

# 英语人才跨文化 交际能力研究



刘 涵 著

A Study on  
Chinese English  
Majors' Interculture  
Communication  
Competence



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## 内容简介

本书从定性和定量两个角度研究了我国英语专业大学生的跨文化交际能力, 对影响跨文化交际能力的各要素之间的关系进行了分析和总结, 可为我国高校英语专业教学提供一定的借鉴。

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刘涵 著

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## PREFACE

This book is based upon my Ph. D. thesis passed with excellence in the year 2014 when I was in Malaysia. The following topics will be briefly covered in this preface: significance of the book, research objectives of the book, organizations of the chapters, and my gratitude to the people who helped me in finishing the book.

Firstly, the significance of the book. It is well known that people of different cultural backgrounds are now living in a world that is highly interdependent and globalized. Therefore, Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) becomes an everyday necessity for a qualified citizen living in this global village. And this is particularly true for our Chinese English majors, because they are facing the challenge of pushing our country to a newer and higher position where we Chinese people are creating and sharing together with other nations the experiences and fruits of the new human civilization. This book answers the call for cultivating a new generation of young Chinese English majors to fulfill this task.

Secondly, the research objectives of the book. Based upon the aforementioned rationale, this book sets out to investigate the relationships between the three dimensions of Chinese English majors' ICC; to examine the relationships between the factors within the dimensions of their ICC; to identify the factors that may influence their ICC development so far as our English teaching is concerned; and to measure the extent to which the factors in our English teaching could possibly influence their ICC development. All these tasks are not easy to do and what this author has accomplished should not be regarded as perfect ends.

Thirdly, the organizations of the chapters. In order to achieve the objectives listed above, this author arranged his book in five chapters. Chapter One focuses on some introductory issues, such as the research questions, the significance of the study, the definitions of the key terms, etc. Chapter Two of the book deals with the most relevant literature. Both Chinese and English literature is collected, interpreted, analyzed, and evaluated. Chapter Three introduces the methodology employed in this book – a mixed method in which the qualitative and quantitative methods are combined to answer the research questions. Chapter Four lists the results and findings of the research and Chapter Five discusses the findings and draws conclusions.

Lastly, in this preface, I should express my deepest gratitude to the people who

have ever helped me in the publication of the book. These people are: my supervisor, Associate Professor, Dr. Salasih Che Lah from the University of Science of Malaysia; my dear colleagues from Hebei University and the editors from the Intellectual Property Publishing House; and my family, who supported me when I was in trouble. It is their selfless help that makes me my thesis finished successfully and my book published on time.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CCWEP: Cross-cultural Writing Exchange Program  
CJFD: Chinese Journal Full-text Database  
CNKI: China National Knowledge Infrastructure  
CSSCI: Chinese Social Science Citation Index  
DMIS: Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity  
HBU: Hebei University  
IAI: Intercultural Awareness Instrument  
IC: Intercultural Communication  
ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Intercultural Communication Competence, Intercultural Competence  
IDI: Intercultural Development Inventory  
IES: Intercultural Effectiveness Scale  
ISS: Intercultural Sensitivity Scale  
SIFIT: Scale of Influencing Factors of ICC in TEFL  
TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language  
TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language  
TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages  
USM: Universiti Sains Malaysia

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

It is necessary to introduce the most important background information about this research at the very beginning of the book. In this section, the following topics are covered: firstly, what are intercultural communication (IC) and intercultural communication competence (ICC)? Secondly, what is the relationship between teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and ICC? Thirdly, what is the current situation of ICC studies and TEFL in China?

### 1.1.1 IC and ICC

As the development of internationalization and globalization, people of different cultural backgrounds are now living in this world of global village, and one of the most frequently asked questions is “how could people communicate successfully when they do not share the same or similar cultural origins?”

IC “occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture . . . (it) is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event” (Samovar & Porter, 2000: 48). Following subjects are the most often examined ones in IC studies: conceptualization of culture, communication, and intercultural communication; perception (cultural values, world views, social organizations); communicative competence (verbal and nonverbal processes); and intercultural application (intercultural adaptation, intercultural training, and ICC) (Fantini, 1997; Samovar & Porter, 2003).

ICC refers to “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Dear-dorff, 2004: 194). It is one of the important research fields in IC studies. ICC studies are highly interdisciplinary in nature—linguistics, education, communication, cultural anthropology, psychology and sociology, all contribute to its development. Existing literature shows that ICC is basically composed of three major components: knowledge, attitudes, and skills—representing the cognitive, attitudinal/affective, and behavioral

dimensions of ICC, respectively (Byram, 1997; G. Chen & Starosta, 1998; Fantini, 2000a; Lussier, 2009b).

Various theoretical models have been developed to define and describe ICC in the past years. G. Chen's model (G. Chen, 2009a) is one of the most influential and well-accepted ones, in which there are three major dimensions of ICC—intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural effectiveness. And from each of these dimensions (except for intercultural awareness), a few factors are extracted based on their theoretical conceptualization of the ICC components and the scales composed accordingly (G. Chen & Starosta, 2000; Portalla & Chen, 2009). In this study, the relationships between the ICC dimensions and those between the factors in the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of ICC are examined on the basis of G. Chen's theoretical model.

### 1.1.2 TEFL and ICC

To be a “fluent fool”, as Bennett (1997) puts it, is more dangerous than to be the ones who could not speak English fluently while better understand the social and cultural indicators of IC, because the more fluent he/she is in speaking a certain foreign language the more likely he himself as well as others will overestimate his ability to handle an intercultural situation, while in fact, he/she could be rather ignorant of the values, beliefs and customs of the person who speaks this language, and thus brings failure or even disaster to the actual communication.

So language and culture are interrelated. Language acquisition and culture learning are interrelated. TEFL and the development of ICC are interrelated. In order to make it clear the relationship between TEFL and ICC, let us take a brief look at the developmental history of the aim of TEFL.

The aim of TEFL has changed over the years. It is linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1965), stressing the correct mastery of a foreign language. Then it is communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), stressing some sociolinguistic skills and the appropriate expression in communication. TEFL, under the guidance of communicative competence theory, takes the native speaker as the model (Byram, 1997; Cook, 1999). Now, however, as the development of internationalization and globalization, English is becoming a lingua franca and different Englishes are being used all around the world. As a result, English has become a bridge between different cultures—a bridge between native speakers and native speakers, native speakers and non-native speakers, non-native speakers and non-native speakers. Therefore, an English language learner is now

expected to become a mediator or “intercultural speaker” between different cultures. An “intercultural speaker” is someone who “mediates between two or more cultural identifications. She/He is someone who crosses frontiers and to some extent is a specialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values” (Byram & Zarate, 1997: 11). As a result, the ultimate purpose of TEFL has changed from communicative competence to ICC, since “accommodation, reflection and mediation skills” are objectives both in English as international language status and in theoretical models of ICC (Byram, 1997; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001; G. Chen & Starosta, 1998; Mete, 2009; H. Zhang, 2007).

There are three components of ICC: knowledge, attitudes and skills, as has been mentioned above, and this is also a well-established classification in light of the classical taxonomy of educational objectives developed by Bloom and his colleagues (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1964). So it is crucial for us to investigate the factors in TEFL that may bring significant influence upon students’ ICC, if we want to develop students’ ICC in English language learning programs.

### 1.1.3 ICC Studies and TEFL in China

ICC could be compared to the fruit in the tree of IC. It is one of the most important and popular research fields in IC as well as teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). But in China, ICC studies, as well as IC studies, have been in a marginalized position and ICC researchers are predominantly foreign language teachers in colleges and universities, even though ICC is so interdisciplinary a field of research. According to Peng (2010), IC has not become a mainstream academic research field in China. Only 13.5% of all the published papers concerning IC during 2000 and 2010 are included in Chinese Social Science Citation Index (CSSCI), with the rest of the papers published in those unknown or non-academic journals. Another problem with IC studies in China is that empirical study is very rare. According to W. Hu (2006a), of all the IC research papers included in Chinese Journal Full-text Database (CJFD), only 5.6% could be identified as papers of empirical study. As for ICC studies, this researcher has not even found any review articles discussing its situation in China.

Next, let us take a look at the overall situation of TEFL in China. English is taught as a foreign language in China, so called TEFL. English is neither native language (as in the United Kingdom and the United States of America) nor second language (as in Malaysia and India). It is taught for the purposes of traveling in foreign countries; doing business with foreigners; translating literary, science and technology works into

Chinese or *vice versa* and conducting all kinds of international and diplomatic activities. It is not a working language employed in workplaces except in Sino-foreign joint ventures or wholly foreign-owned companies. In daily life, one could live comfortably without being able to read, write or speak English. On the whole, one could survive without English in China. While in countries where English is taught as a second language (the so-called TESL—teaching English as a second language), as in India and Malaysia, the situation is quite different. Besides the aforementioned purposes for TEFL countries, people in these TESL countries learn English mostly for the convenience, even the survival in their daily lives. In these countries, English is used as an official language. People use English in government, in business, in media as well as in schools of different stages.

Kachru's (1992) concentric circles could best illustrate China's status in English-speaking communities comparing with other countries (see Figure 1.1).

In English language learning classrooms of China, TEFL is still dominantly teacher-centered, textbook-based and exam-oriented. In primary schools, where English teaching begins from Grade 3 and lasts for four years, there are not enough qualified English teachers at all—only a small number of them graduate from colleges or universities majoring in English. In middle schools (six grades altogether), including both junior and senior middle schools, teachers are busy with basic language proficiency teaching and assessment—their main focus of English teaching is grammar and vocabulary with the main purpose of pushing the students pass the exams of various kinds and levels.

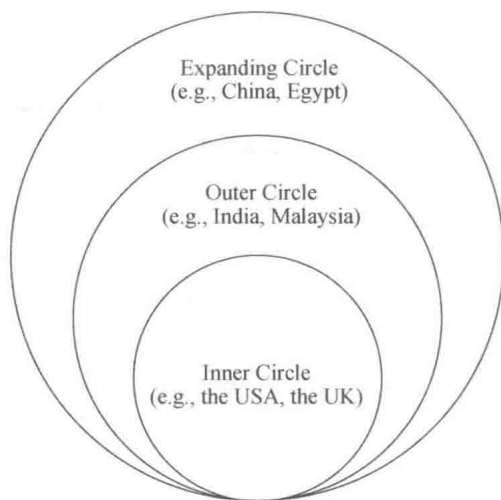


Figure 1.1 Concentric Circles of English

Source: Kachru, 1992.

However, the situation in colleges is a little bit different from that in primary and middle schools. Firstly, most of the teachers are postgraduates majoring in English with either Master's or Doctor's degree. Therefore, they are supposed to be qualified English teachers both linguistically and interculturally. Secondly, students are no longer pressured so much by exams as they are in primary and middle schools, even though exams still remain. In fact, they feel much freer to do what they are interested in and what seems to be important to them in language learning. This is even more the case for English majors in colleges and universities, and this situation partially accounts for the choosing English majors as the participants in this research.

China has made great progress in the past thirty years in her English language education as the consequence of her open-door policy towards the outside world and the economic development. But as for ICC, neither English instructors nor education administrators at different levels pay enough attention to it. As this researcher has argued, ICC should be the ultimate purpose of TEFL, but what makes the scene gloomy and blurry is that ICC has not gained its due attention and English majors in China are graduating without sufficient ICC. Very few empirical studies have ever been done in China to investigate the ICC components and the factors in TEFL that may influence students' ICC development. So in this research, the author this to be the title of his book: A study on Chinese English Major's Interculture Communication Competence.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

For years, ICC theoretical models have been developed in a large number. But the number of instruments measuring ICC based upon these models is quite small, and still less is the number of empirical studies done to examine the relationships between the components of ICC and those between the factors that are extracted from these components. Existing literature has been describing the relationships between the components of ICC in a very general and ambiguous manner—they are “interrelated” “interdependent”, etc. (Bennett, 1986, 1993; Byram, 1997; G. Chen & Starosta, 1998; G. Chen & Starosta, 2000; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2000a; Lussier, 2009b).

G. Chen (2009a) has put forward his own theoretical model of ICC. Moreover, he himself, or together with his fellow scholars, have developed three instruments measuring the components in his ICC model, and two of the instruments have been validated by using American respondents (G. Chen, 1995; G. Chen & Starosta, 2000; Portalla, Chen, 2009). But in China, very few empirical studies have ever been done

to investigate the components of ICC (Guan, 2005; W. Hu, 2005, 2006a; Peng, 2005a, 2010) and no research has been done on the relationships between the ICC components and those between factors in the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of ICC based upon G. Chen's model by using Chinese English majors as respondents.

As we all know, TEFL and the development of students' ICC are supposed to be closely related. And most of the literature just takes it for granted that TEFL could and should improve students' ICC performance. For example, Alptekin (2002) casts doubt upon the validity of the pedagogic model that is based upon native-speaker notion of communicative competence, and he believes that ICC should become the aim of TEFL. His research is very illuminating in that we are informed that communicative competence is no longer the ultimate purpose of learning a foreign language, but the problem with such researches as this one is that they fail to provide us sufficient evidence to show what are the factors in TEFL that may influence students' ICC performance and the extent to which these factors could possibly undermine students' culture learning on the first place. Therefore, empirical studies done to achieve these two goals are in great need.

Based upon the aforementioned rationale, this researcher identifies two problems in this research: one is that the relationships between the components of ICC and those between the factors in attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of ICC are still unclear against Chinese cultural background; the other is that the factors in TEFL influencing Chinese English majors' ICC development and the degree to which these factors may influence Chinese English majors' ICC development are still unknown.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

Based upon the problems identified, the overall objectives of this research are to find, firstly, what are the relationships between the components of ICC and those between the factors in the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of ICC; secondly, what are the factors and to what extent do the factors in TEFL that may bring influence upon Chinese English majors' culture learning. They could be split up into the followings:

(1) To investigate the relationships between the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of Chinese English majors' ICC;

(2) To examine the relationships between the factors in the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of Chinese English majors' ICC;

(3) To identify the factors in TEFL that may influence Chinese English majors' ICC development;

(4) To investigate the degree to which the factors in TEFL influence Chinese English majors' ICC development.

## 1.4 Research Questions

This research went through three stages: firstly, a pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the instruments employed in this research, so that subsequent modification and improvement could be made; secondly, this researcher carried out a survey using the aforementioned, revised instruments to investigate Chinese English majors' ICC and its influencing factors in TEFL. At the last stage, data analyses were performed, and the quantitative and qualitative results were summarized, triangulated, and discussed.

According to the aforementioned research objectives and stages, the following research questions are asked:

Question 1: What are the relationships between the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions of Chinese English majors' ICC?

Question 2: What are the relationships between factors in the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of Chinese English majors' ICC?

Question 3: What are the factors in TEFL that may influence Chinese English majors' ICC development?

Question 4: To what extent do the factors in TEFL influence Chinese English majors' ICC development?

## 1.5 Scope of the Study

This study lasted for about three years from July 2010 to July 2013, and was conducted in two countries—Malaysia and China. During the first year, the author stayed in USM, Malaysia to do library research and finished the research proposal. In the second year, this researcher stayed in China and did field work—to collect both quantitative and qualitative data in Hebei University (HBU), China. In the third year, this researcher returned to USM, Malaysia, analyzing the data collected, and finishing writing the book.

The relevant literature in this study is collected both in Malaysia and China. In Malaysia, the literature collected is written in English and is found either the library of USM or online databases; in China, the literature is predominantly Chinese books and journal articles found in the library of HBU or the online database of CJFD and CSSCI.

This research mainly covers the literature and publications over the recent ten years with some other earlier works that are either classical or influential.

Participants in this study are the English majors and teachers of the English Department in the College of Foreign Languages of HBU in China. The total number of the students who take part in the main study is 195, and within this sampling frame, eight students are sampled to take part in the semi-structured interviews. Moreover, two teachers in the English Department are also chosen to be interviewed. This student population is highly homogeneous and highly representative—representing the English majors in China.

As is shown in the research questions, there are two major areas that this researcher wants to explore in this study: one is the investigation of the relationships between the three dimensions of ICC and those between the factors in the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of ICC; the other is the examination of the factors in TEFL that may exert influence upon Chinese English majors' ICC development.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically.

Firstly, it is theoretically significant.

As the author has mentioned, the theoretical investigation in the field of ICC is far from enough and satisfactory in China. According to one research done by Peng (2005a), of the 1109 articles concerning intercultural studies, published in academic journals during Jan. 1994 and Dec. 2003, only four articles directly address intercultural theories—that is 0.36%. Peng (2005a) says that the studies built upon sound theories are very rare, and most of the theoretical studies are merely introduction, evaluation and translation of western theories. Peng (2006b, 2007a, 2007b) himself investigated certain dimensions of ICC and the relationships between factors in these dimensions, but unfortunately, the questionnaires used in his studies were not piloted and it was still unknown whether they were feasible against Chinese cultural background or not. Therefore, in this book, the theoretical investigation of the relationships between the components of ICC and those between factors of the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of ICC by using Chinese English majors as respondents is extremely significant, theoretically speaking.

ICC theories have been explored quite deeply and thoroughly in the West in the past twenty years. But the endeavor to do empirical studies by using those theories is