EFL context, but failed to systematically incorporate it due to various obstacles they encounter.
Salih & Omar	2022	Oman	Mixed methods	Ts expressed contradicting views on culturally-responsive teaching in ELT,

				exhibited inadequate intercultural cognition and hesitance towards its regular integration in their teaching contexts.
Tavassoli & Ghamoushi	2023	Iran	Mixed methods	EFL Ts were positively inclined toward culture teaching in ELT, but had limited knowledge on interculturality, which in-practice was included only when it was mentioned in the textbooks.
Qian	2023	China	Mixed methods	EFL Ts hold positive perspectives of integrating culture in ELT, but they lack theoretical background on the concept, its principles as well as its implicit integration in the teaching of English.
Onursoy & Zaimoğlu	2024	Turkey	Mixed methods	Intercultural communicative language teaching still remains a challenge for Ts, despite advocating its integration, due to constraints by the curriculum or their limited intercultural awareness.
Ning & Soekarno	2024	Malaysia	Qualitative	EFL Ts' positive perspectives and knowledge on culturally-responsive teaching in ELT was illustrated on their actual classroom practices.
Wang, Xu & Zhong	2024	China	Qualitative	EFL Ts' lack of knowledge on culture teaching objectives, principles and practices for the EFL classroom, inhibited its effective implementation, regardless of Ts' favorable disposition.