

# **Fostering learners' intercultural communicative competence through EIL teaching: A quantitative study**

**Hang Thi Nhu Mai**

*Quang Binh University, Vietnam*

## **Abstract**

While a considerable body of research has proposed a crucial need for the shift to English as an international language (EIL) teaching to suit learners' communicative needs in the mobilized world, little has been conducted regarding its effects on improving learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). To fill in the literature gap, this study adopted a quantitative approach to gain insight into how learners' ICC is enhanced by implementing EIL teaching principles in an English-speaking course in the Vietnamese tertiary education context. A close-ended questionnaire was administered to 40 third-year English-major students at Quang Binh University, Vietnam before and after the course. Their responses were converted into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using a deductive approach. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a non-parametric alternative to the paired-samples t-test, was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in learners' knowledge and attitudes in relation to intercultural communicative competence before and after their participation in the course. The findings revealed that mean scores of learners' ICC, in terms of intercultural knowledge and attitudes after the course were significantly higher than those before the course. The study drew the conclusion that the implementation of EIL teaching evidently equips learners with essential knowledge and appropriate behaviors to be successfully engaged in intercultural encounters, and, hence, it is vital to adopt this perspective into English language teaching to meet learners' communicative needs and goals in the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** English as an international language, intercultural communicative competence, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, Vietnam

## **Introduction**

It is widely assumed that communication is an interrelationship between a language and its users and if a cultural dimension is not included in the language teaching, then communication cannot happen completely in real life. With the growth of English as an international language, intercultural contacts are occurring on a daily basis not only between native speakers and non-native

speakers but also among non-native interlocutors. Especially, in the context of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an ASEAN community will be formed and consist of three pillars including the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) by 2020. English will become the official language being used for business (ASEAN 2009, 2011), and an equal opportunity will be open for every ASEAN citizen to travel, work, and study at any nations in the ASEAN community. Therefore, enhancing intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills has become a requisite response to the changing sociolinguistic reality of English in order to establish and maintain successful intercultural relationships in the international environment. This poses a new requirement for English language teaching in terms of incorporating up-to-date content and effective teaching approaches in the curriculum to fulfil the 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning goals, that is, to help learners become intercultural speakers of English who can communicate and interact appropriately and effectively with other multicultural and multilingual interlocutors. A plethora of research has proposed that intercultural issues need to be integrated into English skill training for learners to be able to produce the target language in culturally appropriate ways for specific purposes. In line with this, Ahmad and Ahmad (2015) state that “language and culture correlation is a must for an effective cross-cultural communication,” (p. 52). Additionally, Nguyen (2007) claims that involving the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in English language teaching may be among the most significant undertakings in the future of language education.

Meanwhile, English language teaching in Vietnam has still received much criticism, such as relying heavily on strict teacher-centered methods and rote learning as well as not helping learners become interculturally competent in English communications. In fact, although the grammar-translation method is losing its popularity, the attention to developing ICC in English language teaching seems to be inadequate (Tran & Duong, 2015). Despite a newfound emphasis on the ICC development in some educational institutions, there are no specific teaching guidelines available. Consequently, intercultural communication issues are not embedded in the curriculum in any integrated or significant ways. Nguyen (2007) asserts that while the increasing demand for English language teaching and learning is obvious, the curriculum contents and textbooks could not meet learners’ communicative needs and goals. The textbooks have been used for the tertiary education level in Vietnam, for example, are mainly designed in English speaking countries; hence, most of the time those textbooks emphasize the language and culture of English-speaking nations rather than of other English speakers or users, or even the learners’ own cultures. In other words, Western

cultures seem to dominate in English language classrooms in Vietnam, and many teachers tend to believe that in order to master the target language, learners need to acquire target language cultures without raising their intercultural awareness in English communications. This leads to the fact that a large number of Vietnamese learners are not confident enough to participate in intercultural encounters with multilingual speakers or take part in those circumstances unsatisfactorily.

Thus, many researchers (e.g., Mai, 2017, 2018; Nguyen, 2007; Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996; Tran & Duong, 2015) have proposed an urgent need for more effective alternatives and a pedagogy of appropriation for the use of English as an international language today. ELT is able to be efficient for global transactions and relevant to the users' local cultures, therefore, intercultural communicative competence is supposed to be integrated into ELT to prepare learners "to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures" (Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996, p. 211).

This study aims to raise awareness of the benefits of integrating ICC into teaching English language skills and proposes an implementation of EIL teaching principles as a teaching approach in EL classroom to enhance learners' ICC. The study focuses on exploring the development of two elements of ICC, which are knowledge and attitudes because these two elements are fundamental to the development of skills necessary for ICC (Deardorff, 2006). Moreover, it is believed that intercultural communication skill development is a long-term process that is better formed through real-life multicultural encounters outside classrooms rather than in the context of a monoculture classroom. In the scope of this study, learners' development of knowledge and attitudes necessary for ICC were examined and evaluated before and after their participation in the EIL principle-adopted Speaking course.

In what follows, this paper will present the background knowledge of intercultural communicative competence and English as an international language pedagogy, followed by a review of some studies of the field in the EFL and ESL contexts. Next, the findings will present the results of the study before making an analysis and discussing its implications. Finally, the conclusion will capture the main points of the study.

## **Literature Review**

### **Intercultural communicative competence**

Defining intercultural communicative competence is a challenging task due to the variety of definitions and frameworks elaborated by various intercultural scholars. Firstly, in the discussions of ICC, most researchers tend to start from clarifying the concept of intercultural competence (IC). It is commonly assumed that

intercultural competence is the preparation of the individuals to interact appropriately and effectively with other interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2012). In the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Bennet (1993) describes the learners' internal process moving from ethnocentricity to ethnorelativity. Byram (1997) subsequently develops a multidimensional model of IC that considers the knowledge, values, and skills as essential elements for successful intercultural interactions.

Additionally, Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence significantly contributes to the better understanding of IC, which implies the intervention and movement of an individual between five elements of attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes in relation to intercultural interactions. In this framework, attitudes are composed of respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery. Openness and curiosity imply the willingness to risk and move beyond one's comfort zone while respect means valuing others. In relation to knowledge essential for intercultural competence, four major elements are considered such as cultural self-awareness, culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge (including understanding other worldviews), and sociolinguistic awareness. With regard to skills necessary for intercultural competence, Deardorff's framework is in line with Byram (1997) that these skills address the acquisition and processing of knowledge such as observation, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating. Another element constituting intercultural competence is internal outcomes that consist of flexibility, adaptability, an ethnorelative perspective, and empathy. These aspects occur in each person as a result of acquired attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for intercultural competence. External outcomes in Deardorff model's refer to the effective and appropriate behavior and interaction in intercultural encounters.

Although intercultural competence provides a strong underpinning for ICC and some scholars use it as an interchangeable term for ICC, it is argued that these two should not be considered equivalent (Byram, 1997; Moller & Nugent, 2014; Nguyen, 2017; Wilberschied, 2015). When comparing IC and ICC, Byram (1997) emphasizes the cluster of skills required for acquired competence "in attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to IC while using a foreign language" (p. 71). According to Wilberschied (2015), individuals with ICC have the ability to "manage interactions of a greater variety and complexity as a result of self-study, foreign language proficiency, and analysis of one's own culture and that of those who speak the target language" (p. 3).

Among the working definitions of ICC, Byram's (1997) is one of the most popular, which coins that ICC includes "knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others'

values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (p. 34). It underscores that in an intercultural interaction someone gains an inside view of other interactants' cultures while also contributing to their understanding of his or her own culture from an insiders' viewpoint. Byram explains further that an interculturally competent speaker turns intercultural encounters into intercultural relationships; however, contrasting with the IC model, individuals with ICC develop such relationships while using the foreign language.

Despite some different ways of conceptualizing ICC, intercultural scholars have a consensus that intercultural communicative competence is a lifelong process (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Moller & Nugent, 2014; Nguyen, 2017; Wilberschied, 2015). Hence, it is important to pay attention to the development process and how one acquires the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The above-mentioned models and interpretations also suggest that intercultural communicative competence is not a naturally occurring phenomenon; rather, it must be intentionally addressed at institutions through curricular and co-curricular effects. Students' ICC should be developed in a more comprehensive and integrated approach. For that reason, a plethora of research has proposed the need for employing English as an international language pedagogy in English language classroom to meet learners' communicative needs and goals.

### **English as an International Language**

It is the colonial and postcolonial expansion of English along with the rapid growth of globalization that has generated a changing sociolinguistic reality of the English language, which is far more complex than any other languages across the world (Marlina, 2014). A plethora of research has confirmed that English is the most dominant international language of the 21st century, used as the main communication tool for international trade, international conferences, entertainment, education, technology, and media. In most international encounters, English is regarded as the number one global language that expresses the fullest meaning.

“For better or worse, by choice or force, English has ‘traveled’ to many parts of the world and has been used to serve various purposes. This phenomenon has created positive interactions as well as tensions between global and local forces and has had serious linguistic, ideological, socio-cultural, political and pedagogical implications” (Sharifian, 2009, p.1).

Seidlhofer (2011) refers to English as an International Language as a term

that can be used interchangeably with others, such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as a global language, English as a World English and English as a medium of intercultural communication. Although Seidlhofer highlights the international role of the English language by naming it with some terms such as international and global language, due to the diversity of the social contexts of English, equating EIL to some other terms seems to be insufficient. In a more distinguishing way, McKay's (2002) conceptualization considers EIL as an "umbrella" term that characterizes the use of English between any two L2 speakers of English sharing the same culture or owning a different culture. Moreover, it also includes speakers of World Englishes (WEs) communicating within their country, as well as English as a Lingua Franca interactions. It then includes L2 speakers of English using English with L1 speakers. EIL is, therefore, viewed "far more complex linguistically than is allowed for in either the World Englishes or ELF model" (p.16) though it cannot separate from WEs and ELF (Marlina, 2014).

### ***English as an International Language Pedagogy***

In terms of EIL pedagogy, Doel (2007) argues that a "truly international English model" should not follow a narrow perspective that focuses on native or non-native "local or parochial concerns"; rather, it is essential to revolve around "a broad view of communication" which embraces both L1 and L2 speaker needs and a diversity of communicative situations. In line with this, Mackay (2002) points out the different assumption between teaching English as an International Language, teaching English as a Second Language, and teaching English as a Foreign Language. The author claims that EIL entails the context of teaching English to those who have learned an additional language alongside their mother tongue to communicate with other interlocutors of different languages and cultures with a desire to be a part of the global community. As an international language, English is not the property of any nations or countries but of its users and serves the local and global needs of various nations and communities with multicultural contexts. Therefore, EIL teaching rejects the single norms of English in intercultural communications and emphasizes that, with many varieties or with the status of pluricentricity, English is a language of international and hereby intercultural communication (Sharifian, 2009).

Due to a wealth of writings on EIL teaching pedagogy by various scholars, a summary of a common agreement on its principles is significantly made by Marlina (2014), which will be presented as follows.

#### ***Principles of EIL teaching***

##### ***Raising an awareness of and a respect for the pluricentricity of English***

As English appears to be a common tool of communication among people across multiple cultures, how and what they speak serves as a source of personal

and social identity (McKay, 2002). As Lick and Alsagoff's (1998) claim, varieties of any language are associated with particular social groups and can be characterized by a specific set of linguistic modifications. These varieties should be treated equally as they are fully systematic and regulated by a set of principles. In teaching EIL, it is imperative that learners become cognizant of and have a view of English as a heterogeneous language with multiple norms rather than a single model of the mother-tongue speakers (McKay, 2012).

#### *Exposure to different varieties of English*

To develop multilingual communicative competence, learners necessarily understand different varieties of English (Marlina, 2014). McKay (2012) contends that the native models are no longer appropriate in the teaching of an international language; rather, English should be seen as “a truly pluricentric language, which does not focus simply on one or two varieties” (Sharifian, 2014, p. 41). Furthermore, Gee (2004) claims that in an international communication environment, developing learners' ability to understand the meanings in a specific social context, what he calls *Discourse*, is of vital importance. At the same time, he emphasizes that what learners of a heterogeneous English today need is “multiple ways of acting-interacting-speaking-writing-listening-reading-thinking-believing-valuing-feeling with others at the ‘right’ times and in the ‘right’ places” (p.25). Thus, knowledge of different varieties of English would be advantageous for learners in cross-cultural communications.

#### *Development of negotiation skills in different varieties of English*

EIL scholars argue that the changing sociolinguistic conditions of English call for more sophisticated formulations of competence. Canagarajah (2006) notes that in the postmodern context of communication today, "to be really proficient in English, one has to be ‘multidialectal.’ This does not mean that one needs production skills in all the varieties of English but needs the capacity to negotiate diverse varieties to facilitate communication" (p. 233). Sharifian (2014) shares the same idea and terms this competence *multi-varietal competence*. In this regard, he emphasizes that apart from the passive competence to comprehend different varieties of English, language users also need “the skills to employ strategies to facilitate communication in the face of any difficulties that arise, for example, from phonological variations associated with varieties of English” (p. 42).

#### *Appreciation of diverse cultures*

In cross-cultural communication, learners are encouraged to recognize and appreciate the diversity existing within all cultures, especially in the modern era of travel and migration when cultures are in constant contact (British Council, 2013; Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Hamid & Nguyen, 2016). Kramsch (1993) proposes that there exist a variety of national characteristics relating to age, gender, ethnic background, social class, and regional origin within each culture. It highlights the fact that national identities are not monolithic, and that no two

people share an entirely similar set of experiences and worldviews. Additionally, Smith (1976) posits that English as an international language is de-nationalized, and it is embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used. In the context of intercultural communication, therefore, it is crucial that learners of English accept and respect the diversity of cultures rather than insist on the exocentric norms (McKay, 2002).

#### *Exposure to diverse cultures*

It is imperative that learners are exposed to other cultures as a way of reflecting on their own values and beliefs (McKay, 2012). This goal cannot be attained through learning about cultures of the English-speaking countries only, but rather through learning about many cultures and about differing cultural values, which helps to increase learners' sensitivity to cross-cultural differences. Kramsch (1993) argues that language classrooms need to establish a "sphere of interculturality." It requires two essential elements, such as (a) learners need to gain knowledge of other cultures, and (b) learners need to reflect on how their culture contrast with it. Moreover, McKay emphasizes that through comparisons and contrasts with other cultures, learners can gain the greater understanding of their culture. In addition, as one of the primary purpose of communication is to share one's own culture, learners also need to know how to explain and express the cultural values that they hold in English.

#### *Development of negotiation skills of diverse cultures*

In today's intercultural communicative settings, interlocutors might encounter misunderstandings or conflicts, as they are not familiar with cultural conceptualizations associated with a particular sociocultural situation (Sharifian, 2014). Sharifian proposes the need of developing the capacity "to communicate and negotiate cultural conceptualizations during the process of intercultural communication," what he calls *metacultural competence* in learners (p. 44). The term of *cultural conceptualizations* alludes to units of conceptual knowledge that are culturally constructed. It is also referred to cultural schemas which are "pools of cultural knowledge" providing "a basis for a significant share of semantic and pragmatic meanings in a cultural group," (p. 45). However, every individual may internalize different elements of cultural schemas. Thus, members of the same cultural group also need to negotiate different cultural meanings (Marlina, 2014; McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008).

### **Research on Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Bennett (2009) claimed that teaching knowledge of different cultures is not adequate to develop intercultural communicative competence. Students are supposed to not only accumulate facts and knowledge about a culture but also critically examine cultures in order to develop intercultural communicative competence. While studies have examined several approaches for developing



ICC, many of them have continued to receive much criticism for lacking in rigor (Mendenhall et al., 2004).

Cushner (2014), for example, proposed strategies for intercultural training in classrooms. First of all, Cushner identified five stages of intercultural learning, namely denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation. For learners at each stage, Cushner proposed specific strategies and developmental tasks for teachers to draw on in their teaching. He also pointed out the intercultural skills that should be expected for the learners to develop when they are working towards the next stage. For example, for the students at the denial stage, the teachers should focus on developing trust, friendliness, and cooperation among students, help the students to manage anxiety and cultural shock, and gradually develop the ability to recognize the cultural differences and the initiatives to explore more aspects of different cultures. At the final stage, the intercultural skills that the teachers should expect from their students include cultural-specific knowledge, cognitive flexibility, respect for others' cultural values and beliefs, culture-related problem-solving skills, interaction management skills and so forth. However, Cushner's framework is developed in the ESL context where students are from multiple countries with diverse cultures. In the EFL context, in most of the cases, learners live in the same country and share many common aspects of culture. Although EFL learners have their own regional cultural values differing from others, intercultural interactions that happen among EFL learners within their countries might be simpler than those in ESL contexts. Hence, Cushner's teaching approaches could not meet all English learners' needs and goals but need to be adapted by practitioners in their own teaching contexts.

Another study by Ahmad and Ahmad (2015) gave insight into the voice of Arabian teachers of English on the effects of implementing EIL teaching on learners' ICC development in English classrooms. The research adopted a qualitative method by using semi-structured interviews with twelve faculty members who had the vastest experience of teaching English at an international level and experienced much teaching in various countries. The participants' interview responses were audio-recorded and then themes were identified and reported. The findings showed that most of the respondents were convinced the importance of inculcating ICC in the learners through the language teaching and learning process by adopting the EIL teaching principles. The study contributed to the field by raising the awareness of adopting EIL teaching in the language teaching. However, the importance of EIL teaching was just explored from teachers' viewpoints but not from learners' voices. Hence, there remains a room for further research to go insight into learners' perspectives and with a different research method such as using a quantitative approach.

With the same purpose of raising awareness of incorporating intercultural

communications into English language teaching, Nguyen's (2007) study proposed a variety of activities that could be carried out in the language classroom in the Vietnamese context. The author based on three domains of intercultural communicative competence including cognition, affect, and behavior to orient and move the learning of intercultural communications beyond its cognitive domain. Various activities in English language teaching were presented to integrate learners' ICC development into the language teaching process such as discussion, role-play, lecture, and story-telling. Also, based on a literature research, Tran and Duong (2015) suggested adapting six principles of intercultural communicative language teaching to enhance learners' ICC in English language classrooms in Vietnam. These studies made a contribution to the field by responding to the call for more attention to intercultural communications and raising the awareness of this issue in ELT in Vietnam. However, the proposed activities as well as teaching principles were described in a general way and lacked specific contexts – for example, for what levels of learners and how to implement them effectively in actual classrooms to suit different levels of students. Moreover, there were no data shown regarding the effects of these teaching and learning activities or approaches on developing learners' ICC. Further research is, therefore, suggested to explore the effects of different teaching approaches on the ICC development to add more data to this research area.

Overall, the literature shows that in the Vietnamese teaching context there are still a very limited number of studies on how to foster ICC and its effects on particular learners. Furthermore, although research has proposed the urgent need for a shift to EIL teaching pedagogy to meet learners' communicative needs and goals, there have been no empirical studies on the effect of the implementation of EIL teaching principles on learners' ICC development in actual classrooms from learners' viewpoints, especially by employing a quantitative method. Therefore, this study fills in the gap by adopting this approach to explore whether learners' intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes necessary for intercultural communicative competence are improved after taking the EIL-adopting Speaking course. It aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do learners' intercultural communication knowledge change after the course?
2. How do learners' intercultural communication attitudes change after the course?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The participants were 40 English-major students who enrolled in a Speaking class

according to their curriculum in Quang Binh University. Quang Binh University is located in Dong Hoi city in Quang Binh, a small province in the middle of Vietnam. All of the participants were third-year students and their ages ranged from 20 to 22. Among them, the number of males accounted for 7.5% and that of females made up 92.5%. Since third-year students at Quang Binh University had a higher level of English proficiency than the first-year and second-year students who were still at the pre-intermediate level, third-year students were chosen for the experimental teaching. Furthermore, fourth-year students were not chosen to avoid adding more pressures on them in their final year.

### **Teaching Setting**

Through 7 Speaking lessons, the teacher employed EIL teaching principles to both develop learners' linguistic skills and intercultural communicative competence, particularly enhancing their intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes through three major points: (1) the changing socio-linguistic reality of the English language; (2) varieties of English; and (3) cultural diversities in English communications. The contents in these teaching streams were embedded in different lessons of the English speaking class. The aim of the first session was to make learners cognizant of the changing status of English and the development of English as an international language, allowing learners to understand the new functions and roles of English today, and enhance their critical thinking as to how to learn English in order to successfully communicate in international encounters. For the second point, designed lessons aimed to make learners aware of varieties of English around the world, expose them to some varieties of English such as Singlish, Indian English besides American or British Englishes, and encourage learners to respect different accents of English as well as its users. At the same time, the teacher used intelligibility to assess learners' ability of English speaking skill rather than the native-like accent. Also, the teacher provided learners with some useful languages to negotiate the meaning to avoid the breakdown in international communications. For the final point, teachers made learners aware of the diversity of cultures in international communications, exposed them to diverse cultures in Speaking lessons, and encouraged them to respect different beliefs, customs, and rituals in international communications.

### **Instruments**

#### ***Survey questionnaire***

With the ability to collect data on a large scale and its benefits in time, in terms of effort and financial saving (Brown, 2000; Dörnyei, 2003), a survey questionnaire was utilized to collect data in the study (see Appendix).

The questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first part helped to collect the biodata of the participants and was followed by 32 statements

regarding learners' intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes. The participants would tick on the appropriate answer (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree) to evaluate their changes before and after the course. The time taken to complete the survey ranges from 15 to 20 minutes according to the feedback of fifteen students who piloted it.

### ***Piloting***

The pilot test allows the researcher to accumulate assessments on the effectiveness of the instrument, that is, whether it performs the job for which it has been designed. Based on that, the researcher can make modifications and fine-tune the final version (Dörnyei, 2003).

Before delivering the survey to the participants, the survey was sent to fifteen learners who were asked to try to answer the questionnaire and give any comments on any problems that they encountered. Based on the comments, some improvements were made with an aim of achieving more accurate responses.

After correcting and improving the questionnaire, it was delivered to 40 third-year English-major students before the course and after the class employing each point of EIL teaching pedagogy with the traditional paper. This administration allowed the participants to reflect their thoughts immediately after the class so that they could remember clearly what they experienced and provided more accurate responses.

### **Data Analysis**

***Reliability level of the questionnaire.*** Reliability analysis was conducted with the questionnaire data using SPSS 22. The Cronbach's alpha value of .947 indicated a high level of reliability (Field, 2009).

***Close-ended questionnaire.*** Firstly, the participants' responses were converted into numbers to calculate scores, such as strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. Secondly, since the purpose of the study was to explore learners' changes in their intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes, the closer the mean scores were to 5, the more knowledge and positive attitudes learners had.

It was hypothesized that there were significant differences between the mean scores of students' attitudes and knowledge before and after the course. However, in analyzing the data, null hypotheses of no differences were tested. It was expected, however, that these null hypotheses would be rejected.

All the null hypotheses were tested at alpha .05 level of significance and with a 95% confidence interval. The procedure of data analysis consisted of the following phrases to deal with the research question.

Firstly, a normality test was conducted to check whether the data set was normally distributed. The result could help to determine which statistical technique was suitable to analyze the data.

Secondly, a Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test, a nonparametric alternative for the paired samples t-test, was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores of students' knowledge and attitudes in relation to intercultural communications before and after the course.

## **Results**

### ***Data screening***

To test the assumption of normality, a Histogram was firstly observed, which showed that the shape did not look symmetric and bell-shaped. Hence, the assumption of normality was not met. A visual inspection of Normal Q-Q plot also indicated that the scores were not normally distributed along the line.

The observed values of the Shapiro-Wilk statistics for the post-test variable did not meet the assumption of normality ( $p < .05$ ). Also, the values of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov for both the pre-test and post-test data were significantly different from the normality ( $p < .05$ ).

As the assumption of normality was not met, the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test instead of the paired-samples t-test was used to test whether there is a significant difference between mean scores of students' intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes before and after the course.

### **Research question 1: How do learners' intercultural communication knowledge change after the course?**

The statistics for the development of learners' intercultural communication knowledge was analyzed throughout each teaching principle adopted.

Firstly, through the introduction about the changing socio-linguistic reality of English, the statistics showed that learners' intercultural communication knowledge about the changing status and role of the target language was significantly improved ( $Z = -5.388$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the median knowledge score rating was 2.33 for the pre-test and 4.67 for the post-test. The statistics for each statement can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*The differences in learners' intercultural communication knowledge score rating before and after introducing the changing socio-linguistic reality of English*

		N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q1. I am aware of the spread of English and its changing status in the mobilized world.	Pre_score	40	2.33	1.05	1	5	2.00	-5.447	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.45	0.60	3	5	4.50		
Q2. I have learned more about the new roles and functions of English as an international language today.	Pre_score	40	2.67		1	5	3.00	-5.164	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.50		3	5	5.00		
Q3. I am aware that to be proficient in English communications is not only developing linguistic skills but also intercultural communication competence.	Pre_score	40	2.80		1	5	3.00	-5.214	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.65		3	5	5.00		

Note: Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, \*p<.05

Secondly, through exposing learners to different varieties of English in the classroom, learners' intercultural communication knowledge regarding varieties of English was also significantly improved ( $Z=-5.515$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and the median knowledge score rating was 2.00 for the pre-test and 4.20 for the post-test. The statistics for each statement can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*The differences in learners' intercultural communication knowledge score rating before and after the exposure to varieties of English*

		N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Z	Sig. (2- tailed)
Q5. I am aware that besides American English or British English, there are other varieties of English such as Indian English, Singlish, etc.	Pre_score	40	2.13	1.14	1	5	2.00	-5.504	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.58	0.64	3	5	5.00		
Q6. I have learned some different accents and vocabulary of Singlish, Indian English, and Manglish besides American and British Englishes.	Pre_score	40	1.90	1.08	1	4	2.00	-5.518	.000*
	Post_score	40	3.93	1.02	2	5	4.00		
Q7. I am aware that I might communicate in English with people from other countries or regions (such as China, Japan, Thailand,...) but not only with people from English-speaking countries such as America or Britain.	Pre_score	40	2.65	1.21	1	5	2.50	-5.292	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.55	0.60	3	5	5.00		

Q8. I have learned that people coming from different countries or regions might have different accents.	Pre_score	40	2.58	1.24	1	5	-5.301	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.42	0.87	2	5		
Q9. I have learned and practiced using some languages to negotiate the meaning in intercultural communications.	Pre_score	40	2.10	0.90	1	4	-5.569	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.25	0.63	3	5		
Q10. I have learned and practiced using some languages to join intercultural communications and avoid the breakdown.	Pre_score	40	1.75	0.87	1	4	-5.556	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.10	0.93	2	5		

Note: Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, \*p<.05

Finally, through exposing learners to a diversity of cultures in the classroom, learners' intercultural communication knowledge regarding the diversity of cultures in English communication was also significantly improved ( $Z=-5.517$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and the median knowledge score rating were 2.00 for the pre-test and 4.36 for the post-test. The statistics for each statement can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3

*The differences in learners' intercultural communication knowledge score rating before and after the exposure to a diversity of cultures*

		N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q16. I am aware that besides American or British cultural norms, there are a	Pre_score	40	2.15	0.92	1	4	2.00	-5.576	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.30	0.72	3	5	4.00		



diversity of cultural norms and beliefs expressed by English speakers from different cultures in English communications.										
Q17. I am aware of enriching my knowledge of different cultures to develop my intercultural communicative competence.	Pre_score	40	2.63	1.10	1	5	3.00	-5.389	.000*	
	Post_score	40	4.70	0.68	2	5	5.00			
Q18. I learned various cultures of different countries besides American or British cultures such as about non-verbal communication, politeness, silence, and turn-taking, etc..	Pre_score	40	2.33	0.92	1	4	2.00	-5.585	.000*	
	Post_score	40	4.52	0.72	3	5	5.00			
Q19. I have developed my knowledge about my own cultures in English.	Pre_score	40	2.10	0.78	1	5	2.50	-5.511	.000*	
	Post_score	40	4.10	0.78	3	5	4.00			
Q20. I have understood more about my culture in comparison with other cultures.	Pre_score	40	2.22	0.86	1	4	2.00	-5.450	.000*	
	Post_score	40	4.43	0.68	2	5	4.50			
Q21. I have developed my knowledge about	Pre_score	40	2.30	0.88	1	4	2.00	-5.545	.000*	
	Post_score	40	4.15	0.70	3	5	4.00			

people and cultures in the world.

Q22. I have learned some languages to participate in intercultural communications and avoid the breakdown.	Pre_score	40	1.67	0.83	1	4	2.00	-5.600	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.07	0.73	2	5	4.00		

Note: Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test; \*p<.05

Overall, the descriptive statistics showed that learners' intercultural communication knowledge score rating after participating in the course was significantly higher than that before the course. It can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4

*Descriptive statistics of learners' knowledge score before and after participating in the ICC course*

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Knowledge_Score_Pre	40	2.27	.71	1.0	3.9
Knowledge_Score_Post	40	4.36	.45	3.2	4.9

A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test showed that the implementation of EIL teaching principles in English speaking classroom helped to make a statistically significant improvement in learners' intercultural communication knowledge (Z=-5.513, p<.05). Indeed, the median knowledge score rating were 2.00 for the pre-test and 4.36 for the post-test. The table also indicated that all of the participants (N=40) gained a positive development of intercultural communication knowledge after the course. It can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5

*A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test*

		N	Mean Rank	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Knowledge_Score_Post - Knowledge_Score_Pre	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00	- 5.513	.000*
	Positive Ranks	40 <sup>b</sup>	20.50		

Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>
Total	40

a. Knowledge\_Score\_Post < Knowledge\_Score\_Pre  
b. Knowledge\_Score\_Post > Knowledge\_Score\_Pre  
c. Knowledge\_Score\_Post = Knowledge\_Score\_Pre  
Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test; \*p<.05

**Research question 2: How do learners’ intercultural communication attitudes change after the course?**

The statistics for the changes in learners' intercultural communication attitudes were also analyzed through each teaching principle adopted.

Firstly, through the introduction about the changing socio-linguistic reality of English, the statistics showed that learners’ attitudes towards the changing status and roles of the target language were significantly improved (Z=-5.569, p<.05), and the median knowledge score rating were 2.00 for the pre-test and 5.00 for the post-test. The statistics for each statement can be seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6

*The differences in learners' intercultural communication attitude score rating before and after introducing the changing socio-linguistic reality of English*

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q4. I have a desire to learn more essential knowledge and skills to communicate successfully in intercultural encounters.	Pre_score 40	2.33	1.05	1	4	2.00	-5.569	.000*
	Post_score 40	4.58	0.60	2	5	5.00		

Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test; \*p<.05

Secondly, through exposing learners to different English varieties in the classroom, learners showed a significantly positive attitude towards English varieties in international communications (Z=-5.515, p<.05), and the median knowledge score rating were 2.80 for the pre-test and 4.60 for the post-test. The statistics for each statement can be seen in Table 7 below.

Table 7  
*The differences in learners' intercultural communication attitude score rating before and after the exposure to varieties of English*

		N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q11. I respect all accents of English wherever speakers come from.	Pre_score	40	2.45	1.26	1	5	2.00	-5.210	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.35	0.77	2	5	4.50		
Q12. I wish my accent of English will be respected by other interlocutors from other countries.	Pre_score	40	2.32	1.05	1	5	2.00	-5.501	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.35	0.80	2	5	5.00		
Q13. I do not feel ashamed if I do not speak like the native's accent as long as I am understood.	Pre_score	40	2.58	0.90	1	4	2.50	-5.609	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.50	0.64	3	5	5.00		
Q14. I want to keep my identity through my English accent when communicating with people from other countries (e.g., Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Australia,...).	Pre_score	40	3.42	1.15	1	5	4.00	-4.888	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.80		3	5	5.00		
Q15. I want to enrich my knowledge of other Englishes outside the classroom to enhance my intercultural communicative competence.	Pre_score	40	3.42	1.15	1	5	4.00	-4.786	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.78	0.66	2	5	5.00		

Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test; \*p<.05

Lastly, through exposing learners to a diversity of cultures in the classroom, learners' attitudes regarding the diversity of cultures in English communications was significantly improved ( $Z=-5.513$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and the median knowledge score rating were 2.60 for the pre-test and 4.50 for the post-test. The statistics for each statement can be seen in Table 8 below.

Table 8

*The differences in learners' intercultural communication knowledge score rating before and after the exposure to a diversity of cultures*

		N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q23. I have an open mind to different cultures that I might meet in international communications.	Pre_score	40	2.63	1.10	1	4	3.00	-5.523	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.55	0.64	3	5	5.00		
Q24. I respect other interlocutors' cultural norms and beliefs in intercultural communications.	Pre_score	40	2.77	1.03	1	5	3.00	-5.516	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.65	0.66	2	5	5.00		
Q25. I wish other interlocutors will also respect my cultural norms and beliefs in intercultural communications.	Pre_score	40	3.00	1.22	1	5	3.00	-5.309	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.70	0.61	3	5	5.00		
Q26. I want to keep my identity in intercultural communications.	Pre_score	40	2.60	1.13	1	5	2.00	-5.311	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.48	0.68	2	5	5.00		

Q27. I wish other interlocutors recognize me as a Vietnamese in an international environment although I speak English.	Pre_score	40	2.30	1.04	1	4	2.00	-5.562	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.55	0.71	2	5	5.00		
Q28. I am sympathetic with cultural mistakes or conflicts that might happen in intercultural communications.	Pre_score	40	2.15	1.00	1	4	2.00	-5.257	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.25	0.81	2	5	4.00		
Q29. I do not feel embarrassed or ashamed if there is a cultural misunderstanding in an intercultural communication.	Pre_score	40	1.97	1.03	1	4	2.00	-5.285	.000*
	Post_score	40	3.95	0.88	2	5	4.00		
Q30. I feel more confident to communicate in English in an international environment.	Pre_score	40	2.05	0.90	1	4	2.00	-5.573	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.30	0.82	2	5	4.50		
Q31. I love the world more with a multicultural picture.	Pre_score	40	2.97	1.00	1	5	3.00	-5.308	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.65	0.66	2	5	5.00		
Q32. I love my own culture more.	Pre_score	40	3.20	1.18	1	5	3.00	-5.140	.000*
	Post_score	40	4.60	0.67	2	5	5.00		

Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test; \*p<.05

The descriptive statistics of learners' intercultural communication attitude score rating before and after the course showed that learners' intercultural attitude score rating after the course was by far higher than that before the course. It can be seen in Table 9 below.

Table 9

*Descriptive statistics of learners' intercultural communication attitude scores before and after participating in the ICC course*

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Attitude_Score_Pre	40	2.65	.76	1.3	4.1
Attitude_Score_Post	40	4.50	.47	2.4	5.0

A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed that the implementation of EIL perspective in English speaking classroom helped to make a statistically significant improvement in learners' intercultural attitudes ( $Z = -5.513$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Indeed, median attitude score rating were 2.64 for the pre-test and 4.53 for the post-test. The table also indicated that all of the participants ( $N = 40$ ) gained a positive change in intercultural communication attitude after the course. It can be seen in Table 10 below.

Table 10

*A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test*

		N	Mean Rank	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Awareness_Score_Post-	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00	- 5.513	.000*
Awareness_Score-Pre	Positive Ranks	40 <sup>b</sup>	20.50		
	Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>			
	Total	40			

a. Awareness\_Score\_Post < Awareness\_Score\_Pre

b. Awareness\_Score\_Post > Awareness\_Score\_Pre

c. Awareness\_Score\_Post = Awareness\_Score\_Pre

Z=Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, \* $p < .05$

## Discussion

The findings suggest that adopting EIL teaching principles in teaching English Speaking skill significantly develops learners' knowledge and attitudes in relation to intercultural communicative competence.

As previously pointed out in the Literature Review, due to the changing socio-linguistic reality of English, the target of the 21st-century English language teaching must embrace both the development of linguistic skills and intercultural communicative competence. However, not only can ICC be enhanced through separate curricular courses or training, but it can be also substantially improved by integrating EIL teaching principles into skill training like Speaking skills. This study's findings confirm McKay's (2002) claim on the vital role of embedding the cultural dimension in English language teaching to develop learners' communicative needs. It is also in line with Roger Nunn's (2007) assertion that in the more varied and unpredictable contexts of English communications, it is obviously inappropriate to teach language in limited cultural situations and a mono-model of the target language.

Although previous studies have proposed using EIL teaching pedagogy to meet learners' communicative needs and goals, most of them mainly stopped at stating the problems and calling for more practical actions in the classroom. Little empirical research was conducted on how to develop learners' ICC in an actual language classroom by employing EIL teaching principles and to what extent it affects learners' intercultural communicative competence. Despite some differences such as adopting a quantitative method and from learners' voice, the current study confirms Ahmad and Ahmad's (2015) claim that implementing EIL teaching is an effective approach to develop learners' ICC in the classroom in a significant and integrated way. However, differences in using two criteria, learners' intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes, to evaluate the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence could contribute to the rate differences between the present study and previous studies.

Despite its valuable findings, this study cannot avoid some caveats. For example, the study used only two criteria, knowledge and attitudes, to evaluate learners' ICC development. Future research could explore whether other elements such as skills to interpret, skills to relate, or ability to solve intercultural situations in international encounters can be measured and how to carry out as well as assess them so that a more comprehensive assessment of learners' ICC can be added to the research field.



## **Pedagogical Implications**

The study firstly drew an implication for curriculum makers and material designers. Due to the fact that English is now used more frequently for cross-cultural communications, the modification in the existing curriculum is crucial for catering the needs of Vietnamese learners of English in the globalized era which is aligned with the role of English as an international language. To be more specific, the EIL curriculum needs to be culturally sensitive to equip learners with knowledge and appropriate attitudes necessary for further skill development in intercultural encounters. In addition, it should make learners cognizant of the plurality of English by introducing World Englishes and the changing face of English as an international language. This will encourage learners to explore more knowledge outside the classroom to meet their interests and needs.

To English language practitioners, on the one hand, they should have “agentive spaces,” demonstrating an awareness of the changing face of English, and on the other hand, act as “gate-keepers” of the language norms (Hamid & Baldauf, 2013). That is to say, although current curricula use the original varieties such as British English or American English to guide learners, it does not mean that varietal features of the language should be ignored in the language classroom. Rather, in a more active role, language teachers should act as gate-keepers to correct learners' errors while be aware of the language variations and learn to distinguish between errors and variants to nurture learners' language creativity.

To researchers, as the study merely adopted a quantitative method to address the research questions, further research could use a qualitative method using interviews, observations, or documents to examine more about learners' performances and opinions regarding the effects of the teaching approach after participating in the course. One subject that remains to be explored is which variable makes a higher contribution to learners' ICC enhancement between knowledge and attitudes.

## **Conclusion**

The research of this study utilized a quantitative method with the aim of exploring how learners' intercultural communicative competence in terms of their knowledge and attitudes would change through adopting EIL teaching pedagogy in an English-speaking classroom. Based on the research sample, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant development of learners' intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes after the course employing EIL teaching principles.

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## Appendix

### Survey Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this project. This questionnaire is designed for research purposes only, and all information will be kept confidential. The questionnaire will begin with some questions asking you about personal information. It, then, includes 32 statements regarding your intercultural communication knowledge and attitudes in English communications before and after employing English as an international language (EIL) principles in the Speaking class.

Please tick (√) the appropriate response (strongly agree, agree to some extent, neutral, disagree to some extent, strongly disagree) to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

(The survey was delivered to learners before and after the EIL-adopted Speaking class. The survey before the course did not contain three points of EIL teaching)

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Age: .....

Gender:     Male     Female

#### **Through the introduction to the changing socio-linguistic reality of English, Knowledge**

Q1. I am aware of the spread of English and its changing status in the mobilized world.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly  
disagree

Q2. I have learned more about the new roles and functions of English as an international language today.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly  
disagree

Q3. I am aware that to be proficient in English communications is not only developing linguistic skills but also intercultural communication competence.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly  
disagree

#### **Attitude**

Q4. I have a desire to learn more essential knowledge and skills to communicate successfully in intercultural encounters.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly  
disagree

#### **Through the exposure to varieties of English,**

### Knowledge

Q5. I am aware that besides American English or British English, there are other varieties of English such as Indian English, Singlish, etc.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q6. I have learned some different accents and vocabulary of Singlish, Indian English, and Manglish besides American and British Englishes.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q7. I am aware that I might communicate in English with people from other countries or regions (such as China, Japan, Thailand,...) but not only with people from English-speaking countries such as America or Britain.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q8. I have learned that people coming from different countries or regions might have different accents.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q9. I have learned and practiced using some languages to negotiate the meaning in intercultural communications.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q10. I have learned and practiced using some languages to join intercultural communications and avoid the breakdown.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

### Attitude

Q11. I respect all accents of English wherever speakers come from.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q12. I wish my accent of English will be respected by other interlocutors from other countries.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q13. I do not feel ashamed if I do not speak like the native's accent as long as I am understood.

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

Q14. I want to keep my identity through my English accent when communicating with people from other countries (e.g., Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Australia,...).

Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neutral                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree

disagree

Q15. I want to enrich my knowledge of other Englishes outside the classroom to enhance my intercultural communicative competence.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

**Through the exposure to the diversity of cultures,  
Knowledge**

Q16. I am aware that besides American or British cultural norms, there are a diversity of cultural norms and beliefs expressed by English speakers from different cultures in English communications.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q17. I am aware of enriching my knowledge of different cultures to develop my intercultural communicative competence.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q18. I have learned about various cultures of different countries besides American or British cultures such as about non-verbal communication, politeness, silence, and turn-taking, etc.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q19. I have developed my knowledge about my own cultures in English.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q20. I have understood more about my culture in comparison with other cultures.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q21. I have developed my knowledge about people and cultures in the world.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q22. I have learned some languages to participate in intercultural communications and avoid the breakdown.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

**Attitude**

Q23. I have an open mind to different cultures that I might meet in international communications.

Strongly agree                      Agree                      Neutral                      Disagree                      Strongly disagree

Q24. I respect other interlocutors' cultural norms and beliefs in intercultural communications.

Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q25. I wish other interlocutors will also respect my cultural norms and beliefs in intercultural communications.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q26. I want to keep my identity in intercultural communications.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q27. I wish other interlocutors recognize me as a Vietnamese in an international environment although I speak English.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q28. I am sympathetic with cultural mistakes or conflicts that might happen in intercultural communications.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q29. I do not feel embarrassed or ashamed if there is a cultural misunderstanding in an intercultural communication.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q30. I feel more confident to communicate in English in an international environment.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q31. I love the world more with a multicultural picture.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Q32. I love my own culture more.				
Strongly agree disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly

### Note on Contributor

**Hang Thi Nhu MAI** is currently a lecturer of English at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Quang Binh University, Vietnam. She obtained her Master degree in Applied Linguistics at the University of Queensland, Australia. Her research interests include English as an international language, intercultural competence, and task-based language teaching. Address: 312 Ly Thuong Kiet, Bac Lyward, Dong Hoi city, Quang Binh province, Vietnam. Email: [hangmainhu88qb@gmail.com](mailto:hangmainhu88qb@gmail.com)