

# The Language Ideology in Chinese English Lesson Planning and Implications for Future EFL Intercultural Teaching Approaches: A Mixed Method Study in Shanghai

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## ABSTRACT

With the continuous development of internationalization, China has been emphasizing the integration of intercultural competence into foreign language classes, but there is currently a lack of clear guidance on how to teach intercultural competence in high school English courses. This research focuses on the language ideology reflected in the design and characteristics of teaching plans, as well as the intercultural teaching methods used by teachers to meet the demands of intercultural English teaching. In this study, a mixed-method was used to collect and generate qualitative and quantitative data through online face-to-face interviews and teaching-related literature analysis. Through the analysis of teaching documents and interviews, the two researchers found that most Shanghai high school teachers no longer follow the mainstream standards of the United States and Britain but pay more attention to improving students' Chinese ethnic identity and confidence. This paper classified the teaching methods and teaching styles of selected teachers and expounded the characteristics and universality of the intercultural teaching methods adopted by them.

**Keywords:** *The language ideology, the intercultural competence, mixed methods, teaching documents.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the setting of internationalization, English has acted as the principal means of communication for programs aimed at globalization in business investment, art, science, and other fields. According to the Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (2017)<sup>[15]</sup> China boasts the world's biggest population of ESL/EFL students. The popularity of English in China and people's unprecedented enthusiasm for learning English have had a profound impact on China's English curriculum standards, policy, syllabus, and teachers' ELT practices (Sun, 2016)<sup>[19]</sup>.

Chinese students usually follow the norms of native speakers who speak standard English, and China's ESL teachers usually follow the approach of teaching English as a foreign language (Wen, 2012b)<sup>[21]</sup>. Most of the English ELT practices in China are utilitarian, and most English teachers focus on helping students pass tests and get high grades. Little attention has been paid to teaching Chinese students how to effectively communicate with NES and NNES in international settings and how to

improve their intercultural communication skills. As a result, in the framework of Specific Foreign Language Education in China, how to use existing intercultural teaching theories and methodologies, how to develop effective teaching processes, and how to combine intercultural learning with language skills teaching should be investigated and applied.

With the increasing need for international communication, English has shifted from a foreign language to a lingua franca in China. In order to change the over emphasis on vocabulary and grammar in ELT practice, the Ministry of Education has repeatedly revised the English curriculum standards, encouraged students to improve their intercultural communication skills, and required English teachers to adjust their teaching methods, emphasizing the integration of cross-cultural competence into foreign language classes. Through online face-to-face interviews and the study of teaching-related literature, a hybrid strategy was employed to collect and generate qualitative and quantitative data in this study. The two researchers discovered that most teachers no longer follow the mainstream standards of the United

States and Britain, and instead place more emphasis on improving students' Chinese ethnic identity and confidence. This was based on an analysis of 28 teachers' teaching plans and face-to-face interviews with six randomly selected teachers. This paper also coded the relevant answers of the teachers' intercultural teaching through specific questions in the interview to generate quantitative data and expounded the characteristics and universality of the intercultural teaching methods adopted by them.

To begin with, this study recorded teachers' experiences with cross-cultural teaching procedures and techniques in the context of Chinese education so that other instructors can learn from them. Furthermore, this knowledge can be used to help develop and promote a range of instructional approaches as well as encourage English teachers to implement a cross-cultural orientation in their own classes.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Language Ideology***

Language ideology is the concept of a language's position, function, conventions, and ownership, which influences the distribution and selection of instructional resources, as well as the expectations of foreign language learners (Woolard, 1992; Heinrich, 2005)<sup>[22][7]</sup>.

Previous Chinese senior high school ELT classes tended to emphasize either British or American English as the default model of English, reflecting Standard English ideology (Lee & Li, 2020)<sup>[10]</sup>. For example, many studies (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Wang et al., 2020)<sup>[8][21]</sup> have shown that current ELT textbooks tend to use British or American English as norms and models. The characters of native English speakers are portrayed as users and owners of English, which is a reflection of power relations.

But the English Curriculum Standards for China's Primary and Secondary Schools (MOE, 2017)<sup>[15]</sup> attempted to change this tendency. These new curriculum standards emphasize the fostering of multicultural rather than British or American English cultural competency, strategies, and affective experiences in the learning process. Although China's Ministry of Education has issued new policies to develop Chinese students' multicultural competence, there is not enough empirical evidence showing the tendency of adopting the ELF approach in China's English education.

The senior high school is a crucial time for the development of students' cognitive abilities. The language ideology behind English textbooks, teaching plans, and the teacher's guidance will influence how future generations perceive English and the development of local varieties of English. It is of vital importance to

study how language ideology influences teachers' teaching practices.

### ***2.2 Development of Intercultural Competence in the classroom***

Since 2010, cross-cultural competency has been a key idea in English teaching in China as well as a key aim of English education. Intercultural competency has become the cornerstone of intercultural English instruction in China, including curiosity and openness, knowledge, interpretation and relevance abilities, discovery and interaction skills, and critical cultural awareness (Zhang, 2007; Byram, 2021)<sup>[24][2]</sup>. Chinese researchers have also established their own models of intercultural competency in foreign language education, the majority of which are influenced by western culture (Zhang, 2007)<sup>[24]</sup>.

Intercultural competence is defined in this study as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 246), and key components of intercultural competence, such as intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster critical cultural awareness, were included in both Deardorff (2006)<sup>[4]</sup> and Byram (2021)<sup>[2]</sup> theoretical models.

Furthermore, the focus on culture in this Chinese educational setting is not just on teaching student interlocutors' cultural norms and values but also on educating their original culture, Chinese culture. Intercultural English instruction seeks to assist students to gain a deeper awareness of both the target language culture and their own culture, allowing them to see things from other viewpoints and avoid preconceptions (Byram, 2002)<sup>[3]</sup>.

### ***2.3 course plan documents***

Although containing multiple meanings, course plan documents were commonly regarded as "the interaction of teachers and particular content in order to arrive at decisions regarding what and how particular content should be delivered to suit the unique circumstances of each teaching situation" (Lai & Lam, 2011, p. 221)<sup>[9]</sup>. It refers to the teaching and learning decisions adopted by teachers prior to delivering a lesson (Sardo-Brown, 1996, p. 519)<sup>[19]</sup>.

Based on this notion, a lesson plan includes the teaching goal (what will students learn in the class), how the goal will be reached (the teaching content, procedure, and class actives) and a way of measuring how well the goal was reached (the evaluation methods). A scientific and well-prepared lesson plan is important for a successful teaching practice, which ensures an effective teaching practice (Rusznyak & Walton, 2011)<sup>[18]</sup>.

The course plan documents are the reflection of the teachers' views on the class. Teachers are the agents who

promote English through the English education system. As a result, their attitudes toward English will influence their teaching practices in English classes and the students' learning process. To put it differently, teachers' perspectives and English proficiency can either promote or hinder the spread of language ideology. The investigation of teachers' teaching plans on language ideology will provide some insights into China's senior high school English education.

In brief, this study aims to investigate the language ideology in current Chinese English teachers' course plan documents and interviews, and its influence on teachers' teaching practice under cross-cultural requirements. The research questions are as follows:

- a) What is the language ideology reflected in the course plan documents and reflection logs?
- b) What are the characteristics of the intercultural pedagogical approaches adopted by the selected instructors?
- c) What is the prevalence of these characteristics?

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1 Mixed research design

The goal of this study was to look at teachers' ideologies, beliefs, and practices of cross-cultural competency, as well as to utilize a hybrid research approach to analyze the complexity and variety of data in order to properly answer the research questions. This research employed Onwuegbuzie's (2003)<sup>[16]</sup> methodological approach, which combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Not only extracted comprehensive information from qualitative data, but also investigated the universality of practice in quantitative data.

A sequential exploratory mixed research design, as defined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018)<sup>[4]</sup>, was employed in this study. (1) A sequential qualitative-quantitative strategy, in which qualitative data were gathered first, then turned into quantitative data, and both qualitative and quantitative data were merged in analyses. (2) A descriptive statistic used to describe the utilization of teaching methods discovered via qualitative research.

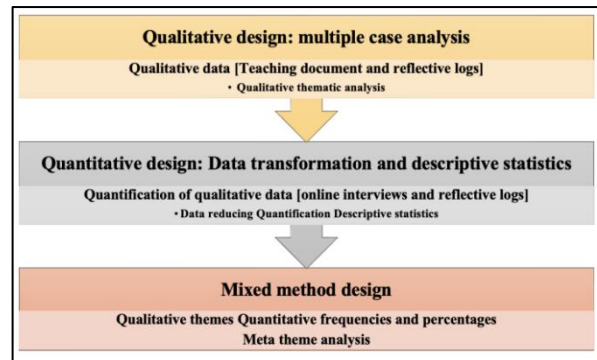


Figure 1 Depicts further design details.

#### 3.2 The data collection

Qualitative data came from course plan documents and interview reflection logs (Leech&Onwuegbuzie, 2008)<sup>[11]</sup>. All 28 instructor participants contributed a one-lesson (50 minute) intercultural English syllabus, as well as pertinent chapters from the textbook, such as classroom topics, course materials on classroom activities, and assignments.

Six instructors were chosen at random to engage in a 60-minute online face-to-face interview, which contained the following questions: (1) What was the value of cross-cultural teaching in the English classroom, and how well did instructors recognize cross-cultural ability? (2) What sorts of features (designs/technologies/activities) did instructors believe can boost students' language and cross-cultural competency development, and how did they use these features? (3) Teachers were asked to describe the concepts, educational requirements they utilize in the classroom.

All interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim to optimize the efficacy of the description (Maxwell, 1992)<sup>[14]</sup>. Two instructors with over ten years of experience were asked to produce reflective blogs based on interviews, which included comments and practices on intercultural teaching design, implementation, and assessment. Participants' thoughts, critiques, and self-analysis are collected in reflective logs, which are regarded a beneficial tool (Anderson, 2012)<sup>[1]</sup>.

#### 3.3 The data analysis

##### 3.3.1 The language ideology

At the macro level, content analysis (Patton, 2003)<sup>[17]</sup> was utilized to evaluate two instructors' reflective logs and instructional documents in the first stage. The instructional curriculum includes literature, environment, business, and art, as shown in Figure 3. In Figure 2, there were two professors who were neutral, 23 who stressed Chinese culture, and three who talked more about Anglo-American culture.

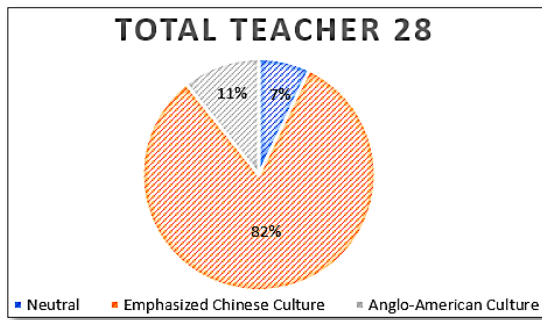


Figure 2 The language ideology of 28 teachers

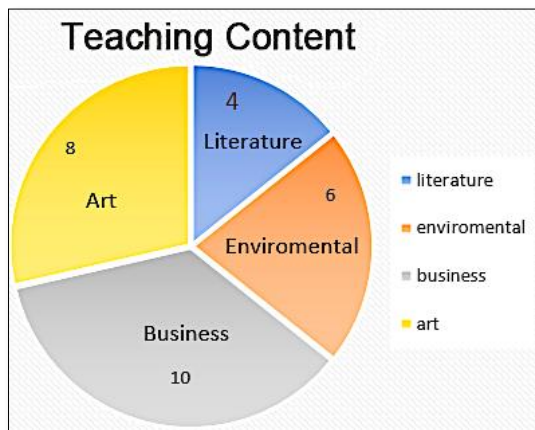


Figure 3 Teaching content including Literature, Environment, Business, and Art

Teacher Gi selected Unit 2 of the compulsory textbook for High School English, Chapter 4: Learning about Trade and Economy. The reading focused on the significant gains China has made in economic development since joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as its significant contribution to the global economy and international community. Students were expected to recognize and build on the significant historic successes of reform and opening up, as well as enhance national confidence, as part of the educational objectives. However, in his interview, researchers found that the teacher overemphasized China's economic and cultural development, and repeatedly expressed negative views on the economies and cultures of western countries.

Teacher Mei selected Unit 3 of the compulsory textbook for High School English, Chapter 4: Protecting the Environment. In the Reading, students were investigated on the measures taken by different countries to solve a specific environmental problem, so as to broaden their international vision, enhance their international understanding and build a sense of community with a shared future. In his interview, the researchers found that the teacher repeatedly mentioned the concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind." And repeatedly stressed that countries should cooperate with each other on environmental protection.

Teacher Lu selected Unit 4 of the compulsory textbook for High School English, Chapter 4: Approaching Classics. The teaching content of this unit is diverse, including different genres of foreign classical literature such as novels and poems. The theme was how the old man in Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" overcomes the difficult situation and tries his best to defend the big fish and his personal dignity. Appreciated the natural beauty of early spring and March in Wordsworth's "Written in March" to help students understand, love, praise and draw spiritual strength from nature. Listening to Russell's message to future generations, realized that the wisdom of critical reason and the moral quality of love and tolerance will determine the meaning and relevance of human life in the future. The texts in the textbooks are all from British and American writers, and all the audio and video materials provided by the teachers in the course are mainly from British and American countries, with only a small part of Chinese literature. In the interview, she said that Chinese and foreign works have completely different perspectives and should not be forced to compare.

### 3.3.2 the intercultural pedagogical approaches

Qualitative data is quantified at the second step. The inter-case matrix (lecturer - participant X topic/subtopic matrix) is formed by dichotomizing qualitative themes. Calculating presentation frequencies under each topic from an inter-case matrix and then translating these frequencies to percentages yields dominant effect sizes (Onwuegbuzie, 2003)<sup>[16]</sup>. The magnitude of the main effect was subjected to descriptive analysis. 6 teacher interviews were examined using reflective logs, and a total of 111 codes were selected for research considerations.

Focus	Evident impact degree	Percentage	Example
Expertise	79	71.1	In this assignment, we examine and contrast the cultural similarities and contrasts between China and the West.
Consciousness	59	53.1	The questions we asked and the projects we provided should assist students in discovering the many components of a cultural phenomenon, with the goal of breaking down barriers in their thinking processes.
Sensations	9	8.1	I believe we should also pay attention to students' emotions, since they have a lot to do with their ability to demonstrate understanding and acceptance. I need students to have some multicultural experience, especially in writing and speaking, before they can discover 'truth' in it.

Figure 4 Focus, Evident impact degree, Percentages, and Examples have been used to define intercultural teaching.

Expertise: The comments of lecturer participants on the issue of "abilities" accounted for 71.1 percent of the overall magnitude of the dominating impact, demonstrating that cross-cultural talents were the most appreciated. Understanding, comparison, analysis, reflection, and problem solving are some of the abilities

that need to be taught in cross-cultural English education, according to the instructor.

**Consciousness:** Cross-cultural Consciousness is encoded in reflective logs that includes the capacity to question stereotypes, adopt different views, conceptualize cross-cultural Consciousness, and be attentive to cultural variations in values, beliefs, and social conventions. There were 59 coded statements in the "consciousness" category, accounting for 53.1 percent of all coded utterances.

**Sensations:** The literature on cross-cultural teaching emotion ability is limited, with only one teacher mentioning the students' emotion, including 9 statements, accounting for 8.1 percent of the overall effect size. However, as the explorer of the Chinese classroom cross-cultural English teaching, some teachers have been concerned about the emotional experience of students in the classroom and have begun the exploration in this area.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

First, this research demonstrated that the language ideology of the instructor has a connection to the content of the chosen chapters. As a result, it played an important role in the collection and selection of textbook contents. Second, this study looked at the ideas and practices of intercultural English teaching, which will assist instructors to better understand how instructors in English classrooms think about and conduct intercultural teaching. Different teaching approaches were also presented by the teachers. It may provide a better understanding of what and how cross-cultural skills are taught in English classrooms, as well as examples of cross-cultural instructional designs and techniques that can be used not just in English language education but also in teacher training and development. Given the restricted case scope and the study's emphasis on teaching techniques, further research on the link between cross-cultural teaching styles and instructors' backgrounds, as well as the efficacy of these reported teaching approaches, is required.

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