Promoting teacher professionalism in language education from the perspective of critical intercultural literacy

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of globalisation, many English language teaching (ELT) curricula emphasise the need to promote awareness of intercultural communication. However, in many settings, the current ELT practices still predominantly focus on Anglophone cultures or interactions with Anglophone speakers, as the teachers and materials may not fully anticipate the cultural complexity and diversity the students will encounter in the future. This paper reports on a case study designed to build teachers' critical intercultural literacy through a series of workshops at a university located in southeast China, specifically aiming to train Chinese university teachers in how to challenge textbook content from a critical perspective. Through an analysis of interviews with teachers and their reflective journal entries, this paper examines how teachers made sense of critically-oriented teaching and it discusses the implications for developing a critical stance beyond the classroom informed by critical pedagogy and Global Englishes language teaching.

Keywords: critical literacy, critical pedagogy, culture teaching, Global Englishes, intercultural literacy

Introduction

The concept of culture has been emphasised as a key component in many English language teaching (ELT) contexts. Thus, language teachers are required to incorporate curricula about culture into their language classrooms. However, many scholars now argue that the traditional relationship between language and culture needs to be re-visited in view of the fact that English has become a global

language (Baker, 2015; Fang & Baker, 2018; Jenkins, 2014), particularly in terms of how we deal with the complexity of the concept of culture itself (Baker, 2015; Kramsch, 2019). From a traditional perspective, language and culture are considered inextricable elements that should be integrated in language teaching. In the context of ELT, this gives rise to the assumption that Anglophone cultures should be taught and learned in mainstream ELT settings. However, because English functions as a global language, it is not possible to assume an essentialist relationship between the English language and Anglo culture. Speakers of English around the world bring their own cultural frames of reference and communicative preferences to their interactions, which means that the relationship between language and culture is inherently dynamic and co-constructed in instances of meaning making (Baker, 2015; McConachy, 2018a; Zhu, 2019). Moreover, given that English is no longer viewed as the exclusive property of native speakers, notions that invoke a language-culture-nation correlation and which perpetuate native speakerism are being challenged (Baker, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). Therefore, it is essential that English language teachers develop critical intercultural literacy in and outside of language classrooms to challenge the traditional ELT approach in order to "prepare learners for the diversity and unpredictability of communication in English in international contexts of use" (Illés & Akcan, 2017, p. 11).

The current situation related to integrating culture within ELT from a critical perspective is not optimistic. Previous studies have found the dominance of Anglophone cultures introduced in mainstream ELT textbooks regardless of the promotion of cultural diversity in ELT (Gray, 2010; Ren & Han, 2016). Other work shows that linguistic and cultural representations are still generally out of sync with the reality of English language use. For example, working within the ELF paradigm, Vettorel (2018) revealed that ELF has not yet been acknowledged in ELT materials in Italy. Syrbe and Rose (2016) investigated three series of textbooks in Germany and found that the textbooks somewhat reflected real-world material. However, the concept of culture was represented in a static manner (see also Baker, 2015), and there was only limited acknowledgement of diverse Englishes. Syrbe and Rose (2016) therefore concluded that the textbooks "do not accurately meet students' needs in terms of their actual future use of the language" (p. 161), although some small changes had been made.

Thus, it has been argued that ELT still "constitutes and reflects the biases people have toward linguistic varieties and speakers' race/ethnicity" (Kubota, 2018, p. 97). Another issue is that many ELT practitioners are told to simply follow the content in the textbook, which constrains the scope for thinking more critically about that content and often results in the teaching of English from a rather restricted perspective. Thus, developing language teachers' critical intercultural literacy is important in the context of 21st century Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (Yang, 2018; Yazan, 2019). This paper examines a case study in which the concept of critical intercultural literacy was incorporated into teacher training in Chinese tertiary education in order to raise awareness of critical perspectives on language and culture teaching in order to challenge problematic aspects of traditional ELT models, including essentialist views of culture and the phenomenon of native speakerism.

Critical Intercultural Literacy

Within language education, there are various conceptions relating to the development of criticality in relation to language and culture. For example, Byram's (1997) notion of "critical cultural awareness" advocates that language learners develop "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" (p. 53). More recently, Byram (2021) explains that what is important here is that learners are able to evaluate cultural phenomena from an explicit and rational viewpoint whilst taking into account diverse perspectives. Some scholars have relied on Byram's model of intercultural communicative

competence and the concept of the intercultural speaker as a starting point for new conceptualisations (Helm & Guth, 2010; Hoff, 2020; Porto, 2013). Yet, the dominant focus on culture within the framework of the nation state within Byram's model reflects a modernist conception of culture that is difficult to apply to 21st century ELT given the diverse speakership of English and the transnational and multimodal flows of communication.

In our conception, critical intercultural literacy is best linked to the concept of interculturality (Zhu, 2019), which emphasises that cultural influences and affiliations are actively negotiated within interaction. One of the implications of this perspective for language learning is that learners need to be socialised into a view of language and culture as dynamic entities and cultivate their ability to critically analyse and reflect on interactions as well as multi-modal representations of cultural difference (McConachy, 2018b). Moreover, we see critical intercultural literacy as tied to re-examination of intercultural encounters from the viewpoint of power and ideology in a way that aims to expose and challenge the overly simplistic representation of the speakership of English and the re-production of Anglo cultural dominance. Critical intercultural literacy, thus, has the potential to challenge entrenched linguistic and cultural ideologies, make visible different forms of taken-for-granted privilege, and create space for the amplification of marginalised voices (Bishop, 2017; Kubota, 2018).

We take the view that a critical perspective "uses texts and print skills in ways that enable students to examine the politics of daily life within contemporary society with a view to understanding what it means to locate and actively seek out contradictions within modes of life, theories, and substantive intellectual positions" (Bishop, 2017, p. 371), recognising intercultural encounters and teaching in and beyond classroom instruction. We argue that critical intercultural literacy should be viewed as an imperative skill in 21st century ELT.

Our conception above builds on recent work in the Global Englishes (GE) paradigm that has challenged native speakerism to promote linguistic and cultural diversity in both language use and teaching (Baker, 2015; Fang, 2020; Jenkins, 2014). With the proposal of Global Englishes language teaching (GELT) recognising multilingualism and multiculturalism, scholars have argued for Global Englishes (GE) awareness to be incorporated into the ELT classroom (Fang & Ren, 2018; Syrbe & Rose, 2016). One difficulty is that many ELT practitioners, especially in expanding circle contexts, still view English as the property of its native speakers. As argued by Holliday (2005), native-speakerism is "a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that "native-speaker" teachers represent a "Western culture" from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (p. 10). The critical stance of ELT, which challenges the fixed norm based on native-speakerism and the essentialist national perspective of understanding culture (Holliday, 2006), is slow to be recognised, in particular by language practitioners. Some studies have already demonstrated ways that content, multimodal and critical discourse analyses to challenge the hidden ideologies reflected in the textbooks (Curdt-Christiansen, 2021; Guo & Feng, 2015; Weninger & Kiss, 2013), as well as to understand the role of the home cultures represented in EFL textbooks (Liu & Fang, 2017; McConachy; 2018a; Xiong & Peng, 2021).

We believe that there is much potential for teachers' understanding of critical intercultural literacy to have a direct impact on pedagogical practices. We also believe that it is important that teachers are empowered to incorporate critical intercultural literacy into their understanding of teaching and learning and apply it to their ELT. As argued by Kumaravadivelu (2006):

> By their uncritical acceptance of the native speaker dominance, non-native professionals legitimize their own marginalization. Both the process of

marginalization and the practice of self-marginalization bring to the fore the coloniality, rather than the globality, of the English language. (p. 22)

In this study, we report on a training programme that aimed to empower English teachers in China to recognize problematic cultural representations in their textbooks and to consider ways to help their students examine, challenge, critique and readdress the power relationship to decode what is missing, silenced or discounted (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Through a training workshop, the participating teachers were encouraged to go beyond the textbook contents to understand the relationship between language and culture as being "a close connection, an interdependence, a complex relationship" (Risager, 2007, p. 163). The study aimed to explore how critical intercultural literacy "is built on exploring personal, socio-political, economic and intellectual border identities" (Bishop, 2017, p. 371) through various cultural events. To fill in this gap in native-oriented ELT, both linguistically and culturally, as represented in the marginalisation of local voices in mainstream ELT, this paper aims to answer two research questions:

1. What understanding of the concept of critical intercultural literacy do the teacher participants have before and after the training?
2. To what extent are the teacher participants willing to incorporate the notion of critical intercultural literacy into their ELT teaching after undergoing the training? And how?

Methodology

Research Setting and Participants

This research was conducted at a university located in southeast China, which has more than 10,000 students. This university values its students' English-speaking ability as a key reference for their applications to exchange programmes with universities at home and abroad. The teachers that participated in this study were instructors from the English Language Centre (ELC) who are responsible for teaching all the students at this university. Purposive sampling (Dörnyei, 2007) was used in this study. After the research purpose was explained to a group of eight teachers, they agreed to participate in two interviews about their experiences of teaching a course on intercultural communication within the ELC. This is essentially an EFL course focusing on intercultural communication where students' English proficiency and intercultural knowledge will both be tested at the end of the semester. The participants had been teaching English from one to six years, and all had obtained a master's degree in TESOL or applied linguistics at Chinese universities, or universities in the UK, US, and Australia. All participants had previous intercultural experiences during their study abroad period and travel/conference experiences abroad. At the time of data collection, the participants were all teaching a course on intercultural communication with two to six years' experience teaching this particular course[1]. The textbook, *Encounter with Westerners: Improving Skills in English and Intercultural Communication* (Snow, 2013), was used in this course, and one of the intended learning outcomes from the course syllabus was "to discuss common generalizations concerning Western and Chinese cultures." Based on the first author's experiences teaching for three semesters, the textbook, as well as some supplement contents were found to be either prioritise Anglophone culture (although with a claim of cultural comparison with a fixed nation-based cultural knowledge) or adopt an essentialist perspective based on cultural dichotomies such as *individualism/collectivism*, *in-group/out-group*, *high/low context*, *responding to a compliment*, *dating habits*, *dealing with conflict*, with American and Chinese cultures.

Training Process and Activities

The teachers participated in the training organised by the first author. The training, which was done

during the semester, included two workshops introducing and discussing the concept of critical intercultural literacy and the participants' teaching experiences. The participants all volunteered to take part in the research, based on assurance that participation would not affect their performance appraisal and that all the data would remain confidential. As the authors and participants were from different departments, there is no conflict of interests regarding the participation and this research, although we acknowledge a certain level of subjectivity during the data collection process. As the first author was involved in teaching the course with his colleagues when conducting this research, the subjectivity level was kept minimal through author reflexivity when collecting data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When conducting such training sessions led by the first author, he made it clear that the participation of this study would not affect any participants' teaching performance and annual appraisal, and that they were free to withdraw from this study so they were also given enough room in a flexible and relaxing manner to share their opinions.

Before the training, the participants were assigned specific content to read; during the training sessions they discussed what they had read and shared their reflections of their teaching experiences. The teachers were then invited to participate in two interviews, the first interview was conducted at the beginning of the 2019–2020 autumn academic year. During that interview, the participants shared their understandings of intercultural communication and the extent to which they held a critical perspective on language and intercultural teaching and learning. Then, two, two-hour workshops, one on critical pedagogy and one on critical intercultural literacy, were conducted in the middle of the semester to help them reflect on their teaching practices and develop their critical intercultural literacy skills. McLaughlin and DeVoogd's (2004) proposal of "promoting reading from a critical stance" was used to conduct the workshop. Using (and going beyond) the textbook contents, the teachers were asked to discuss the questions designed by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), including: "What does the author want us to think? How might alternative perspectives be represented? How would that contribute to your understanding of the text from a critical stance" (p. 53)? The participants were given opportunities to critically reflect on their critical intercultural literacy skills. Examples of these papers include: McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), Holliday (2006), Dooley (2009), and Gray (2010), among others.

A second round of interviews was conducted at the end of the semester in early January 2020. During the second interview, the participants shared their ideas and comments, including some of the challenges they experienced when teaching the course, as well as whether they gained a deeper understanding of critical intercultural literacy. Each interview lasted 30–40 minutes. After the interview, the participants were asked to keep a reflective journal to write about their experience of participating in the training workshop and the interviews. Mandarin was used during the interviews and for the journal writing to allow the teachers to more easily and fluently express their ideas (Mann, 2011). The interview responses and journal entries were later translated into English and checked by a professor specialising in translation studies before sending the transcripts to the teachers to ensure that their intended meaning had not been altered. By participating in this study, we hoped that the teachers would develop an awareness of "the social construction of reading, writing and text production within political contexts of inequitable economic, cultural, political, and institutional structures" (Bishop, 2017, p. 372) represented in the chosen textbook.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was adopted for data analysis in this study (Schreier, 2012) "to explore the deeper meanings so as to add interpretive depth and breadth to the analysis" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 128). The interview responses were first transcribed verbatim in Mandarin. The transcriptions were peer-checked by the teacher participants after the initial transcription process was completed to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and translation processes. The first author then listened to the

recordings to double-check the accuracy of the transcription. Both interview and journal data were then put into NVivo 11 software for coding. The first level of the coding process started from top-down codes according to the research questions; these included "culture knowledge," "intercultural teaching" and "critical intercultural literacy." During the coding process, some emergent codes were identified from the interview and journal writing data. Examples of the emergent codes include "student motivation," "Global Englishes and intercultural communication teaching," "experience abroad for intercultural awareness" and "home culture in intercultural learning." After the analysis process, necessary data extracts were translated into English for the purpose of writing this paper. Based on both the inductive and deductive themes, two main themes were summarised for data analysis: *critical intercultural literacy development* and *intercultural communication teaching*.

Findings

In the first round of interviews, many of the participants were unaware of the potential for adopting a critical perspective in their ELT classes. During the first round of interviews, some of the participants (T1, T3, T5, T6, T8) reported that they simply followed the textbook contents because they had not been trained in intercultural literacy in their pre-service teacher training programme, regardless of the concept of the critical intercultural literacy. For instance, T5 stated: "I have not heard of critical intercultural literacy during my postgraduate study. When I was assigned to teach the intercultural communication course, I just followed the textbook and the course syllabus, although I sometimes did not understand the contents." In the similar vein, T8 mentioned that: "We teach the course as a team, so few people would break the comfort zone to challenge what it says on the textbook and what has been designed as teaching material."

We found that, before the workshop training, few teachers realised the significance of intercultural literacy in culture teaching. Only one teacher, T6, a recent graduate from a university in the United Kingdom, mentioned during the interview: "I participated in a teaching practicum when I was doing my master's degree. We were encouraged to develop critical intercultural literacy when doing the practicum. Somehow I develop an awareness when I am teaching this course." It is interesting that, in his reflective journal, T6 expressed some of his concerns: "I feel that the critical aspect is difficult to implement because people seem to regard the textbook content as the golden rule." He also expanded on this concern in the second round of interviews, pointing out that some teachers and students seem to "accept the face value because they just want to finish the task easily but not to encounter different concepts critically." To some extent, this comment shows the importance of implementing a critical approach in ELT and culture learning; however, it also demonstrates that there is a significant need to develop critical intercultural literacy (Bartolomé, 2004; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018).

After participating in the training workshop and analysing the textbook contents from the perspective of critical pedagogy, the teachers seemed to develop an awareness of critical intercultural literacy. With feedback from the workshop, all the participants agreed that the training helped them develop their critical cultural literacy awareness in general. For example, in a journal entry, T1 wrote: "the training was helpful as I am now more open-minded and will not take the textbook contents for granted." During the interview, T3 voiced a typical concern when teaching the course: "many examples from this textbook are so-called Western cases and I am not sure whether the cases well-reflect the local situations. The training, however, provides me with new knowledge to view things from a local perspective." In the interview, T5 stated: "I now view the relationship between language and culture from a more critical stance. As English is now the global language, we should not simply focus on teaching Anglophone cultures." We found that the training created a platform for the teachers to further challenge the traditional concept of language and culture.

Regarding *intercultural communication teaching*, after participating in this study, some of the participants (T2, T3, T4, T6, T7) realised the importance of not simply following the textbook contents. They suggested the importance of challenging the traditional notion of culture, and they thought that students should be informed about an alternative perspective when analysing "culture" from the textbooks. For instance, in a journal entry, T3 wrote: "previously, we only taught what was written from the textbooks. Now, I have learnt the importance of seeing more alternatives, even when dealing with the same cultural encounters." When asked to explain what she meant by the word, alternatives, she stated: "I tend to take what has been written in the textbook as granted. Now I will think twice when preparing for a class, pause, then reflect, before teaching some cultural and intercultural aspects to my students."

The teachers learnt to consider an alternative perspective and understand the text from a critical standpoint. More specifically, they realised that the particular textbook simply focuses on Anglophone cultures when introducing the concept of intercultural communication. This is due to the restricted focus of the textbook—which has an essentialist language and cultural understanding, equating intercultural communication to encounters with Westerners (see Appendix 1 for sample contents). The workshop training helped the teachers challenge the taken-for-granted notion of intercultural communication. For instance, T7 learnt to challenge the Anglophone-oriented content of the textbook. In the interview, she stated: "when teaching English, I tend to focus on Anglophone cultures only, and did not realise the global status of English. I now realise that we should readdress the ownership of the English language, as well as its culture." T7 also elaborated on her new understanding of culture teaching in her journal entry; she wrote: "The entrenched native-speakerism ideology of language and culture representation is still salient in ELT. I am optimistic about the change and I should try to empower my students to be exposed to linguistic and cultural diversity in my future teaching." In a journal entry, T3 wrote: "I was surprised that such notions were taken for granted. I thought we should only teach Anglophone cultures to the students, but now I realise that this is no longer the case when English is used as a global language." As seen from the data presented here, the teachers were able to harness the concept of critical intercultural literacy, recognising cultural diversity and multiculturalism through ELT.

The participants also commented on the importance of applying critical intercultural literacy in their future teaching. For instance, in the interview, T2 mentioned that "such a notion is important for my future teaching. The training opens another window for my knowledge. I benefit a lot and hope to share with my students in my career." In the second round of interviews, T4 stated: "I was reluctant to participate at the beginning. However, I like the discussion people have shared during the workshop. I am not a novice teacher anymore, but the critical intercultural literacy is really something new to be applied in my own teaching and training experience." T6 commented briefly, but powerfully: "Although I have some previous knowledge on this concept, the training still empowers me. I want to empower my future students too." In a journal entry, T5 wrote: "Critical intercultural literacy opens a new door for my future teaching. As a teacher I should keep learning myself too before I adopt techniques to my teaching."

The participants also expressed how the concept of critical intercultural literacy can be applied in the ELT classroom. For example, T2 stated that "students should be encouraged to establish conversations with teachers and peers to share opinions and question some traditional ideologies taken-for granted." She suggested that the concept of critical intercultural literacy can be incorporated into courses through techniques, such as extensive/intensive reading and discourse analysis, and teachers and students should initiate and engage in conversations. In a similar vein, T7 mentioned the sociocultural and socio-political aspects in culture teaching: "I do hope that a more conscious critical intercultural awareness can be created by language practitioners. One way we can

do is to empower local cultures in ELT; another way is to promote such notions in teacher training programme" (cf. Bartolomé, 2004; Hoff, 2020; Liu & Fang, 2017).

However, some of the participants expressed concerns about applying critical intercultural literacy in their teaching. For instance, T1 noted that it was difficult to effectively manage the level of "criticality," stating: "I agree with the importance of being critical, but how should teachers manage the level because we don't want to go to another extreme." Similarly, T3 noted that "it is difficult for a textbook to be comprehensive when dealing with intercultural communication." She believed that it was important to incorporate the concept of critical intercultural literacy into ELT classes, but she also stated: "I don't want to impose my perspective on students either." T5 believed that "being critical doesn't mean to be appropriate to all the teachers and students, based on my teaching experience. It's more important to learn to be contextualised if we want to apply such a notion." T6 also elaborated in the journal that "it depends on what teachers need: some want to learn more theories while others want to take away some ideas of activities. So the concept of criticality might not apply for every teacher."

In summary, the participants considered the training workshops to be helpful and effective; they viewed the concept of culture from a critical perspective and they understood the complexity of the relationship between language and culture. Although the participants voiced some concerns about the actual implementation, in general, they also developed a critical understanding of what culture teaching is and how it can be applied in an ELT context.

Discussion and Implications

This paper has reported on a study of how language teachers learnt to view the concept of "culture" critically to challenge the traditional aspects of ELT and the Anglophone dominance of teaching about culture, and argued that in-service English language teachers should develop their critical intercultural literacy to increase their intercultural awareness.

Regarding the first research question, we found that the development of the students' critical intercultural literacy is impacted by the teachers' sociocultural perspective when choosing, utilising and revising ELT materials. From the study, we found that, quite often, in-service teachers do not have a sense of what critical intercultural literacy entails if no professional training is provided; this is even more applicable to many pre-service teachers. We found that teachers' critical intercultural literacy can be developed through professional training and from reading academic papers. From the training and follow-up interviews, they have challenged the fixed nation-based cultural knowledge after the training. To some extent, they have also developed an awareness of GE-oriented pedagogy to challenge the essentialist understanding of culture and a privilege of Anglophone cultures in teaching by recognising linguistic and cultural diversity.

Regarding the second research question, we realised that many in-service ELT teachers are still willing to develop this awareness and apply it to language teaching. From both the interviews and the journal entries, many started to realise that cultural diversity and critical intercultural literacy can challenge the native-speakerism ideology and native Anglophone culture-orientation in ELT. Therefore, it is essential for language practitioners to contextualise their teaching plans and to ensure that the intercultural interactions and cultural knowledge are appropriate and practical for their classes. Furthermore, language teachers and students should develop a critical perspective in both cultural learning within the classroom and real-life intercultural encounters. Given the issue of teachers not imposing their ideology on their students during teaching and in relation to some of the concerns raised in relation to critical intercultural literacy development, more conversations between

teachers and students are required to address the various needs of the stakeholders (Díaz & Moore, 2018; Dooley, 2009). In terms of education, "the importance of incorporating teacher engagement, understood as teachers' ability to form constructive relationships with students into the study of teacher professionalism and public management reform" (Hendrikx, 2020, p. 619) should be emphasised.

In relation to incorporating the notion of critical intercultural literacy into ELT classes, several implications for researchers and language practitioners are provided here. First, even if teachers are unaware of this particular concept, it does not mean they are unaware of notions such as "critical," "critical thinking," which could also be applied to ELT before the training, we argue that the concept of literacy should be viewed as a social practice in which ELT should also be positioned from a social perspective. While literacy development is an important "learning outcome" of intercultural communication courses (Phipps & Clair, 2008), the process of identity construction and negotiation from the stakeholders should also be emphasised in ELT classrooms to facilitate a conversation about the aspect of "criticality" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2016). Because many mainstream textbooks on intercultural communication are based on an essentialist and national perspective of understanding culture, and they prioritise Anglophone cultures in ELT, language teachers must explore the relationship between language and culture, as they are constantly intertwined but lack a fluid, multifaceted, dynamic and complex perspective. Culture can no longer be perceived as a fixed perspective and simply taught in terms of cultural knowledge and/or cultural comparison at a superficial level.

Second, there is a need to challenge the traditional ideologies represented in textbooks to enhance the students' critical intercultural literacy (Gray, 2010). From the training, the teachers gained a new perspective and learnt to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs. They were able to view the relationship between language and culture from a non-essentialist point-of-view and disconnect the English language from Anglophone culture. Teachers can introduce the notion of GE by providing first, features of various varieties of English, then asking students to search various cultures connecting to real-life in different contexts and do some presentations and (online) cultural exchange activities. The dialogue can be extended to searching for information online and conducting some field trips for some ethnographic studies for students to be able to understand the complexity of language and culture from both international and local aspects. Developing critical intercultural literacy requires teachers and students to engage in reflection to facilitate more critical conversations about the topics related to intercultural communication. During the teaching and learning process, students are consciously and unconsciously exposed to cultural representations in the textbooks. Therefore, teachers must be able to think critically about and present alternative interpretations of cases of intercultural encounters presented in textbooks (Ren & Han, 2016; Syrbe & Rose, 2016; Xiong & Peng, 2021).

In order to go beyond textbook instruction, process of intercultural teaching, real-life intercultural critical incidents experienced by teachers and students should be incorporated, discussed and critiqued in order to develop the students' critical literacy awareness (Hoff, 2020; Ren & Han, 2016); doing so will enable instructors to present a more inclusive representation of culture. However, we should also realise that teachers should be "cautious so that they do not impose their own ideologies onto the students" (McConachy, 2018b, p. 86) when inviting conversations about critical intercultural literacy. Therefore, such training should foster critical but intellectual conversations among the trainer and teacher participants instead of being regarded as top-down practices that impose the ideologies of the trainer.

Third, teacher training and professional development should serve as a platform to raise both pre-service and in-service language teachers' awareness of critical intercultural literacy. The findings

of this study reveal that many teachers are unaware of such a notion when they teach intercultural communication as ELT instructors. TESOL is beginning to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity when English is used as a global language. From the Global Englishes for Language Teaching (GELT) perspective, teachers should develop a global awareness to challenge the privilege of the so-called native English speakers. Policy makers and language educators should also change the restricted requirement of native-only in their recruitment process (Rose & Galloway, 2019). For instance, it has been argued that it is important to include material development, innovations in curricula, curricula and real-life practice in the classroom in GELT (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020). It is hoped that such concepts can be introduced in both pre-service and in-service teacher training and professional development programmes. The time has come for teacher training to incorporate the notion of critical intercultural literacy so teachers can develop their multilingual and multicultural awareness and competences (Bartolomé, 2004; Hoff, 2020; Zhu, 2019).

The notion of "postmodern" understandings of culture in theory and interaction should be recognised to challenge the essentialist understanding of culture "as static, stable and monolithic representations" (Díaz & Moore, 2018, p. 86). As argued, a precondition for "navigating the complexities of intercultural communication is the classroom participants' willingness to explore such concepts as culture and identity or the intricate relationship between language and culture in a multifaceted and analytical manner" (Hoff, 2020, p. 68). A bottom-up voice and contextualisation more effectively addresses the students' needs for intercultural communication in TESOL in the 21st century (Baker, 2015; Díaz & Moore, 2018; McConachy, 2018b; Zhu, 2019).

Conclusion

This paper showcases a teacher training programme to develop ELT teachers' critical intercultural literacy for cultural teaching in the Chinese context. Before making any tentative conclusion, it should be recognised that, as a case study with some qualitative data, the findings cannot be generalised; they can only resonate with other similar settings. The number of the participants, as well as the fact that data were collected at only one site, as an example, call for a more comprehensive teacher training in the future of similar topics.

However, as shown in this paper, teachers require training to enhance their awareness of critical intercultural communication and their willingness to adopt a critical approach in their future teaching. The teachers have constructed a professional identity to challenge the native speakerism ideology and the dominance of Anglophone cultures in the process of intercultural communication teaching. The process of empowerment is important for teachers' new identity construction in TESOL in the 21st century, as the relationship between the English language and its culture becomes more subtle and complicated. It is hoped that this study can help English language practitioners go beyond ELT classroom teaching to view "culture" from a dynamic and fluid perspective, from teacher training to students' awareness of teaching and learning about different cultures. It is also hoped that this awareness can be further applied in teacher training and professional development programmes for both pre-service and in-service language teachers.

Further research can be conducted to observe the extent to which teachers incorporate what they have learnt in their training session into their ELT classrooms. In the future, studies should investigate how teachers challenge the native speakerism ideology in their teaching to a more Global Englishes-oriented teaching approach. It is hoped that future ELT and intercultural teaching can create an equal environment with a more Global Englishes-oriented critical approach for both language and culture teaching and learning.

Acknowledgements

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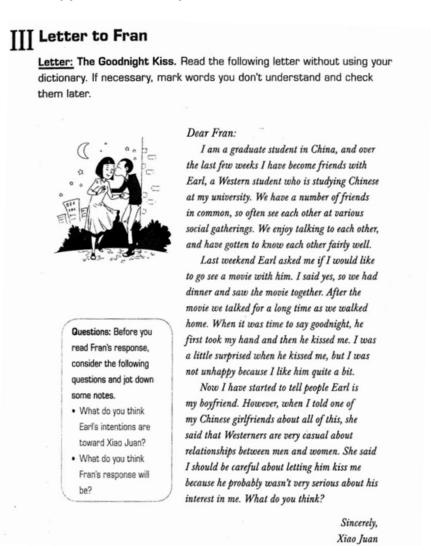
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Appendix 1: Sample content of the textbook

III Letter to Fran

Letter: **The Goodnight Kiss.** Read the following letter without using your dictionary. If necessary, mark words you don't understand and check them later.

Dear Fran:

I am a graduate student in China, and over the last few weeks I have become friends with Earl, a Western student who is studying Chinese at my university. We have a number of friends in common, so often see each other at various social gatherings. We enjoy talking to each other, and have gotten to know each other fairly well.

Last weekend Earl asked me if I would like to go see a movie with him. I said yes, so we had dinner and saw the movie together. After the movie we talked for a long time as we walked home. When it was time to say goodnight, he first took my hand and then he kissed me. I was a little surprised when he kissed me, but I was not unhappy because I like him quite a bit.

Now I have started to tell people Earl is my boyfriend. However, when I told one of my Chinese girlfriends about all of this, she said that Westerners are very casual about relationships between men and women. She said I should be careful about letting him kiss me because he probably wasn't very serious about his interest in me. What do you think?

Sincerely,
Xiao Juan

Questions: Before you read Fran's response, consider the following questions and jot down some notes.
- What do you think Earl's intentions are toward Xiao Juan?
- What do you think Fran's response will be?

III Letter to Fran

Letter: **A Helping Hand.** Read the following letter without using your dictionary. If necessary, mark words you don't understand and check them later.

Dear Fran,

    I graduated several years ago and now I am working as an English teacher at a university here in China. Last week my department sent me to the airport to meet a visiting Canadian professor. When I met him at the airport he had two heavy suitcases and some smaller bags. He was an old man, in his sixties, I think, and we couldn't find a luggage cart, so I wanted to help him with his luggage. Several times I offered to take one of the heavy suitcases from him, and each time he insisted that he could carry the suitcases himself. However, he seemed to be having some difficulty moving both of the suitcases, so at one point when we stopped and he put the suitcases down, I just picked one up. When I picked up the suitcase he again said "I can handle these myself," but I thought he was just being polite so I went off toward the van with the suitcase. However, when we got to the van he seemed annoyed with me, and he hardly spoke at all to me the whole way to our school.

    Why did he get upset with me? Was it wrong to try to help him with his luggage?

Questions: Before reading Fran's Response, consider the following questions:

- Why do you think the professor became annoyed?
- What do you think Fran's response to Li Hua's questions will be?

Sincerely,
Li Hua

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[1] For ethical reasons we are not able to provide further details of the teachers, as some could be easily identified if a detailed profile were provided.