Creating Classroom-Based Cross-Cultural Experiential Learning in EFL

Kai-Li Liu

Abstract
Approaches to intercultural teaching and learning have widely recommended integrating intercultural components into courses, with the idea of fostering students’ understanding of other cultures. To enrich the literature on intercultural language education and to make a contribution to the development of effective ways of promoting language and culture learning, this study integrated experiential learning into an English as a foreign language (EFL) class of 33 non-English majors. This was achieved by inviting international student guest speakers to promote language and culture learning. The effects of this experiential learning were then examined using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative and quantitative data in this study demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach for intercultural experiential learning. It also emphasized the importance of a reflective awareness of language use and cultural elements in intercultural settings. Evidence of students’ progress in the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) was found. Based on these results, suggestions for teaching and future research are also provided.

Key Words: experiential learning, intercultural communicative competence, EFL

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization is breaking down barriers and borders with vast implications for education. This is particularly true in English language teaching (ELT) as languages are themselves transformed by this process. Englishes used in the expanding circle (Kachru, 1992) have been reported to be the fastest growing in the world, and in the twenty-first century, non-native speakers (NNS) of English have come to significantly outnumber native speakers (NS) (Gnutzmann, 2000; Graddol, 1999). This indicates many verbal exchanges in which English is used as a foreign or second language involve exclusively non-native users of English. For many English learners, the main purpose of learning English is to communicate with people around the world, the majority of whom are NNS. In traditional ELT, learners follow the NS norms and standards, trying to understand the rules and usages of the language set by NS. Target language-based communicative competence has been the desired outcome of language learning, and communicative teaching approaches, mainly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), have been used to achieve this goal. As such, target language culture and NS are elements crucial to the success of the teaching model. However, under a global English paradigm, this NS model seems unrealistic (Alptekin, 2002; Wright, 2010). The rising evidence against communicative competence, or CLT, has sent practitioners searching in other directions to cope with globalization. Educators and curriculum guides around the world stress the need for incorporating cultural studies into foreign language curricula to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication (Alptekin, 2002; Baker, 2011; Byram, 1997; Chlopek, 2008; House, 2012; Young & Sachdev, 2011). This implies that the goal of language learning is shifting from its focus of being a NS to one of being an intercultural person. Accordingly, the focus of language teaching is shifting from developing one’s own communicative competence to developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

Foreign language classes are the most important form of access to the development of intercultural competence, which functions as the foundation for future intercultural experiences. However, this can prove problematic for a number of reasons. As Chlopek (2008), Krieger (2005), and Yeh (2009) noted, the lack of experiential learning in a culturally homogeneous classroom can be a difficulty for teachers. Moreover, a lack of appropriate cultural materials is another issue hindering the development of ICC. Chao (2011) notes a lack of diverse cultural content in English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks can
make classroom practice of intercultural competence difficult. This challenge is also mentioned in Cheng’s (2012) study on the influence of college EFL teachers’ understandings of intercultural competence on their self-reported pedagogical practices in Taiwan. In Korea, Lee (2009) investigated the aspects of culture included in eleven EFL conversation textbooks used in Korea. The result revealed a strong tendency to include big “C” target-culture learning, such as facts and statistics in the fields of arts, history and customs related to the USA, without any explication of the small “c” domain of a target culture.

In the development of ICC, Byram (1997) has pointed out that classroom-based training is as important as experiential learning. Intercultural competence develops gradually over time through both learning in the classroom and learning from the real world. Classroom-based training enables learners to acquire knowledge concerning other cultures and the process of communication, and to reflect on their own practice under the teacher’s guidance. In contrast, intercultural learning through participation in intercultural exchanges or study abroad programs can increase knowledge, improve language fluency, develop sensitivity to cultural difference and increase the efficacy of the learning experience. Participants also develop greater intercultural networks and friendships with people from different cultural backgrounds (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Hua, 2014; Liu, 2013, 2016).

While learners who have immersion experiences gain more intercultural benefits, these study abroad programs are not equally available or taken advantage of by all students. Instead, many students are forced to rely on classroom teaching to develop their intercultural competence. However, this is problematic due to the lack of diverse cultural materials in textbooks and the shortage of experiential opportunities to facilitate intercultural language teaching in a culturally homogeneous classroom. To address these problems, the researcher created classroom-based cross-cultural experiential learning by inviting foreign student speakers of different nationalities to the English classroom to engage with non-English major students. It was hoped this would stimulate students’ interest in culture learning and enhance their intercultural awareness. To evaluate the effectiveness of this course, two research questions were answered:

(1) What are students’ perceptions of the English course incorporating guest speakers as a form of cross-cultural experiential learning in the classroom?

(2) What are students’ perceptions of their progress towards the development of ICC through this cross-cultural experiential learning in the English class?
The study was designed to make a contribution to the search for effective ways of teaching language and culture. It is envisaged that it will help shed light on how to integrate cultural elements into English classes and create experiential learning in the classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ICC in Language Education

The rise of English as a global language is prompting a paradigm shift for ELT. In traditional ELT, learners follow the NS norms and standards, trying to understand the rules and usages of the language set by NS. In contrast, under a global English paradigm, the importance of intercultural comprehension outweighs that of grammatical correctness and standard forms of the language. A new pedagogic model is therefore urgently needed to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication. If EFL learners are to become successful intercultural communicators, it is essential they develop ICC.

Many definitions of intercultural competency have been developed over the last few decades (Chen & Starosta, 2006; Jandt, 2007; Taylor, 1994). As a foreign language education specialist, Byram (1997) highlights the importance of the language component in understandings of intercultural competency, as language is a core element in intercultural communication where most interactions involve a second language. He prefers to distinguish between intercultural competence and ICC. For Byram (1997), intercultural competence refers to the skills and abilities that individuals draw on to interact in their native language with people from another culture. By contrast, ICC refers to the ability of individuals to interact successfully across cultures while using a second language. Thus, ICC is broadly recognized as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures in a second language. Many definitions of ICC emphasize that it incorporates four dimensions: knowledge, attitude, skills, and behaviors (Alred & Byram, 2002; Byram, 1997; Heyward, 2002; Hiller & Wozniak, 2009; Lustig & Koester, 2006). A person who has ICC can develop relationships with people from different cultures, solve complicated conflicts by crossing the barriers that arise as a result of cultural differences, and improve their ability to do business with counterparts from different cultures (Huang, Rayner, & Zhuang, 2003).

Building on his understanding of ICC, Byram (1997) has devised a model of ICC which has had a profound impact on the teaching of
second or foreign languages. His conceptual framework draws attention to the need to integrate culture into second language teaching and learning in terms of the following five components:

1. Attitudes: Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own

2. Knowledge: Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

3. Skill of discovery and interaction: Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

4. Skill of interpreting and relating: Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own culture.

5. Critical awareness/political education: Ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria the perspectives, practices and products of one’s own and other cultures and countries.

**Intercultural Approaches: Experiential Learning**

Under recently developed intercultural approaches, successful teaching of international communication implies the importance of incorporating the teaching of the intercultural dimension in language curricula. This can be effectively achieved through the application of experiential learning. Experiential learning aims at integrating linguistic and learning theories into a comprehensive and internally consistent educational approach to language teaching. As Kohonen (1992, 2001) stated, experiences of language, communication, culture and personal learning processes are essential for foreign language learning. Byram (1997) has also emphasized the value of integrating experiential learning in the curricula for the development of ICC.

Reflection plays an important role in experiential learning. Students need to gain knowledge of world cultures, and must develop the ability to compare their native culture to other cultures, to evaluate and interpret the results of such comparisons, and to apply this knowledge in communication. This intercultural approach thus emphasizes the importance of a reflective awareness of language use and cultural elements in intercultural settings (Kohonen, 1992, 2001).

Experiential learning has gained popularity in various settings of informal learning, such as international exchanges and internships.
However, the principles and practices can also be used in formal, classroom-based learning contexts. For instance, computer mediated communication via e-mails has been investigated as a means for the integration of culture into the language classroom (Cifuentes & Shih, 2001; Ke, 2011; Mete, 2011). Ke (2011) and Mete (2011) collaboratively conducted a study of Taiwanese and Turkish students who communicated via e-mail. The study concluded that e-mail exchange can be used as a valuable pedagogical tool for the development of intercultural competence among university students. Cifuentes and Shih (2001) also conducted a study of Taiwanese and American students who communicated via e-mail. They found the students benefited from the e-mail exchange not only in terms of linguistic skills but also in terms of cultural awareness, with the added benefit of improving their motivation (Cifuentes & Shih, 2001).

In addition to email, the use of ethnographic interviews in foreign language programs is also considered an effective means of facilitating intercultural/interpersonal communication and understanding. Many studies have shown positive outcomes of the use of this technique in terms of the development of intercultural competence, active listening practice, and increased awareness and understanding of learners’ own culture and confidence in using English (Bateman, 2002; Hsu, 2014; Su, 2008; Wu, 2016).

Numerous educators also advocate using films as learning materials in intercultural education (Chao, 2013; Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010; Roell, 2010). Several benefits of this have been pointed out. Films can easily gain the interest of learners and stimulate learners’ curiosity about different cultures, allowing them to quickly acquire cultural information, and expose learners to other cultures and different languages or English accents without leaving their classrooms (Bueno, 2009; Roell, 2010; Verluyten, 2007). Films can also provide valuable exercises in interpreting cultural features and developing intercultural awareness (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Chen, 2010).

Despite these useful resources, there is still a need to find further ways to integrate intercultural education into the formal language classroom. There are many other opportunities for experiential learning in a formal classroom setting that can be explored. This is particularly important given the changing nature of intercultural language education in a world under transformation by globalization.

**Challenges in Intercultural Language Education for EFL**

Approaches to intercultural teaching and learning have been widely proposed to integrate intercultural components into courses,
with the idea of fostering students’ perspectives about other cultures. Traditionally, British or American cultures have served as the target cultures for EFL curricula, but this is insufficient given the rise of English as a language of global communication. Under the paradigm of English as a lingua franca, McKay (2002) suggested that three types of cultures should be integrated into teaching materials. They are: local cultures—learners’ cultures, target cultures—Inner-Circle countries, and international target cultures—a mixture of Inner- and Outer-Circle countries and learners’ cultures, referred to as “blended cultures” (Brown, 2012). In teaching English as an international language (EIL), blended cultures provide ideal content for cross-cultural education because they provide various subjects for the discussion of everyday issues, with English as a common medium of expression.

Many syllabi and guidelines refer to the importance of cultural learning, and more recently intercultural competence, but there is still a lack of good practice. According to many studies, one challenge for language teachers who rely on using textbooks is the lack of diverse cultural content in textbooks (Chao, 2011; Cheng, 2012; Lee, 2009; Liu, Zhang, & Yin, 2014; Wu, 2010; Yuen, 2011). With the rising interest in culture and the development of intercultural approaches in language teaching, many scholars have investigated the cultural content in EFL textbooks, and have found there is still much space for improvement. For instance, Cheng (2012) conducted a survey of the influence of college EFL teachers’ understandings of intercultural competence on their self-reported pedagogical practices in Taiwan. The results of textbook analysis in her study revealed several concerns: (1) objective Western cultural content, (2) dominance of American culture and values, (3) emphasis on linguistic skills, and (4) no cultural self-awareness. Wu (2010) investigated the cultural content in the textbook College English, published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press in 2001. The results suggested that more passages should reflect the culture of other English speaking communities, international cultures should be included, and content relating to Chinese culture should also be increased. In addition, comparisons and contrasts between different cultures should be added.

Another challenge in an EFL class is that students are usually monolingual, and they learn English while living in their own country. They have little access to world cultures and therefore a limited ability to become culturally competent. Thus dealing with cross-cultural issues and providing cross-cultural training to develop intercommunicative competence has been a challenge (Chlopek, 2008; Krieger 2005; Yeh, 2009), especially when teaching materials are not suitable or are inadequate.
As can clearly be seen, while intercultural competence is becoming an ever more important aspect of EFL education, there are major deficiencies in classroom teaching resources that afford students the opportunity of experiential learning of intercultural competence. It is this deficiency that this study seeks to help address.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study included 33 college-level non-English majors in an intermediate level Freshman English course at a private university in northern Taiwan. Level placement for English courses was arranged based on students’ English scores from the College Entrance Exam of 2015, which produced scores on a scale ranging from 0 to 15. Intermediate level Freshmen English students scored from 9 to 11 in this exam. According to Ministry of Education (MOE) reports, participants in this examination with English scores from 9 to 11 accounted for between 30 to 48 percent of the total test-taking population of 143,883. All the participants were students from the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. The cross-cultural experiential learning experiment was conducted in the spring semester of 2016.

Course Design

Course description. This one-semester study was integrated into the teaching program as part of a three-hour Freshman English class, in which students met for two hours for reading and writing skills every Tuesday, with another hour for speaking and listening skills every Friday of the same week. To make teaching and learning more effective, the university later decided to reschedule the one-hour study session on Friday as a fortnightly two-hour study session, so students met for speaking and listening every other week instead. There was one holiday on Friday during the period of the study. Thus the length of this cross-cultural experiential learning course was 8 weeks. The aim of this classroom-based cross-cultural experiential learning was to foster culture and language learning and to trigger students into reflecting on their own culture through direct contact with foreign guest speakers invited to the classroom. Students were provided with opportunities for improving listening and speaking skills required for communication through interaction with the guest speakers, gained knowledge of foreign cultures, and were guided to reflect on their own practice.

Guest speakers. Six international students studying in Taiwan volunteered to be guest speakers in response to invitations made by the
instructor. The six guest speakers, four females and two males, came from Japan, the Czech Republic, Germany, Malaysia, the US and Turkey respectively. The instructor met the six guest speakers at the beginning of the semester and provided them with details and support to help them prepare for their presentations. Two guest speakers visited the class each time. The guest speakers introduced themselves and their cultures using power point presentations in week 3, week 5 and week 8 of the course. They were also asked to address the topic discussed by the Taiwanese students in the previous week so that they could prepare and join the discussion of this topic in their presentation sessions.

Course content and classroom procedures. The course content included two main components: topic-based discussion guided by the teacher (week 2, 4, 6, 7), and power point presentations (week 3, 5, 8) by both the 33 Taiwanese students divided into 6 groups and international guest speakers. There were three topic-based discussions, on stereotypes, higher education and crossing cultures respectively. The film, *Outsourced* (2006), which details the experiences of an American working in India, was also added as a catalyst to introduce the third topic of crossing cultures. Students previewed the film before class and discussed it in class the following week. The topics and the film were decided after consideration of a variety of factors, including: the potential for developing intercultural competence, the suitability of the language level for freshmen, students’ English proficiency, students’ interest, and the difficulty of the concepts. For each discussion, students received reading materials from the instructor and were also required to conduct web-based research related to the topic. Taking the second topic of higher education as an example, in the first class, materials such as university brochures and videos in English were used to build up related vocabulary, and websites on Study in Taiwan were explored for discussion. In the following class, students then compared and contrasted their own education system with the guest speakers’ education systems. Thus the topic-based discussions served as a springboard for intercultural exchanges by sharing the knowledge of each topic and personal experience in the subsequent presentation sessions.

For each presentation session (week 3, 5, 8), two guests and two groups of local students presented on topics related to their own cultures, with the goal of expanding cultural knowledge and looking for and recognizing cultural differences. Both local and foreign students were allowed to decide the cultural topics they were interested in sharing, but they were required to be related to the topics discussed under the teacher’s guidance. For instance, the American guest shared
details of his college life in the Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. The German student talked about the refugee issue in Germany and asked Taiwanese students’ opinions on this issue. The groups of Taiwanese students shared aspects of Taiwanese culture, such as taboos in Taiwan, the story of local food, such as pineapple cakes, and high school life in Taiwan. One group reported on a cultural issue about conflicts between Taiwanese employers and Indonesian caregivers as an example to show the importance of showing respect to others. At the end of each presentation, there was a Q&A session. Local students also wrote a reflection paper at the end of each presentation session. They were allowed to complete the reflection paper at home and were required to submit it to the instructor in the next discussion session. Table 1 shows the course outline and procedures.

Data Collection and Analysis

To answer the first research question regarding students’ perception of this course, data was collected from an evaluation questionnaire (See Appendix A). Questions, including both open (Q2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9) and closed (Q1, 5) questions, were designed to establish the degree of satisfaction of students in terms of the overall course, teaching methods, activities, guest speakers, learning outcomes, motivation, and interaction experience. The questionnaire was distributed to the students at the end of the course.

For the second research question, two types of data were collected: guided reflection papers (See Appendix B), and an ICC questionnaire (See Appendix C) consisting of eight 5-point Likert-scale questions based on that used in Mete’s study (2011). The eight questions were based on Byram’s intercultural communication model and measured students’ progress in three components of ICC: knowledge, skill and

Table 1
Course Outline and Classroom Procedures

1. Orientation
2. Discussion topic 1: Stereotypes
3. Presentations and intercultural exchange (reflection paper 1)
4. Discussion topic 2: Higher education
5. Presentations and intercultural exchange (reflection paper 2)
6. Discussion topic 3: Crossing cultures (work/travel abroad) assignment:
   Watching a film: *Outsourced* (reflection paper 3)
7. Discussion: The film: *Outsourced*
8. Presentations and intercultural exchange (reflection paper 4)
attitude. Guided reflection papers with seven questions allowing students to reflect on each presentation and intercultural exchange session were collected at the end of each presentation session. These, together with the results of the ICC questionnaire completed at the end of the course, were used to look for evidence of the development of intercultural competence. Students were allowed to write reflection papers in Chinese. The researcher and another English/Chinese translation expert worked together to translate these.

For data analysis, statistical analysis was conducted on the data collected from the closed questions in the evaluation questionnaire and the ICC questionnaire. Descriptive statistics including the mean, frequency and percentages of responses were calculated.

A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was performed to analyze the data collected from the open questions in the evaluation questionnaire and the reflection papers. All the answers or comments were read thoroughly and repeatedly to code important texts related to the research questions. After this, the coded excerpts were categorized and given the initial themes, which were reviewed continually and revised several times before the final themes were generated.

RESULTS

Participants’ Perceptions of the Course

Overall feeling. The question concerning whether students liked the classroom-based cross-cultural experiential learning of the course showed most participants (79%) agreed or strongly agreed and 7 (20%) participants stated they were not sure, with a mean score of 4.3 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.79. This result indicated overall positive feelings toward the course.

Most and least favorite course elements. All participants indicated that their favorite part in this course was the idea of learning about cultures by inviting international students to act as speakers in the classroom. Most students agreed that this course was much more interesting and dynamic compared to traditional EFL classes. It allowed direct contact with people from different cultures, and students learned something new and heard personal stories from these people, which was very different from simply reading textbooks. Some also mentioned this course helped stimulate their curiosity about other cultures. When asked their least favorite part of the course, nearly 35% of the participants (including all 7 students who stated they were not sure if they like this course) said there were too many activities, like group work, or too much homework to do.
Perceived language and culture learning. The question dealing with how this course helped improve their learning showed over 90% of the participants thought this course could help them increase cultural knowledge and gain a better understanding of differences between their own cultures and foreign cultures. 81% thought it benefited their speaking, 62% thought it benefited their listening, and nearly 70% thought it benefited their presentation skills. This course required listening skills to understand the international speakers and speaking practice for presentations and intercultural exchange. One-third of the students reported listening difficulties occurred because of content relating to unfamiliar topics, such as refugees in Germany and the history of the Czech Republic, and because speakers had slight accents. More than half also indicted that international speakers were much better skilled presenters, and served as good role models for them to follow in the future. The following are representative detailed responses to the questions:

... being able to meet different friends from different parts of the world in the English classroom is such a new experience. I’ve learned many cultures from local people not from reading books. I really enjoy this class although I had to try very hard to understand the speakers. Some topics are difficult to understand, for example, the history of the Czech Republic. (Response, 06/14/2016)

The speakers’ presentations impressed me. They showed us rich contents and speak English so fluently. They were so well prepared. They don’t read the text. Sometimes they tell jokes. This gave our group members some ideas to improve our own presentation. (Response, 06/14/2016)

I gain a lot of knowledge about different cultures and this really broads my horizon. I am interested in the topic of refugees in Europe. In Taiwan, it is just a piece of TV news. It happens far away. I don’t really care about it. But from the German student and Turkish student’s talks, I realize how serious they are looking at this issue. (Response, 06/14/2016)

The best part of this class is we have chances to meet people from cultures I am not so familiar to. For example, I learn something new about cultures of Turkey and the Czech Republic. (Response, 06/14/2016)

Teacher let us to think of one piece of Taiwanese culture and present it to the guests. I think this is a good chance to let more people know Taiwan. Our audiences are not just classmates, but including real guests. We are nervous, but we want to make it better in front of them. (Response, 06/14/2016)

Speaking English in front of people is a challenge for me. But this class gives me a lot of training. I was nervous, but I have more confidence now. I’ve learned some presentation skills. I got positive feedbacks from the teacher, which really means a lot to me. (Response, 06/14/2016)
Perceived English learning motivation. When asked if this course design could increase their English learning motivation, 89% of the participants reported they agreed that this course promoted English learning motivation. Enquiring about the reasons driving them to keep learning brought out a variety of responses. The most mentioned motivation was that they wanted to know about more cultures, meet more friends from different cultures and communicate with them. Some mentioned that the proficiency of the speakers, mostly also English as second language learners, impressed them a lot, which stimulated them to improve their own English. Other responses included understanding the need to improve speaking or listening skills, and the fascination of such a dynamic learning atmosphere. The following are representative further responses:

After this class, I want to improve my speaking and listening abilities so that I can communicate with more foreigners and learn more cultures. (Response, 06/14/2016)
I seldom use English for real communication. The real contact encourages me to speak more. I like this class although we have a lot of assignments. Passing the high-intermediate level is my goal. (Response, 06/14/2016)

Perceived Progress in The Development of ICC

The ICC questionnaire evaluated students’ perceived progress in the development of ICC. The results are summarized in Table 2. Evidence was also gathered from 125 reflection papers (7 students were absent from presentation sessions), and from observations by the teacher of students’ intercultural communication progress to support the ICC questionnaire. The findings identified significant progress in the areas of knowledge, skill and attitude in ICC:

Knowledge. Question 5 and 8 addressed progress in gaining knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction. The average scores for questions 5 and 8 were 4.1 and 4.0 respectively, indicating a rather strong agreement regarding progress in the gaining of knowledge. The reflection data also provided further evidence to support such findings. The following were some excerpts from the reflection papers.

This semester I need to make a report on Syrian’s refugees in another class. But in English class, we have a chance to meet a student from Germany. It’s great to hear what she thinks of this issue and how their government foster integration, such as facilitating access to training and the job market. Many
German students, including her friends, also participate in volunteer work forming initiatives to support or provide guidance to refugees. I think this is a very wonderful experience different from what we learn from reading or watching TV. (Reflection, 04/22/2016)

The only thing I know about Muslim is they don’t eat pork. Today two speakers from Turkey and Malaysia, introducing Ramadan culture to us. It’s hard to understand first because it seems unhealthy. But I’ve learnt the reason why they fast today. It is a time of teaching Muslims how to practice self-discipline, showing empathy for those who are less fortunate and encouraging charitable actions, like donations. From sunrise to sunset, adults don’t eat or drink, except sick people, pregnant women and children. (Reflection, 05/17/2016)

I am happy that Hana, from Czech Republic, is interested in our topic, Jing Gang Shan and asked us some questions about how to visit this place in Taidong. (Reflection, 03/25/2016)

Today I like the topic of Pineapple’s story introduced by my classmates. Pineapple cakes are famous and popular among tourists in Taiwan. But I never know about that. (Reflection, 05/17/2016)

When Muslim students in my class practice Ramadan, we, overseas Chinese, usually don’t eat or drink in front of them to show our respect in school. (Reflection, 05/17/2016)

I have two classmates from Malaysia, but I’ve never tried to know their high school background. There are independent private Chinese-funded schools and state-owned middle and secondary schools in Malaysia. If they want to study in Taiwan, they have to pass the unified exam accredited by Taiwan, or they have to study in Preparatory Programs for Overseas Chinese Students in National Taiwan Normal University before entering universities. (Reflection, 05/17/2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Willingness to communicate</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. See different perspectives</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increase awareness</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increase knowledge about misunderstandings</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Increase knowledge about another culture</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Explain similarity and difference</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Change stereotype</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Search about a different culture</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 33.
Today Anna, from Japan told us about Coming of Age Day, Seijin no Hi (成人の日). There are ceremonies for young women turning 20. Only single women wear traditional kimono to mark the occasion while most young men choose regular suits. When young people reach 20, they have the right to smoke, drink alcohol and marry without permission from their parents. Their voting age is 18, which is lower than that in Taiwan. (Reflection, 03/25/2016)

We are so surprised to know that tulips are also Turkey’s national flower. We used to think tulips are the national flower of Holland. But in fact they are native to Turkey. Each bulbous root grows only one flower symbolizing their belief in Allah as the only God. (Reflection, 03/17/2016)

In the movie, I learn that Holi is a festival of colors in India. People do not work on Holi. They play and smear each other with colors. It is a joyful holiday to welcome the arrival of spring. (Reflection, 05/20/2016)

Attitude. Questions 1, 2, 4 and 7 focused on student’s curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own culture. The four average scores were 4.2, 4.1, 4.1, and 4.0 respectively. The mean scores exceeded the value of 4, indicating significant changes in attitude. The following are some excerpts from the reflection papers.

I used to think people either from Czech Republic or Japan like drinking a lot, but today two speakers from Japan and Czech Republic said they don’t drink at all. I think this is one example of stereotype we have discussed earlier in class. (Reflection, 03/25/2016)

Today’s speaker introduced his country, Turkey. After this class, I realize I have wrong impression of Turkey. I used to think it is a country in the wild desert. But actually its biggest city, Istanbul, is so beautiful. It has magnificent mosques and beautiful art works, such as tulip-shaped tea cup. I like painting, so I am so attracted by their amazing Turkish art technique, Ebru, painting on water. I am so curious how it works. I would like to visit this country and try the painting in the future. (Reflection, 05/17/2016)

I don’t really know much about refugees. Honestly I don’t care about it. Maybe this is because it doesn’t have any impact on us in Taiwan. But Karin, a second-generation immigrant from Cambodia in Germany told us her family story. Her father was a refugee. He fled to Germany with many other Chinese Cambodians during the period of Red Khmer (I don’t understand what Red Khmer means. I guess it is a war). Because of this background, she has a lot of sympathy for the refugees. I think her family story is very touching, making me feel more sympathy for the refugees and understand the problem better. (Reflection, 04/22/2016)

We asked Karin why she came to Taiwan. She told us she used to study in China. Some friends told her about Taiwan. There are a lot of good things
about Taiwan. Therefore, she decided to experience it on her own. It’s very encouraging to me. I want to experience the world too. Hopefully, I can go abroad to study and tell people about Taiwan like these guests. (Reflection, 04/22/2016)

If refugees came to Taiwan, it would be also difficult to come out of best solutions. After all, it will affect job market and our life. Where will they live? There are also more considerations such as cultural conflicts or integration. (Reflection, 04/22/2016)

I enjoyed the movie, *Outsourced*. At the beginning, he didn’t adjust to living and working in India. There are many cultural differences between America and India. He even couldn’t get the burger he wanted. But he changed his attitude toward to his Indian colleagues and culture after he experienced Holi festival. He tried to understand people and appreciate their values. Then everything is different. I think this movie made me understand the importance of being open to different cultures and showing respect. We should not use our values to judge others. (Reflection, 05/20/2016)

**Skills.** Questions 3 and 6 concerned ability to interpret documents or events from another culture, and to explain and relate them to documents and events from one’s own culture. The mean scores were 3.9 and 3.7 respectively, showing a moderate agreement with regard to intercultural awareness by comparing and contrasting one’s own culture and other cultures. Some excerpts supporting these results include:

Japanese students work hard on job hunting when they are juniors; however, most students in Taiwan look for jobs after graduation. ... In Taiwan, our semester begins in September, but it starts in April in Japan. (Reflection, 03/25/2016)

Hana said people in Czech Republic don’t smile as much as Taiwanese, which makes me feel proud and like my own country more. We Taiwanese are really friendly. (Reflection, 03/25/2016)

In Japan, celebrations are held when young people reach 20. In Taiwan, we also have similar ceremonies in some areas, such as Tainan. But the difference is the age. When young people turn to 16, they go to the temple with parents to pray. (Reflection, 03/25/2016)

I am not so sure if there are differences between military colleges in Taiwan and the United States. But today Daniel told us about his military college life in the Citadel by showing his schedule, a video of Recognition Day and photos. One thing similar is the tough physical training. It’s very interesting to know this because their college life is so different from ours. We seem have much more freedom. (Reflection, 04/22/2016)

... being a soldier is his dream since he was a child. But in Taiwan, going to military schools is usually not a priority. (Reflection, 04/22/2016)

American and Indian cultures are very different in communication styles.
They have different values about using time at work. To Todd, his Indian employees are not efficient. They don’t have fixed schedules to get things done. This makes Todd so frustrated. But things start changing after Todd tries to understand them and listen to them. (Reflection, 05/20/2016)

It is inappropriate to ask Americans too personal questions. The guest house landlady asked Todd how old he is and why he doesn’t get married, which made Todd so uncomfortable. (Reflection, 05/20/2016)

English is used differently in America and India; for example, the eraser is called rubber in India. (Reflection, 05/20/2016)

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the study showed that students’ feedback was generally highly positive. The majority of students agreed this course was interesting and provided a novel method to learn about different cultures, making this English class different from traditional classes they had experienced. Students especially appreciated the component of meeting guest speakers in class, and demonstrated this by showing a great deal of passion and enthusiasm. Some expressed their gratitude to the instructor for creating the opportunity to broaden their horizons. They viewed this classroom-based cross-cultural experiential learning as being beneficial to culture learning, speaking, listening and presentation skills. These findings support the findings of previous studies on the development of ICC through experiential learning in various settings of formal (classroom-based) and informal learning (e.g., extracurricular activities) (Liu, 2016; Wu, 2016).

Inviting people from different parts of the world to the classroom for face to face interaction and to share understandings allows students, especially those with little intercultural experience, to use English as a lingua franca. This helps them to understand that English is used globally for communication by people with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students were aware of the challenge this posed when they listened to speakers with different accents from those they were used to and understood this problem had to be overcome.

The guest speakers, who were almost the same age as local students in the class, speak English fluently with a high level of confidence. It is possible that this peer pressure stimulated local students’ motivation towards English learning. Moreover, listening to the guest speakers’ introduction of their own cultures or personal stories was far more interesting for students than reading textbooks or listening to teachers’ lectures.
The results showed that their curiosity and willingness to learn more about other cultures were stimulated. The study also found that bringing in guest speakers with diverse educational backgrounds can provide opportunities to trigger students’ reflection on their learning and performance. Students themselves identified the areas of English proficiency they needed to make more efforts in, and what skills were necessary for a good presenter. These findings support the educational goal of experiential learning, which requires an explicit awareness and understanding of what it is that needs to be learned and why such learning is necessary (Kohonen, 1992; Kolb, 1984).

Another significant finding is students’ increased reflective awareness of cultural elements arising from cross-cultural experiential learning experience. Students’ reflection papers indicated students’ progress in the development of ICC described by Byram (1997). Most students showed an interest in knowing more about other people’s way of life and introducing their own cultures to others. Students expressed more interest and curiosity in cultures that they were not so familiar with, such as Turkish and Islamic culture. Thus, most of them reported the successful acquisition of cultural knowledge. Some students further compared and contrasted the foreign cultures with their own culture. This demonstrated the cultivation of intercultural awareness. Students’ ability to change perspectives and to break down stereotypes was also evidenced in reflection papers. Students’ papers showed that shared feelings could be spread through real personal stories, and consequently, students’ perceptions could change and take on new perspectives.

As for increased skills concerning the intercultural communication process, little evidence relating to this was obtained from their Q&A session. While this may be due to time constraints in the presentation classes preventing Taiwanese students from conversing with non-Taiwanese guest speakers, another explanation for this may relate to students’ learning styles. In general, Taiwanese students are somewhat reticent and hesitate to speak in class. Only a certain few students were active in engaging in conversations with speakers and maintaining short conversations.

However, this course did lend support to the idea of the effectiveness of using films to promote intercultural skills, knowledge, and awareness (Bueno, 2009; Roell, 2010; Verluyten, 2007). Through the film used in the course, most students stated that they were made aware of cross-cultural differences between America and India, such as language use for intercultural communication, and that they gained a greater understanding of the importance of being open and showing respects to other cultures. The walls separating us based on cultural
differences and causing misunderstandings can be torn down only when we open our minds and let other people in.

Although the majority of students showed a positive attitude toward this cross-cultural experiential learning, the instructor encountered some barriers when teaching this course. For example, some students complained there was too much work when writing reflection papers and an overuse of cultural materials. Apart from this, another significant barrier was the lack of conversation between the speakers and the audience due to time constraints and students’ reticence.

To improve the effectiveness of a course incorporating foreign-local student interaction such as the one in this study, some pedagogical suggestions can be offered for the course plans.

First, the instructor needs to consider the factor of student learning styles. As mentioned earlier, most Taiwanese students hesitate to speak out for various reasons, such as personality, lack of confidence, being accustomed to a traditional learning style or being afraid of showing off in front of peers. Thus, in order to foster active engagement and participation, strategies should be adopted to boost students’ self-confidence. For example, less competent students should be encouraged and given extra guidance to help them prepare questions regarding the country of the speaker. In addition, the numbers of speakers and presentations should be also considered for each class so that an adequate amount of time could be allocated for more effective intercultural interchange.

Next, one important element of this course was the topic-based discussions, which served as a springboard for intercultural exchanges by allowing students to share knowledge and personal experience related to each topic in the subsequent presentation sessions. Discussing one’s own culture as a starting point will naturally lead to comparison and contrast with other cultures. When deciding the topics, the instructor may consider the factors of: potential for developing intercultural competence, linguistic skills needed by students, students’ English proficiency, students’ interest, and the difficulty of concepts. In addition, an orientation for students is essential for the success of this type of course. The course outline should be clearly explained to students, ensuring they understand the purpose of this course and the importance of being a responsible learner. The provision of teacher support at every stage of the entire process is also a key factor to ease course implementation.

Last but not least, learning about a culture does not mean accepting that culture. The role of culture is to create learner interest towards the language. Overuse of cultural materials in the language classrooms might decrease the learners’ motivation (McKay, 2000).
CONCLUSION

This study integrated experiential learning into an EFL course by inviting international student guest speakers to promote language and culture learning. It was hoped that this would help form the foundations of students’ ICC for their future intercultural experience. The qualitative and quantitative data in this study demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach for intercultural experiential learning, and emphasized the importance of a reflective awareness of language use and cultural elements in intercultural settings. The findings were also consistent with previous studies of different forms of experiential learning, such as web-based technology (e-mails, videoconference, and blogs) and cross-cultural projects to develop ICC (Bateman, 2002; Bueno, 2009; Chao, 2013; Cifuentes & Shih, 2001; Hsu, 2014; Ke, 2011; Mete, 2011; Roell, 2010; Su, 2008; Verluyten, 2007). This study finds that classroom-based experiential learning by inviting guest speakers to share their cultures with local students was an effective way to foster students’ perspectives concerning other cultures and to promote the use of English for international communication in the real world. This method can also be a supplement to the cultural contents in the EFL textbooks. In intercultural teaching, a language teacher does not need to have experience or be an expert on the world’s many cultures. The teacher’s task is to help learners ask questions, and to interpret answers. In order to incorporate the intercultural dimension into their teaching, language teachers do not necessarily need more knowledge of other countries and cultures; rather the teacher needs skills in promoting an atmosphere in the classroom that allows learners to take risks in their thinking and feelings. Such skills are best developed in practice and in reflection on experience (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

Despite the positive aspects of this course, this study shows it provided limited opportunities for individuals to engage in conversations with guest speakers after the presentations. However, using this framework as a basis may help EFL teachers design courses and introduce more diverse perspectives. This may be enhanced by future research in the following areas: (1) integrating resources resulting from internationalization to create different forms of experiential learning, (2) adding more activities involving engagement, (3) using different forms of assessment, and (4) lengthening the period of study. As Byram has indicated, although many studies regarding pedagogical dimensions provide a variety of models to develop intercultural competence, these models cannot be simply be copied in other classrooms (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001). This is because teaching has to fit the occasion, the learners and the teacher’s own style.
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APPENDIX A

Course Evaluation

1. In general, in what degree do you like this class?
   1. I strongly disagree
   2. I disagree
   3. I am not sure
   4. I agree
   5. I strongly agree
   Please explain the reason(s) why you like or dislike this class.
   __________________

2. Which part of this class do you like most? (speakers, topics, activities, teacher, intercultural exchange or others) Why?

3. Which part of this class do you dislike most? (speakers, topics, activities, teacher, intercultural exchange or others) Why?

4. Which topic are you interested in?

5. In what ways has this class helped improve your English skills? Please check (you can choose more than one answer) and explain it.
   ( ) Speaking _____________________________
   ( ) Listening______________________________
   ( ) Writing_______________________________
   ( ) Reading______________________________
   ( ) Vocabulary____________________________
   ( ) Culture_______________________________
   ( ) Presentation Skill_______________________
   ( ) Others_______________________________ (Please specify)

6. Do you think this class increases my English learning motivation? Why or Why not?
7. Do you agree that integrating culture learning into English class is interesting? Why or why not?

8. Do you encounter any challenge in this class? If yes, please specify it.

9. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about this class?
APPENDIX B

Reflection Paper

1. Your name
2. Who was the speaker(s)?
3. What was the topic of today?
4. Did you learn anything new or interesting from the speaker(s)?
5. How did you feel about what you learnt? For example, confused, surprised, angry ... Why?
6. Did you find anything different from your own culture or from what you have found?
7. Looking forward, I want to find out more about?
8. Other thoughts:
APPENDIX C

ICC Questionnaire

Please circle the degree that you agree with the following statements.

1. I strongly disagree  2. I disagree  3. I am not sure  4. I agree  5. I strongly agree

This class integrated with guest speakers:

1. Made me feel willingness to communicate with a member of a culture about which I did not have much idea before.
   1  2  3  4  5

2. Made me see different perspectives in approaching events which I am both familiar and unfamiliar with in my own and the other culture.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. Made me increase my own awareness towards my culture by getting the change to compare and contrast my culture’s and another culture’s values.
   1  2  3  4  5

4. Made me increase my knowledge about the reasons of possible misunderstandings that can be encountered between people coming from different cultures.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. Made me gain knowledge about the ways of living and behaviors of another culture.
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Made me bring explanations to events which show similarity to and difference from my own culture.
   1  2  3  4  5
7. Made me change my stereotypes that I had towards the other culture in a positive way.

8. Gave me a reason to search about and gather information about a different culture.
跨文化經驗學習融入英語教學之探討

摘要
全球化時代下，如何在學習者通常來自於單一的語言文化背景的英語課程中強調學習跨文化溝通能力是許多英語教學者的一大挑戰。研究者從國際化角度思索，利用國際化校園環境資源，邀請校內國際學生到英語課演講與本地生互動交流，並探討跨文化溝通能力學習成效與課程設計滿意度調查。課程教學模式主要以三構面為核心基礎：(1) 文化議題探討 (2) 認識他國文化 (3) 瞭解台灣文化並與他國文化比較。透過多元的跨文化活動設計，以增進學生跨文化學習經驗。研究方法採用量化和質性研究法。研究資料來源分為三部分：(1) 跨文化學習問卷 (2) 學生的反思報告 (3) 課程設計滿意度問卷。結果顯示課程設計打破以往書上學習單一英語系國家文化的現況，將文化學習轉化為認識、尊重跨文化的差異性，著實增進語言與文化的學習，在認識世界國際文化的同時，也懂得如何描述在地文化及自我反思，作為將來交流的基礎。根據研究過程及結果，作者也提出教學設計相關建議供參考。

關鍵詞：經驗學習 跨文化溝通能力 英語教學