

## Exploring Novice Thai EFL Lecturers' Perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence

Thidaporn Jumpakate <sup>a,\*</sup> Le Trung Hieu <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Thailand.

<sup>b</sup> King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand.

\*Corresponding Author Email: [thidaporn.j@rmutp.ac.th](mailto:thidaporn.j@rmutp.ac.th)

(Received: 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019; Accepted: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019)

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.34256/ajir1926>

**Abstract:** With the rapid changes of world population, people are likely to come into contact with others with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Accordingly, Thai graduates are often required to have intercultural communication skills. The skills are parts of professional communication skills that the students should be acquired so as to respond to employers' demand. As such, institutions are placing more consideration on intercultural communication competence (ICC). This study, therefore, aims to: 1) investigate teachers' perceptions of ICC; and 2) investigate how teachers integrated ICC into their classes/lessons. Six novice EFL teachers from Thai universities were interviewed. Then, the interview data was transcribed and grouped into themes. According to the findings, overall, the participants have various understanding of ICC. For the ICC's integration, participants' answers can be categorized into five main groups, which are: 1) intercultural attitudes, 2) knowledge, 3) skills of interpreting and relating, 4) skills of discovery and interaction, and 5) critical cultural awareness. This study shows the teachers' perceptions of ICC and how they could integrate ICC in classes. The results also reveal that the teachers are willing to intercorporate activities regarding ICC into their teaching contexts. Pedagogical implications of this study are proposed. On the basis of these findings, the pedagogical implications and suggestions are included in this paper.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication competence, EFL Teachers, English Language Teaching

### 1. Introduction

Our world is increasingly diverse in a way that people may find out that their friends or colleagues are different from them in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. Cultural diversity in one country is increasing, for instance, in Thailand. The power of globalization on Thais' life is demonstrated by the fact that today numbers of foreigners in Thailand has been increasing. To be exact, numbers of expatriates in Thailand are probable to change dramatically due to the

population mobility. Songwanich (2017) reported that the expatriate employee population in Thailand, mostly Bangkok, has doubled from 2011-2016 [1]. Vapattanawong (2017) also stated that there were 1.8 million migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar [2]. According to worldometers information foreign residents in Thailand, according to the 2010 Census. There were 2,581,141 of foreign, comprising around 3.87% of the Thailand population.

With the rapid changes, people are likely to come into contact with others with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Necessarily, graduates are required to have professional communication skills, in other words, they are required to have foreign language skills and intercultural skills that empower them to interact in a global setting. Consequently, institutions in higher education level are placing more attention on intercultural communication competence (ICC). It can be concluded that ICC is a competence which should be input into Thai graduates to have foreign language, and intercultural skills.

As mentioned earlier, students are required to have professional communication skills that respond to employers' demand. Diamond, Walkley, Forbes, Hughes, and Sheen (2011) conducted research by using a survey of UK business professions [3]. The findings revealed that employers in the UK value employees who have global mindset and intercultural agility. They believe that global graduate should demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, demonstrate drive and resilience and embrace multiple perspectives. To succeed in professional communication, linguistics, pragmatics abilities, and ICC are considered.

To serve employers' demand, the majority of universities in Thailand must aim to develop students to be global citizens. It can be seen that ICC has become an irresistible force and motivation leading students to prepare to be part of the shifting social trend. Teachers are part of higher education system whose job is fostering students. Thus, the researcher wanted to investigate teachers' perception of ICC. Also, the researcher wanted to know how they integrate ICC into classes/lessons in order to encourage students' ICC

## 2. Intercultural Communication (ICC)

Culture is complex; however, it is difficult to communicate without culture. Culture is often considered as the core concept in intercultural communication. According to Gudykunst (2002), intercultural communication studies often focus on how cultural groups differ from one another, for example, Muslims differ Christians; Japanese differ from Americans; Men differ from women; old differ from young, and on and on.

In some studies, intercultural communication is defined as the connection between culture and ethnocentrism. Intercultural encounters make people aware of their own ethnocentrism- a tendency to think that our own culture is superior to other cultures. This means that we assume, subconsciously, that the way we do things is the only way [4]. In order to reduce ethnocentrism, intercultural communication competence possibly will help. According to the analysis presented in Allwood (1976), intercultural communication is defined as the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between people with different cultural backgrounds, where different cultural backgrounds include both national cultural differences and differences which are connected with participation in the different activities that exist within a national unit [5]. So, intercultural communication hypothetically prevents a misunderstanding among people from different backgrounds.

ICC is also considered as a correlation between foreign language teaching and communication competence. As Byram (1997) mentioned, ICC is a link between recent traditions in foreign language teaching and the concept of communication competence [6]. While Deardoff (2004, p.194) defined the term ICC as "the ability to communicate

effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" [7].

Many scholars stated that the term ICC means one of the components that people should be well equipped. Van Ek (1986) as cited in Byram (1997) built a model of 'Communicative ability' which contains six competencies which are linguistic competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence, linguistic competence, strategic competence, socio linguistics competence and social competence [6]. Later, Byram (1997) developed that model to be an ICC model so-called 'schema of the factors involved in ICC'. Byram's ICC schema factors in intercultural communication comprise five aspects as follows: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, critical cultural awareness, attitudes and skills of discovery and interaction.

Similarly, Byram et al. (2002, p.7-9) suggested that ICC is related to some particular components that people should be prepared. Those components of ICC include five components which are: 1) intercultural attitudes, 2) knowledge, 3) skills of interpreting and relating, 4) skills of discovery and interaction and 5) critical cultural awareness [8].

### 3. A Conceptual Framework of ICC

Components of internationalization have been defined in various ways depending on different studies. In this study, the researcher aimed at lecturers in higher education. Consequently, the adapted framework of Müller-Hartmann and Ditfurth (2016) was used in the current study [9]. According to the framework, Byram's (1997) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) was matched with teaching activities for EFL classroom. So, the

framework from Müller-Hartmann and Ditfurth (2016) was used in the study.

Table 1 serves as a review of ICC framework, which is reviewed from the previous studies. According to Table 1, the conceptual framework of ICC consists of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The conceptual framework was used in this study.

### 4. Research Questions

1. What are the teachers' perceptions of ICC?
2. How did teachers integrate ICC into their classes/lessons?

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Participants

The participants of this study were six new English lecturers who are teaching English language in Thai universities. All participants are Thai EFL lecturers who have experienced in higher education teaching for three months to one year. The researcher focused on the new English language lecturers who are teaching in higher education level. They are recruited during the years that Thai universities are placing more consideration on ICC of Thai graduates in order to respond to employers' demand. Moreover, classes are conducted in English. The participants volunteered to participate in the study. A homogenous sampling strategy was used because the researcher selected participants from a particularly large subgroup who have experience in teaching English language for Thai students in higher education level.

**Table 1** A Conceptual Framework of ICC

Aspects	Definition	How can it be developed in the class?
Intercultural attitudes	the curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own	using brainstorming, visual aids when working with texts to create curiosity and interest, using texts written by or about learners from other cultures telling about their lives, children's and young adult literature, authentic texts – brought by learners (songs, interviews), virtual and face-to-face encounter projects (e-mail, exchange) – getting-to-know phase important, cultural similarities in forefront
Knowledge	the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction	facts (film, texts, internet, authentic material), working with stereotypes in class, guest speakers ...
Skills 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	tasks that allow careful reading, analysis, interpretation of texts – in order to achieve a change of perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creative tasks working with literary texts (writing new scenes, new ending), look at action in literary text from the point of view of minor characters, projects/simulations – learners experience a situation from different cultural point of view (how does the American school work – what is a typical day like at such a school), role plays / certain games</li> </ul>
Skills of discovery and interaction	the 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	comparing e-mails, face-to-face and virtual encounter projects (web cam), chat, study visits – ethnographic observation tasks (sounds, images, smells ...), negotiation of cultural misunderstandings, role plays, critical incidents
Critical cultural awareness	an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries"	critical comparison how Australian and German society deals with immigration

**Table 2** Demography of the six participants

Participant	Teaching Experience		University Location
	Start date	Months	
1	January 2018 – present	11	Central Thailand
2	August 2018 – present	4	Central Thailand
3	January 2018 – present	11	Northeastern Thailand
4	June 2018 – present	6	Central Thailand
5	May 2018 – present	7	Central Thailand
6	June 2018 – present	6	Central Thailand

\* Present refers to November 2018

## Instrument

The instrument of this study was a semi-structured interview consisting of these questions: 1) What is ICC?; 2) What are the components of ICC?; 3) Which of these components do you integrate in class?; 4) How did you integrate these components?; and 5) As an English teacher, what can you do more to promote ICC? The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to investigate teachers' perceptions as well as to see how they have prepared themselves for ICC. This research instrument was suitable for this study because it was not in the ready-made response category of research instruments that would have limited the depth and breadth of the respondents' answers. Semi-structured questions offer a compromise between the two features: Although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended, and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner. In other words, the interviewer provides guidance and direction, but is also provided opportunities to probe further when it is warranted [10]; for example, interviewers may ask follow-up questions, which cannot be done through observation, or structured interviews. This instrument is not only intended to find out teachers' perceptions, but also to help understand how they integrated ICC in class, and what they can do more in order to implement ICC.

## Procedures

Stage 1: Preparing the research instruments

1. The researcher reviewed ICC framework from different studies.
2. The researcher used the adapted framework of Müller-Hartmann and Ditfurth (2016) in the current study.
3. The researcher studied the conceptual framework of ICC

4. The researcher designed a 15- minute-interview questions with the use of the framework.
5. The researcher prepared the technical support: voice recorder for iPhone.

## 6. Data Collection and Analysis

All participants were asked to answer the questions about ICC and integration in semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview questions were designed based on the conceptual framework of ICC. The questions were designed using five items to answer the two research questions shown above. The subjects were given 15-20 minutes per person. While asking the questions, the iPhone's voice recorder was used to record all interviewees' answers, pauses, turn-taking and intonations. After the semi-structured interview, the participants' answers were transcribed and categorized into themes in order to answer the research questions: 1) What are the teachers' perceptions of ICC?; and 2) How did teachers integrate ICC into their classes/ lessons? The analysis was carried out by identifying the keywords from the participants' answers and dividing them into themes. According to the questions (items 1-5), these items were participants' thoughts about understanding of ICC, components of ICC, integration of ICC, and promotion of ICC. Therefore, the researcher identified only keywords that are related to internationalization. The data is presented in sets of tables, as follows: 1) Table 3: Understanding of ICC, 2) Table 4: Components of ICC, 3) Table 5: Integration of ICC and 4) Table 6: Promotion of ICC.

## 7. Results

The findings of this study are presented through themes: understanding of internationalization, Components of ICC, Integration of ICC and Promotion of ICC.



**Table 3** Understanding of ICC

Categories		What is ICC?						Total mentions	
		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6		
culture	having a knowledge of culture	√						1	6 (42.86%)
	something related to culture		√					1	
	having a cultural awareness			√				1	
	an ability to understand the cultures.				√			1	
	a consideration of the other party culture in communicating				√			1	
	a competence of communication in different cultures						√	1	
understanding	a strategy for understanding people		√					1	4 (28.57%)
	a competence for understanding people		√					1	
	a communication for understanding content			√				1	
	an ability for having a mutual understanding					√		1	
language	a communication for understanding languages			√				1	4 (28.57%)
	something related to languages		√					1	
	an ability to talk to each other considering language				√			1	
	something related to pragmatics		√					1	
<b>Total mentions</b>		1	5	3	3	1	1	14	

**Table 4** Components of ICC

Categories		What are the components of ICC?						Total mentions	
		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6		
Intercultural attitudes	an understanding of culture	√						1	6 (46.15%)
	an understanding of cultural differences		√			√		2	
	an acceptance of cultural differences		√					1	
Knowledge	a knowledge of culture			√			√	2	6 (46.15%)
	a knowledge of language	√	√				√	3	
	an understanding of English language					√		1	
	a knowledge of personal belief	√		√				2	
Other	N/A				√			1	1 (7.70%)
<b>Total Mentions</b>		3	3	2	1	2	2	13	

Table 3, Understanding of ICC, illustrates participants' answers to question 1 (What is ICC?). Question 1 was asked to investigate teachers' understanding of ICC. All of the teachers provided opinions about their respective definitions of ICC. There were 14 mentions which showed teachers' varied perceptions of ICC's definition. In Table 3, the definitions of internationalization are classified into three categories: culture, understanding and language. It is reflected that the key of ICC's definition is the culture, which was mentioned 6 times or 42.86 percent of all mentions. Additional defining elements are understanding and language, in declining order of importance. As can be seen in Table 3, understanding was mentioned four times or 28.57 percent, along with language, which was mentioned four times, or 28.57 percent.

The first category is culture. The participants thought that ICC means having a knowledge of culture, something related to culture, having a cultural awareness, an ability to understand the cultures, a consideration of the other party culture in communicating and a competence of communication in different cultures, as can be seen from the interview of Participant 1:

*"To be honest, I'm not really sure about what is the competence of IC. So, I go with... that...er...in order to communicate well in different language, for example, in English language, you have to have a background knowledge about the culture. Like, in American culture, if you'd like to give a gift to somebody and that time is not a special occasion, you shouldn't give a gift because they'll feel like you want them to give you something in return, for example, if you go to study in the United States. And your professor helped you to receive a scholarship, and you want to buy that professor a gift, you*

*should not give the very value gift. For example, the expensive watch or the pen because they might interpret in the different way. They might think that oh! The way you give the gift is...we call "undertable" in Thailand so it is like different interpretations. In Asian culture, especially, in Thailand, normally, we give the gift to say thank you because you feel thankful for that person for helping you out on anything a lot. So, we try to let them appreciate our thank by giving them the gift. So, yeah, I think that ICC is a knowledge of the culture in order to communicate well and don't misunderstand about the culture."*(Participant 1)

The second category is understanding. The participants indicated that students is another element of ICC's definition, saying that ICC means a strategy for understanding people, a competence for understanding people, a communication for understanding content and an ability for having a mutual understanding. An interview excerpt from Participant 3 supports this:

*"It's a tough question. Based on my understanding, ICC means a communication in order to understand not only about content or language itself. Cultural awareness is included as a part of the communication. Cultural awareness refers to a basic knowledge of each culture around the world. For example, you know what is the rationale behind people's behaviors from each country because the cultures can reflect messages conveyed by people. With a background knowledge of different cultures, you can interpret the messages."*(Participant 3)

Language is the last category. The participants indicated that ICC is related to

language, stating that ICC means a communication for understanding languages, something related to languages, an ability to talk to each other considering language and something related to pragmatics, as shown in the excerpt from Participant 2:

*“From my point of view, it can be a strategy or competence that can help people to understand each other. To have an understanding among people, these following issues are needed: languages, culture, and pragmatics, for example, when Asian people said something, sometimes, they did not mean that. So, these issues are parts of the competence for understanding people.”(Participant 2)*

Table 4, Components of ICC, exemplifies participants' thoughts about the components of internationalization. The researcher asked participants, “What are the components of internationalization?”, without showing them the aforementioned framework. After that, the researcher presented the framework of internationalization to the participants and asked, “Which of these components did you integrate in class”. However, this table shows only teachers' initial perceptions about the components of ICC, before seeing the framework, because the researcher wanted to investigate teachers' background knowledge and opinions about the components of ICC without giving any hints. As can be seen from Table 4, there were 13 mentions. The components are grouped into three main categories based on the framework of ICC, which are 1) Intercultural attitudes, 2) knowledge and 3) others.

The often-mentioned aspects are intercultural attitudes and knowledge. Six out of 13 mentions, or 46.15 percent, were related to intercultural attitudes. Two participants out of six stating that an understanding of cultural

differences is a part of ICC' components. For other aspects, an understanding of culture was mentioned by only one participant as one of ICC components. Also, an acceptance of cultural differences was mentioned by only one participant. An interview excerpt from participants 5 support this:

*“Firstly, you have to have a deep understanding of English language. If you speak wrongly, the meanings will be changed such as article a and the, they convey different meanings. Secondly, an understanding of cultural differences between a sender and receiver. Cultural differences refer to a difference of nationality, religion, tradition, and culture etc. For example, foreigners don't have ideas that Thais pay respect to royal family. So, they may disrespect the royal family accidentally. Overall, in order to communicate, apart from an in- depth understanding of English, you have to have a background knowledge of your receiver or interlocutor regarding some elements such as their culture, belief, religion, and politics. These elements should be considered before you speak out.”(Participant 5)*

The second aspect to be discussed is knowledge. In Table 5, there were six mentions from six participants, or 46.15 percent of all mentions, stating a knowledge of culture, a knowledge of language, an understanding of English language and a knowledge of personal belief are parts of ICC' components, as can be seen in an excerpt of an interview from Participant 6:

*“The first component is language. The second one is culture. To communicate, having background knowledge about cultures is important. Communicating with people from different countries are different. So, knowing background of*



*people is important. However, language is the first priority. You should know the language before communicating. Anyway, culture should be included because culture is linked to whatever you talk.”(Participant 6)*

Interestingly, there was one participant who stated that it is difficult to identify the components of ICC. According to the nature of ICC, it is a broad term which is too abstract to define. An interview excerpt from Participant 4 supports this:

*“In my opinion, I don’t think it’s fixed. I feel like when you talk about culture, um it’s something very subjective. It’s an abstract idea to me. So, if you ask me how many I can’t really tell but it’s too subjective.”(Participant 4)*

Table 5, Integration of ICC, illustrates the perceptions of teachers about how they integrated ICC in class after seeing the ICC’ components from previous studies. As shown in Table 5, the data was categorized into two main parts based on the interview questions. The first part is to answer question 3, “Which of these components did you integrate in class?”, whereas the second part is to answer question 4, “How did you integrate ICC in class?”. The interviewees’ answers were categorized in five categories based on the conceptual framework of ICC, which are: 1) intercultural attitudes, 2) knowledge, 3) skills of interpreting and relating, 4) skills of discovery and interaction and 5) critical cultural awareness.

To answer question 3, “Which of these components did you integrate in class?”, the participant answers were categorized according to the framework. It can be seen in Table 5 that the majority of participants mentioned critical cultural awareness and skills of interpreting and relating the most. To be exact, there were five mentions out of 16,

which are related to skills of interpreting and relating. Also, there were four mentions out of 16, which are related to critical cultural awareness. In other words, the largest number of participants thought that they integrated skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness in class already, as can be seen in interview excerpts from Participant 3 and 5:

*“...To summarize, I let my students differentiate western and Asian cultures. I think it is a category of critical cultural awareness... Also, it can be a part of skills of interpreting and relating category. According to what I did, they had to interpret...”(Participant 3)*

*“...I’ve mentioned about cultural awareness already. I shared experience with students about speaking with foreigners...”(Participant 5)*

To answer question 4, “How did you integrate ICC in class?”, the participant answers were categorized according to the framework. However, the answers were clarified as a list of activities the teachers did in class. As shown in Table 5, the most-mentioned aspects were intercultural attitudes and skills of interpreting and relating. There were five out of 18 mentions, or 27.78 percent, which are related to Intercultural attitudes. The participants stated that they could integrate ICC in class by sharing experience regarding cultural diversity, proposing young adult literature, mentioning how people from different cultures behave, having students focus more on people’ belief and people’ sensitive issues and giving a lecture about using words along with pragmatics. The interviews excerpt from Participant 1 and 4 support this:

Table 5 Integration of ICC

Aspects	Which of these components did you integrate in class?						How did you integrate ICC in class?	Participants						Total mentions	
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6		
Intercultural attitudes	√		√	√			shared experience regarding cultural diversity	√						1	5 (27.78%)
							proposed young adult literature	√						1	
							mentioned how people from different cultures behave				√			1	
							let students focus more on people' belief and people' sensitive issues.			√				1	
							gave a lecture about using words along with pragmatics				√			1	
Knowledge		√		√			gave a lecture about cultures		√					1	2 (11.11%)
							gave a lecture about English language				√			1	
Skills of interpreting and relating	√	√	√	√		√	demonstrated people's life from different countries	√						1	5 (27.78%)
							gave a lecture about cultural differences		√					1	
							let students interpret the differences between cultures			√				1	
							demonstrated how people use language					√		1	
							gave a lecture about analyzing meaning underlying the words or the texts				√			1	
Skills of discovery and interaction				√			brought real world into classroom				√			1	2 (11.11%)
							took students out to see the real world				√			1	
Critical cultural awareness	√		√	√	√		provided awareness from giving example	√						1	4 (22.22%)
							let students differentiate different cultures			√				1	
							gave a lecture about how to use language and pragmatics				√			1	
							shared experience with students					√		1	
<b>Total mentions</b>	3	3	3	5	1	1	<b>Total mentions</b>	4	2	3	7	1	1	18	

**Table 6** Promotion of ICC

Aspects	What can you do more in order to integrate ICC?	Participants						Total mentions	
		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6		
Knowledge	will integrate knowledge regarding ICC			√			√	2	2 (33.33%)
others	will not do more because of some factors	√						1	4 (66.67%)
	will bring students to the international environment		√		√	√		3	
Total mentions		1	1	1	1	1	1	6	

*“Um... Honestly, I usually, integrated or let the students absorb the intercultural attitudes inside our class because I normally talk to them and tell them the stories about cultural diversity in the united states. Because I lived there for a while so I kinda like pick up some cultural differences so I can tell the students about the way they live, the way they talk or I propose students the young adult literature as well. Something that I integrate most of time is intercultural attitudes. And also, let's see... probably would be critical cultural awareness as well, because, in our program, we teach so many languages together, we call the language for communication so all the students have to learn German, France, Vietnamese or Cambodian language depends on student's choice. So, yeah, we usually give them the awareness when you see people from different countries. Or how to deal with them, how different between German, French, Australian or British people. ...sometimes I illustrate skills of interpreting and relating because this semester I teach holistic education and liberal arts education so I showed high school students' life in united states, in Britain or Australia, or Japan. So, they can see what the typical day of Japanese students. and like in such a primary secondary school or high*

*school and I still demonstrate about typical day of students in US so the students will feel the sense of what they do or how they dress or how they eat and even or even the sense of feelings. Some like that.”(Participant 1)*

*“... if you ask me if I used any, I have to tell you that I've used everything. Yes, for intercultural attitudes, yes since I'm teaching English so I make sure that my students understand what they are learning and not only the language itself but the culture how people interact, how people communicate, how they talk, how they walk, how they live their life and everything. So, the attitudes toward foreigners or toward the language itself, it's very important. So, for the intercultural attitudes, yes, I've been trying to serve it to students where they can be aware of that in every class so, in every time, they learn English. the knowledge, of course, English knowledge. Skills of interpreting and relating, yes, every time they see textbook and everything, they have to be able to understand. Not only the grammar but the meaning underlying the words or the texts. Ah... skills of discovery and interaction, yes, I have times when they talk to foreigners or you know to bring real world into classroom or even go out to see the real-world using English.*

*Critical cultural awareness, yes, of course, this is kinda like I integrated that with intercultural attitudes where they have to be aware of different cultures every time, they use the language even by using the language itself by using pragmatics by using something they might think that using this word is okay. But in different people, they might not interpret it the same way. So, yeah, to answer your questions, I integrated everything.”(Participant 4)*

Another aspect to be clarified is skills of interpreting and relating. There were five out of 18 mentions, or 27.78 percent, which are related to the skills. Overall, the participants thought that they could integrate ICC into their classes by demonstrating people’s life from different countries, giving a lecture about cultural differences, having students interpret the differences between cultures, demonstrating how people use language, and giving a lecture about analyzing meaning underlying the words or the texts. The interviews excerpt from Participant 3 and 6 support this:

*“Interviewer: Thai students interpreted western behaviors in a way that they are impolite in Asian context. However, in western context, this kind of behavior is normal. It can be concluded that I mentioned about manners of lecturers, teacher classroom language, and students’ classroom behaviors. For students’ behaviors, I illustrated American students’ life in high school. When the class ends, American students will grab their things and leave a classroom immediately. Conversely, Thai students normally wait for their teachers to say “time’s up! You can go out of the class.” I’m not sure what I did matches which category from the Table. To summarize, I let my students*

*differentiate western and Asian cultures. I think it is a category of critical cultural awareness because this activity could encourage students’ awareness. Also, it can be a part of skills of interpreting and relating category. According to what I did, they had to interpret. There was a class named Public Speaking. In the class, I told my students to analyze audiences before giving speech. ...In brief, I provided students what to talk in the different contexts while giving speech. I informed that each person has different belief so that you should not give speech about those beliefs which are sensitive.*

*Interviewer: For example?*

*Interviewee: ... Let’s think about national level, if you are an I-sarn(Northeastern) person giving speech in Southern Thailand, you have to avoid mentioning about some sensitive issues such as religion and cultures of southern people.” (Participant 3)*

*“I think skills of interpretation and relating. I remembered that I demonstrated how Thai people use Thai language. When Thai people say “Suay na(beautiful)”, without considering any voice tone, it literally means beautiful. However, it can be a sarcastic expression if you include lower pitch tone in there. This is how I integrated the skills of interpretation and relating...” (Participant 6)*

Table 6, Promotion of ICC, points out what teachers can do to promote ICC after asking all 4 questions above. This Table shows how teachers thought they can do more in order to promote ICC. The aspects are clarified into 2 areas which are 1) knowledge and 2) others. The Table will be presented as follows:

From Table 6, Promotion of ICC, Question 5, "What can you do more to integrate ICC?" was asked to investigate teachers' perceptions of how they want to do more for promoting ICC. There were 6 mentions which are categorized into two main areas.

The first area to be clarified is knowledge. For knowledge, there were two mentions out of 6, or 33.33 percent, related to knowledge. The participants said that they will integrate knowledge regarding ICC in class. An interview excerpt from Participant 3 supports this:

*"I was not fully integrated knowledge regarding ICC into my class. However, I illustrated them different situations which I was able to link to ICC. So, I'd love to integrate knowledge regarding ICC into my lessons. What I did was just showing them examples and provide awareness."* (Participant 3)

Interestingly, participant 3 stated that lacking of knowledge in ICC was the main reason underlying the teaching in class.

*"Interviewer: Can I ask you that why don't you integrate ICC knowledge at the first place?"*

*Interviewee: I did not provide ICC knowledge to my students because it's not the focus of my courses. I focused more on content relating to the courses. In the meantime, teaching contents or topics that could be linked to ICC, I linked them. So, my students were able to have cultural awareness. Actually, the main reason is that I lacked of the knowledge of ICC that's why I couldn't integrate or add it into the classes."* (Participant 3)

The second aspect is others. There were four mentions from four participants, or 66.67 percent, which were related to others.

Fascinatingly, there was one participant stating that the participant will not do more because of some factors. An interview excerpt from Participant 1 clarifies this:

*"I would love to do more; however, in our faculty especially in my program, we do have the subject or the course for ICC already. Like students will learn ICC1 and ICC2 so that's why I've been trying not to integrates much because we don't want to go over again and again about the same topic...."* (Participant 1)

Lastly, there were three mentions from three participants, which stating that the participants will bring students to the international environment. An interview excerpt from Participant 2 confirms this:

*"I would let my students be exposed to the real situations. If it's possible, I will bring them to the international environment where there are lots of foreigners. Or let Thai students participate in a kind of activity which they can observe foreigners' behaviors, like, how they eat. So, bringing them out is the best choice. If it's impossible to bring them out, I may invite foreign students to join a class with Thai students for 3 hours. So, Thai students will be able to have different perspectives on foreigners."* (Participant 2)

In conclusion, it is interesting that the lecturers are interested to include more activities in class in order to support ICC. Thus, it can be assumed that the participants have positive attitudes towards ICC and they would like to promote ICC to prepare their students to live in a global setting in the future.



## 9. Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the findings revealed that all new Thai EFL lecturers in the current study have various perceptions of ICC. In detail, the findings from this study revealed that the teachers understand what ICC is, and can define it as involving the culture, language and understanding aspect. However, the majority of lecturers are placing their understanding more on a culture aspect. The findings correspond to the study of Gudykunst (2002) as culture is customarily considered as the core concept in intercultural communication [11]. Besides, the findings are related to Byram (1997)'s ICC model. To be clarified, Byram (1997) proposed five components of ICC regarding culture. From the findings, it is evident that the numbers of Thai EFL lecturers in this study emphasize on culture more than other aspects: language and understanding. Moreover, the findings are concordant with the study of Deardoff (2004, p.194) who defined the term ICC is as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes", as can be seen from the findings, some lecturers thought that ICC means an ability or competence in order to communicate to have a mutual understanding. Attractively, language was partly mentioned to fulfill the meaning of ICC. Most participants implied a term, language as English. With the spread of English, now one of those languages which one has got to know in order to be able to function actively in today's world [12]. However, language cannot be solely defined as a meaning of ICC. Language must go along with other components: culture, understanding as to be a part of ICC's definition.

To the extent of ICC' components, the findings and the framework are not

concordant because the participants' answers could partly cover components presented in the framework from the previous studies by Müller-Hartmann and Ditfurth (2016). To be clarified, the findings from this study have revealed that the lecturers can specify it as involving the intercultural attitudes and knowledge. Furthermore, there was one participant who stated that ICC term is too abstract so it is impossible to clarify the components. Similar to some previous studies, [13, 14] the findings show that ICC is broad and complex. Spitzberg (2009) states that intercultural communication competence is considered very broadly as an impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context [13]. Whereas, Moeller and Nugent (2009) stated that defining intercultural competence is a complex task. All in all, the lecturers have perceptions of ICC by focusing mainly on intercultural attitudes and knowledge. The findings can be supported by Deardoff (2004); her study revealed that ICC is defined as an ability to communicate effectively regarding intercultural knowledge as well as attitudes [7].

To the extent of integration of ICC, the findings reveal that the majority of participants thought that they integrated skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness in class already with a variety of activities. However, providing inputs including giving knowledge, was mentioned the most. It can be inferred that giving a lecture probably is the easiest way to do at that time according to some factors; time constraint, and inadequate knowledge of ICC, and ICC's unfamiliarity.

To the extent of promotion of ICC, to support ICC, the lecturers focused more on providing knowledge in relation to ICC and setting up an international setting. Having knowledge and international setting are related to each other. As Garcia-Perez (2017)

proposed an interesting concept of ICC knowledge and international setting exposure, she stated that Intercultural Studies is a relatively emerging field within Social Sciences whose object of interest is the interaction between cultural groups and individuals [15]. It examines how culture influences on who people are, how they interact, how they feel, how they think, speak, communicate, listen, and behave. So, an exposure to other cultures offers potential benefits to individuals and societies in a way that it helps overcome miscommunication and conflict among human groups. Therefore, the discipline of Intercultural Studies aims to provide individuals with both the knowledge to understand the complexities and dynamics of intercultural contact and the practical skills and perspectives to enable them to successfully engage with cultural diversity in the different communities. This reality motivated EFL lecturers to consider Promoting Intercultural Communication Competencies in Higher Education.

It is conclusive that all new Thai lecturers could understand what ICC is as well as identify the components of ICC. They also integrated some ICC component through activities already. Also, they would like to promote ICC more because ICC is essential. According to some previous studies [13, 16, 17], the findings show that ICC is considered as life skills in global setting society. T people in virtually all locations of the globe are more mobile than ever, and more likely to traverse into cultures different from their own. Though a “global village” is not fully ready, it is undeniable that the various cultures of the world are far more accessible than ever before, and that the peoples of these cultures are increasingly coming into contact. Therefore, the competence to negotiate with people from different backgrounds is

necessary. As various communicative features underlying the sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies in the target language culture are different from those in the learner’s own culture, it is suggested that teachers develop target language communicative competence in learners by integrating language and culture. It has been found that both ‘pedagogically and educationally sensible’ can serve ‘a multidimensional perspective or experience’ for the learners. Consequently, integrating language and culture is seen by some as the fundamental purpose of language learning in a way that it gives learners experience of another language, and a different way of coping with reality.

## References

- [1] S. Songwanich, (2017), Chinese expat community swells in Thailand, The Nation. Retrieved from <http://www.nationmultimedia.com>
- [2] P. Vapattanawong, (2015) (Foreigners in Thailand). Retrieved from <http://www.ms.ipr.mahidol.ac.th/ConferenceXI/Download/Presentation/2558-12-Patama.pdf>
- [3] A. Diamond, L. Walkley, P. Forbes, T. Hughes and J. Sheen. (2011). Global Graduates into Global Leaders. Retrieved from <http://www.ncub.co.uk/reports/global-graduates-into-global-leaders.html>
- [4] J.N. Martin, & T.K. Nakayama, (2010), Intercultural communication in contexts. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- [5] J.S. Allwood, (1976), Linguistic communication as action and cooperation, Monographs in Linguistics 2. Göteborg: Dept. of Linguistics, University of Göteborg.
- [6] M. Byram, (1997), Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. Clevedon, UK: Multicultural Matters.
- [7] D.K. Deardorff, Internationalization: In Search of Intercultural Competence, International Educator, 13 (2004) 13-15.
- [8] M. Byram, B. Gribkova, & H. Starkey, (2002), Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- [9] A. Müller-Hartmann, & M.S. Dittfurth, (2016), Introduction to English language teaching, Stuttgart: Klett Lerntraining.
- [10] Z. Dörnyei, (2007), Research methods in applied linguistics, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [11] W.B. Gudykunst, (2002), Issues in cross-cultural communication research. In W.B. Gudykunst and B. Mody (Eds.). Handbook of international and intercultural communication (2nd ed., pp. 165-177). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [12] A. Klimczak-Pawlak, (2014), Towards the Pragmatic Core of English for European Communication; : The Speech Act of Apologising in Selected Euro-Englishes, ISBN: 978-3-319-03557-4, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-03557-4
- [13] B.H. Spitzberg, A Model of Intercultural Communication Competence, Intercultural communication: A reader 9 (2009) 379-391.
- [14] A.K. Moeller, and K. Nugent, (2014), Building intercultural competence in the language classroom. Lincoln, NE: Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education @University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
- [15] G. M. Garcia-Perez, (2017), Promoting intercultural communication competencies in higher education. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- [16] C. Alptekin, Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT, ELT Journal, 56 (2002) 57- 64.
- [17] M. Porto, Integrating the teaching of language and culture, IATEFL Newsletter 132 (1996) 14-15.

**Funding:** No funding was received for conducting this study.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

### About The License

© The author(s) 2019. The text of this article is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License