



EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND THEIR REPORTED PRACTICES OF ENACTING THE COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE SECTION IN THE NEW ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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Abstract:

The development of globalization and integration requires a modern workforce with 21st-century skills, especially intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Thanks to the National Foreign Language 2020 project, the new English textbooks were introduced to Vietnamese students with the hope prepare them for ICC. Research on how EFL teachers explored the new teaching materials has been made, but previous findings show limitations on EFL teachers' practices in the communication and culture section. Hence, this descriptive research was conducted to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions and their reported practices of enacting this section. A mixed-method approach was employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Seventy-two EFL teachers in the Mekong Delta responded to the questionnaire and seven of them joined the semi-structured interviews. Results revealed various EFL teachers' perceptions and high levels of agreement on their practices of four dimensions of ICC. The study also suggested further research should look into students' perspectives.

Keywords: culture, communication, intercultural communicative competence

1. Introduction

Globalization and integration have rapidly developed, which requires a young workforce with 21st-century skills. Among those, English communicative competence becomes one of the most necessary language skills, especially intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has been a rising concern of many research educators when English is considered as lingua franca across the boundaries. English is widely used in European countries as a tool of communication (Sherman, 2018), and it is one of the communication means in Asia as well (Nguyen & Hamid, 2020). Since Vietnam actively joined international organizations such as ASEAN, WTO, and TPP, the country aimed to build

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up a young competent labor force for the globe. Therefore, ICC becomes a target in English training and education in recent years. In order to prepare Vietnamese learners with ICC, the authority has made a lot of planning and policies for English teaching and learning. Prominently, the National Foreign Language 2020 Project, which was launched in 2008, and expanded up to 2025 as its second phase, has brought about a new curriculum in order to respond to this vision. In comparison to the previous curriculum, English was introduced 3 years earlier in the current curriculum. In particular, students were going to have English as a compulsory subject in Grade 3, instead of Grade 6 as before. Along with that, new textbooks for upper secondary education (grade 10 to 12) were issued as an innovative design that provided learners with both linguistic and cultural competencies (Hoang, 2016).

Although the new textbook release brought about the hope to prepare students with communicative competence in general, and ICC in particular, EFL teachers' implementation did not reflect the author's wish. Much research was carried out on how the books were explored, especially the communication and culture section. However, previous results showed although EFL teachers held a positive attitude about the section, their practices remained inadequate (e.g., Chau & Truong, 2018, Nguyen & Nguyen 2021). Other scholars supposed that challenges and difficulties in teaching culture and communication might lead to the above-mentioned results. Vo (2017) presented some challenges that confronted EFL teachers' implementation of the section. The research revealed that time insufficiency was rated the most challenging, accounting for 82,2%, and limited teaching resources and foreign environments for communication took a share of 55,1% equally. The other challenges came from limited content of ICC in the teaching curriculum (54,2%) and limited knowledge of ICC in ELT (42,1%).

All in all, the implementation of the communication and culture section remained many challenges and difficulties concerning teaching practices, despite being positively perceived by the teaching staff. Hence, the author aimed to conduct a study to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions and their reported practices of enacting this section after 6 years since the new textbooks were put into use in 2016. The researcher wanted to investigate:

- 1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions on enacting the communication and culture section in the new English textbooks?
- 2) What teaching activities do EFL teachers use in enacting this section?

Inheriting from previous studies and using grounded theory for factual information, the author proposed a frame of reference for this study. Hopefully, this research brought about significant findings based on the framework which was presented in detail in the literature review along with the definitions of key terms, and relevant studies in the field.

2. Literature Review

Culture is believed a controversial concept as its definition does not meet a consensus among scholars for over a century. Rather culture is defined based on the viewpoint of each research. In particular, one group of researchers considers culture as a whole complex of capacities and habits that are formed by human groups. Another group perceives culture as individuals' by-products of experiences that were learned, created, or interpreted from generation to generation (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). In general, most scholars propose that culture shares some common features such as concrete and abstract aspects, visible and invisible values, normative and descriptive behaviors, explicit and implicit patterns of symbols, and experiences learned or created by the individuals of a population (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, and Ginzberg, 2016).

Concerning language teaching, culture should be integrated into the teaching and learning process because it has a significant influence on the patterns and the pragmatic use of a community where that language is spoken (Yeşil & Demiröz, 2017). In the vein of foreign language teaching, some scholars suggested adding culture to language teaching and considering it as the fifth skill apart from reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Gumarkaran, 2017, Savignon, 2018). From these viewpoints, language teachers need to have an adequate understanding of culture and language, if not they may mistake teaching a language for teaching its culture automatically (Byram & Wanger, 2017). In this research setting, culture is integrated into a separate lesson of every unit, so it focuses on investigating how the participants teach cultural elements in the new English textbooks.

2.1 From Communicative competence to Intercultural competence

Since the communicative approach appeared in English language teaching, communicative competence became the ultimate goal of this language teaching task. So, what is communicative competence? Why is it important to provide students with this? According to Embark (2013), the concept of communicative competence was based on Hymes' critique of Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence. While Chomsky's concept focuses on tacit language knowledge, Hymes' idea of communicative competence reflects the socio-cultural significance. In particular, communicative competence does not only provide learners with accurate language structure, but it is also about how to use the language to convey and receive the messages appropriately. The term communicative competence has been accepted and developed by Canale and Swain, and Bachman with a focus on social aspects such as communications or interactions. Since this competence relies on social interaction, language learners should be prepared with it so that they can properly communicate with their interlocutors. This competence is important because it helps learners to effectively communicate in another language, not their mother tongue. In this study, students need English communication competence to interact with their international friends when this language is used as a common means of communication regionally and globally.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) proposed that intercultural competence was the ability to be aware of the relations among cultures. The authors claimed that someone's behaviors were culturally dependent, and there were certain ways of doing things that people from different countries or cultures possess. Hence, to understand a particular cultural way of living, learners need to learn about a culture that engages with its linguistic and non-linguistic practices within that context. Culture in this setting is about daily life in which people use their language, English in particular, to convey their living activities, and the language they speak reflects their culture in return. In brief, intercultural competence helps language learners be aware of what makes people from different countries behave in a particular way, and of how language is culturally influential in their daily interaction.

2.2 What is intercultural communicative competence?

As aforementioned, it is necessary to prepare students with 21st-century skills so that they can fully participate in globalization and regionalization. Since English was considered a lingua franca in ASEAN and EUROPEAN settings, communicative competence became the main goal of English teaching and learning. However, it would be inadequate if FL teachers did not include culture in their classroom practices (Byram & Wanger, 2017, Yeşil & Demiröz, 2017). Therefore, the concept of communicative competence (CC) was developed into intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as the second term *"emerged as the most comprehensive description of the abilities needed to perform appropriately and effectively in a new culture"* (Fantini, 2019, p.28). The components of ICC as proposed by Byram (1997) were knowledge, attitudes, awareness, skills of relating and interpreting, and skills of discovering and interacting. While Fantini's (2019) model of ICC consisted of knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes. There was a slight difference in Fantini's model of ICC in comparison to Byram's. In particular, the two skills were integrated into one dimension, called skills in general. This study used Fantini's (2019) model of ICC's four dimensions as it matches with the MOET's assessment framework which covers students' four aspects including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness (Do, 2019).

Based on the term definitions and previous studies in teaching ICC both in Viet Nam and other countries, the author proposed a working framework for this study. Aspects to examine EFL teachers' perceptions were divided into 5 groups: (1) ICC dimensions on the research participants focus their teaching on, (2) the Implementation of the communication and culture section, (3) students' learning outcomes in completion of the lesson, (4) Challenges/ difficulties EFL teacher participants encounter, and (5) attitudes toward the communication and culture lesson. Parallel to EFL teachers' perceptions, their practices were viewed as (1) EFL teachers' selection of teaching activities, (2) teaching activities related to teaching Intercultural knowledge, (3) teaching activities related to teaching Intercultural awareness, (4) teaching activities related to teaching Intercultural skills, and (5) teaching activities related to teaching Intercultural attitudes.

3. Methodology

This descriptive research employed a mixed-method approach which collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The instruments were a cross-sectional survey, an online questionnaire, and interviewing method, semi-structured interviews in particular. Seventy-two participants who responded to the questionnaire were teachers from the Mekong Delta. They are currently using or have an understanding of the new English textbooks. Seven of them volunteered to join the semi-structured interviews.

Adapted from Chau and Truong's (2019) questionnaire, thirty-eight items in the later version were divided into 4 parts. The first part was about the demographic of the participants, questions 1 to 5. The second part consisted of 6 questions, from 6 to 11, asking about EFL teachers' perceptions of enacting the communication and culture section. The third part used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the level of agreement on teaching activities related to the four dimensions of ICC. There were 21 questions in this part starting from items 12 to 34. The last part was about teacher participants' recommendations and feedback.

For the semi-structured interviews, seven respondents to the questionnaire accepted to take part in an in-depth interview on the subject study. The questions adapted from Nguyen (2013) have functioned as a guide to the interviewer. However, the content of the conversation was led by information provided by the interviewees. To ensure the instruments were reliable and valid, the author piloted them and made some adjustments before sending out the official version.

Having got the results from both instruments, the quantitative data was processed via the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS for short) version 20. A scale test was run to check the reliability of the questionnaire. The result indicated that the internal consistency of the questionnaire was $\alpha = .90$, which meant the questionnaire was reliable to use.

Qualitative data of a total of 20,102 words (3797 from the open-ended question in the questionnaire and 16,305 from the semi-structured interviews) were processed by using a thematic analysis approach (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Because some respondents did not fulfill the open-ended question (item 6), there were only 62 responses for this item. Data from the interviews were grouped into five themes in line with the proposed working framework mentioned in the literature review. The coding system in this study employed Nguyen's (2018) approach. The themes for data from the interviews, and how qualitative data from both instruments were coded in this study can be found in the appendix.

4. Findings and Discussions

Results from the questionnaire and interviews showed that EFL teacher participants gained various perceptions on teaching the communication and culture section in the

new English textbooks. Concerning the practices of enacting the section, results indicated a high level of agreement on activities used to teach four dimensions of ICC.

4.1 EFL teachers' perception of enacting the communication and culture section

Firstly, among the four dimensions of ICC EFL teacher participants focused on teaching knowledge to their students. Data collected from item 7 in the questionnaire showed the order of four dimensions of ICC from the most focused to its least as follows: knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitude with the frequency of 28 responses (38,9%), 20 responses (27,8%), 19 responses (26,4%) and 5 responses (6,9%) respectively. The pie chart below showed the distribution of ICC's four dimensions.

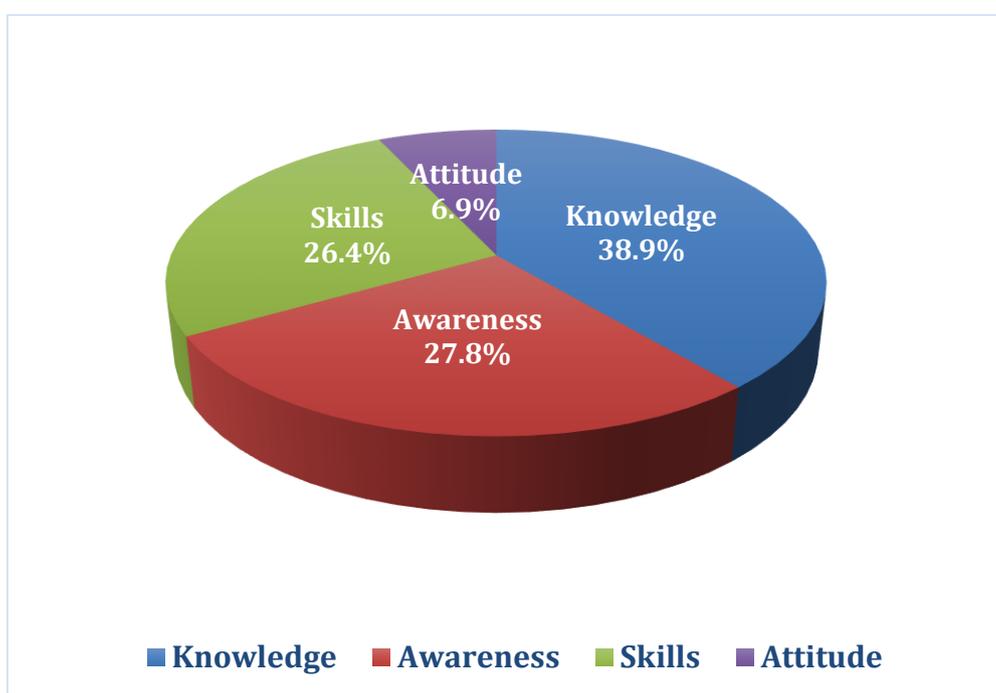


Chart 1: ICC dimensions from EFL teachers' focus in their teaching

Interestingly, data from the interviews showed a different focus on the dimensions EFL teacher participants taught in the communication and culture section. In fact, most of the interviewees agreed that they provided most of the four dimensions in the section with different emphasis, which depended upon the objective of each unit and lesson. However, based on the excerpts from the interviews the most focus was the skills, the second most focus was knowledge, and the least focus was attitude and awareness. The following table illustrated four dimensions of ICC the interviewees focused on teaching the communication and culture section.

Table 1: ICC dimensions EFL the participant focused their teaching on

ICC Dimension	Total times mentioned	Codes	Example of excerpts from the interviews
Skills	13	LA2_S19	<i>[...]But in general, the learning activities will focus on Listening, Speaking, and Presentation [...]</i>
Knowledge	5	HG2_K33	<i>[...]Well, related to Communication and culture I will focus on knowledge. Both knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and knowledge of culture, too [...]</i>
Attitude	1	HG2_K35	<i>[...]Oh, I train my students with attitude and awareness in every lesson not only in the communication and culture section [...]</i>
Awareness	1	HG2_K36	<i>[...]I believe that students need to have a proper attitude and awareness first, then they can acquire and apply the knowledge [...]</i>

Secondly, the implementation of the communication and culture section appeared various among the participants. Data from the questionnaire showed different levels of frequency that EFL teachers taught the section in their classrooms. Forty-two respondents accounting for 58,3%, agreed that they strictly followed the teaching program required by the school administration. Fourteen of them, equivalent to 19,5%, gave instructions and students did their self-study. Ten teachers, approximately 13,9%, said they could flexibly skip some unimportant content in the section. Only four questionnaire participants (5,6%) chose to teach the section twice or three times a semester, and two respondents (2,7%) chose other answers. The pie chart below presented the distribution of the frequency level EFL teacher participants applied in their teaching of the section.

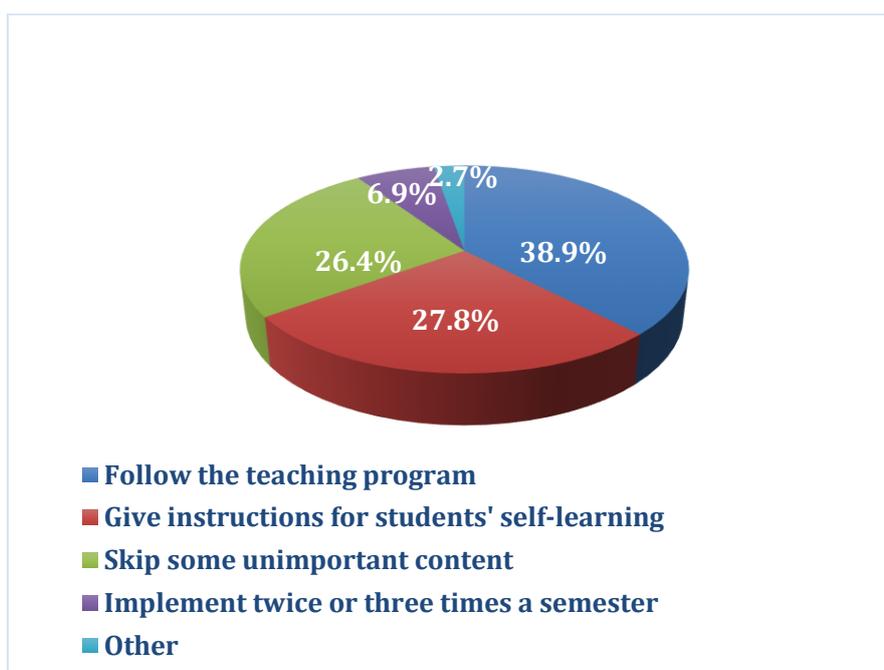


Chart 2: Frequency level of teaching the communication and culture section

Findings from the interviews matched most respondents' ideas from the questionnaire. Most interviewees agreed that they strictly followed the teaching program required by the school administration. [HG4_TF100, BT4_TF121]

"[...] I usually taught in accordance with the teaching program, I did not skip the lesson." [HG4_TF100]

"[...] I obeyed the teaching program; I taught this lesson in one period." [BT4_TF121]

Besides, almost all the interviewees preferred integrated teaching. This idea was repeated 13 times by seven informants when they were asked about how to teach the section. [TC4_TI102, TV4_TI90]

"[...] It depended on each level and content of the lesson that I integrated culture into communication more or less." [excerpt coding CT4_TI102]

"[...] Usually, I integrated the communication and culture section with the project because I found they share the same requirement on speaking." [TV4_TI90]

Thirdly, students' learning outcomes were also teacher participants' concerns. EFL teachers observed their students' attitudes and competence in completing the communication and culture section. For students' attitudes, data collected was placed into 4 entries from very engaged, not engaged, and as normal as other lessons, to other answers. For students' improvement, there were also 4 entries including, students' improvement in speaking and reading skills, students gaining more knowledge about culture, no measures on students' improvement in communication skills, and students' improvement in soft skills training. Results were indicated in the table below.

Table 2: Students' learning outcomes in completing the lessons

Students Attitudes			Students Competence Improvement		
Entries	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage	Entries	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage
Very engaged	23	31,9%	Improve speaking and reading skills	11	15,3%
Not engaged	5	6,9%	Improve knowledge of culture	53	73,6%
Normal engagement	36	50,0%	No measures on students' communication skills	5	6,9%
Other	8	11,1%	Improve soft skills	3	4,2%
Mean	2.40		Mean	2.00	
Total	72	100.0%	Total	72	100.0%

Results from the interviews were again in line with their counterpart. Most of them supposed that students had various attitudes and competence improvement in

completing the communication and culture section. Concerning students' attitudes, interviewees' comments were different. [LA3_SA122, TG3_SA129, CT3_SA154]

"[...] usually, students felt fed up with the task assignment at first, but when they agreed then they could do it very well and engagedly." [LA3_SA122]

"[...] if we just let students do the activities in the textbook, students would get bored." [TG3_SA129]

"[...] I believed that integrating communication into a culture made my class learning atmosphere more active." [CT3_SA154]

In contrast, teacher participants had common ideas on their students' competence improvement in completing the section. They most agreed that students could improve language skills and knowledge, or cultural knowledge [HG3_SC148, TC3_SC162, VL3_SC147]

"[...] oh well, in such periods I found that the students could develop their skills, for example speaking skills, and mostly speaking skills because they often had some discussion on the topic they presented." [HG3_SC148]

"[...] having learned, students could draw up a lesson for themselves, or they could figure out something good to apply in their real-life." [TC3_SC162]

"[...] usually, I found my students improve their speaking skills." [VL3_SC147]

Fourthly, the challenges or difficulties EFL teacher participants encountered were placed into 4 categories, three of them derived from teachers and one from students. Teachers' challenges and difficulties were: (1) insufficient time allowance, (2) insufficient knowledge of culture/ new culture, and (3) lack of teaching materials or teaching activities resources. Students' causes of challenges or difficulties were put in one category as the focus of this study was on EFL teachers. The pie chart below illustrated participants' challenges or difficulties in providing the communication and culture section.

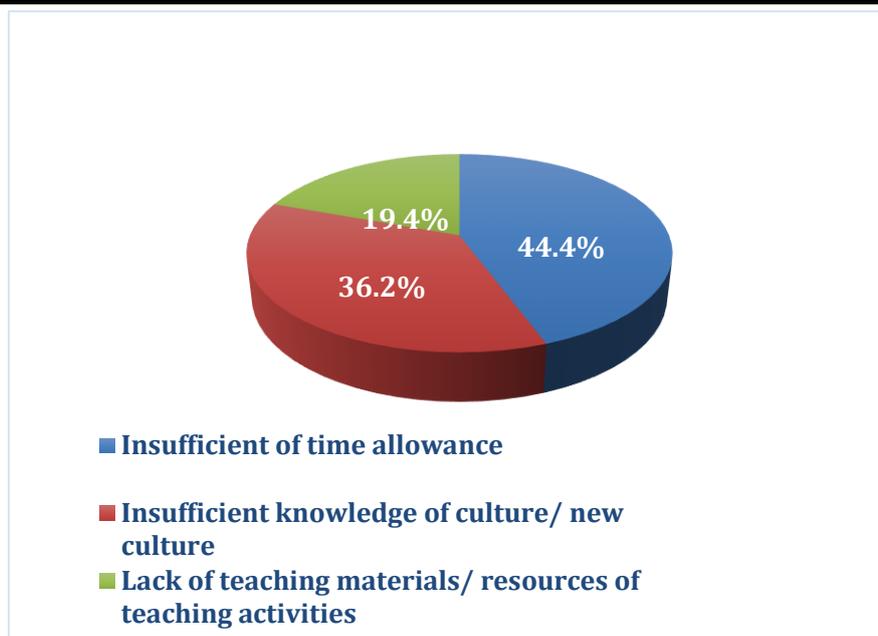


Chart 3: Challenges/ Difficulties from EFL teachers

Information found from the interviews pretty much matched with the data from the questionnaire which ranked insufficient time in the first place, insufficient knowledge of culture/ new culture, and lack of teaching resources materials. Besides, challenges or difficulties caused by students were also reported. These factors are related to students' competence and students' attitudes toward the communication and culture lesson. [TG3_S46, BT3_CS73]

"[...] In relation to students' ability, if they aren't able to speak much, then teaching the Communication and culture lesson places a burden on their teacher." [TG3_CS46]

"[...] There are some certain difficulties. For example, if a group of students is passive, and they don't have any ideas about culture then we have to scaffold them more." [BT3_CS73]

Fifthly, EFL teachers' attitude toward teaching the communication and culture section was ranked from positive to neutral and negative. There were 62 respondents to this open-ended question in the questionnaire. Data for this item was coded and put into sections. In particular, participants' attitudes toward enacting the communication and culture section were grouped into positive, neutral and negative categories. The number of respondents for each was 37, 14 and 11, respectively. Findings from the interviews totally supported its counterpart. The interviewees' attitudes were reported in the same categories as data from the questionnaire. Teachers' attitudes under three categories were 11 times, twice, and once in the order mentioned [LA1_AP1, VL1_ANe15, TG1_AN8].

"[...]the new textbook has this section and I found the unit completely exciting. [...] there were many good and specific activities that distinguished it from the previous textbooks [...] I totally find teaching this lesson funny, not boring." [LA1-AP1]

"[...]I found this section normal, similar to others." [VL1_ANe15]

"[...] I found the communication and culture section unnecessary if we taught carefully in the skills lessons." [TG1_AN8]

4.2 EFL teachers' practices of enacting the communication and culture section

Concerning EFL teachers' practices, findings showed participants' high level of agreement on teaching the communication and culture section. Besides, findings also showed teaching activities the participants used to teach the section. The findings were illustrated via quantitative data and were processed via SPSS, mostly descriptive tests. A Descriptive test was run to examine the level of agreement of EFL teachers' reported practices on enacting the communication and culture section in their classrooms. The test results were shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive results of EFL Teachers' reported practices

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EFL Teachers' Reported Practices	72				
Valid N (listwise)	72	1.55	4.95	3.4558	.68558

The test value in Table 3 indicated that EFL teachers' reported practices were at a high level ($M = 3.4$) according to the level of agreement in the Likert scale proposed by Oxford (1990).

Descriptive statistics of EFL teachers' reported practices on teaching activities used to enact the four dimensions of ICC in the communication and culture section were summarized in the figure below.

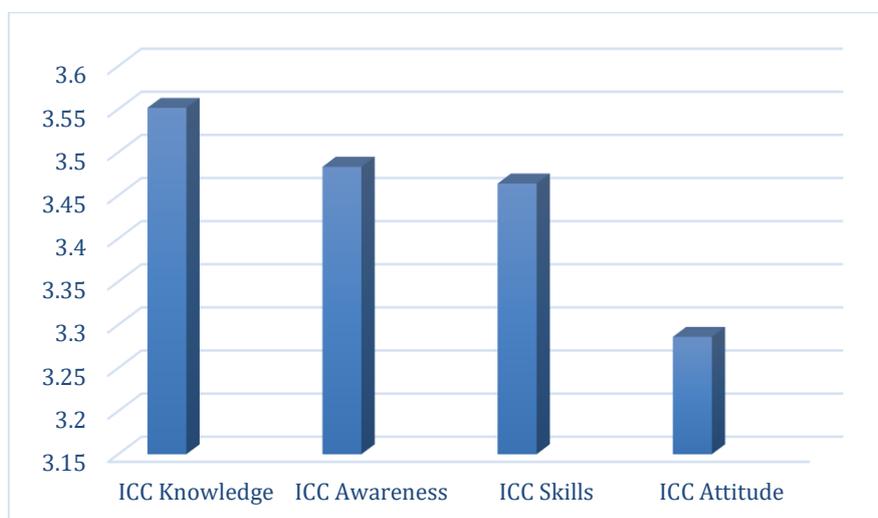


Chart 4: Mean scores of EFL Teachers' reported practices among the four clusters

The figure indicated the mean scores of teaching activities EFL teachers used to teach four dimensions of ICC namely, ICC knowledge, ICC awareness, ICC skills, and ICC attitude. The mean comparing the four dimensions displayed a downward trend from the first to the fourth dimensions, $M_1 = 3.55$, $M_2 = 3.48$, $M_3 = 3.46$, and $M_4 = 3.28$, respectively. It was noted that teaching activities related to ICC Knowledge were at the highest level of agreement while those related to ICC Attitudes reached the lowest level of agreement. Teaching activities related to ICC Awareness and ICC Skills remained similar at a high level.

In addition, EFL teacher participants mainly applied common activities to teach ICC knowledge to their students such as recognizing, connecting, and reading an aspect of both source and target culture, $MQ_{12} = 3.89$, $MQ_{13} = 3.85$, $MQ_{14} = 3.86$, $MQ_{15} = 3.53$, and $MQ_{18} = 3.56$, respectively. Meanwhile, activities that require active learning like drawing posters or passive learning like rote learning appeared less common, equivalent to $MQ_{17} = 2.94$, $MQ_{16} = 3.24$ in the order mentioned.

In contrast, teaching activities related to ICC attitudes were reported the lowest in comparison to the four dimensions of ICC. A Descriptive test was computed to check the EFL teachers' reported practices on providing their students with ICC attitudes in the classroom. The test value illustrated that EFL teachers' reported practices on this aspect were at the average level, $M = 3.28$. The mean scores for each item were also shown in the table below.

Table 4: Descriptive results of EFL teachers' practices on the intercultural attitudes

Items	Mean
Q30. I organize different activities so that students can interact with different cultures to help them build up positivity towards cultural differences.	3.51
Q31. I create situations in which there are cultural conflicts so that students can recognize the link between language and culture in communication.	3.19
Q32. I ask students to explain why those conflicts can happen in the given situations.	3.11
Q33. I ask students to give solutions for those situations to avoid cultural conflicts in intercultural communication.	3.32
Q34. I have students write about their feelings when they finish a section in the communication and culture in the textbook, for example, what they like/ dislike about this lesson.	3.29

EFL teachers had an average agreement with most of the teaching activities related to the ICC attitudes. Noteworthy, item Q30 reached a high level of agreement although the overall score for this teaching dimension stayed at an average level. It was concluded that EFL teacher participants preferred organizing different activities for students to interact with culture, and to build up positivity among diverse cultures the most.

Interestingly, results from the interviews showed a different level of agreement on teaching activities EFL teachers used to enact the communication and culture section. When the participants were asked how they implemented the section, most of them reported that they focused on teaching activities related to ICC Skills the most, the second

focus was on techniques of providing ICC Knowledge, and the least mentioned was activities related to teaching ICC Attitude, and none of them mention teaching ICC Awareness to students.

5. Discussion

In general, EFL teachers' perceptions of enacting the communication and culture section in the new English book were aligned with previous findings, such as Vo (2017), Chau and Truong (2019), Ahmed et al. (2019), Le and Thai (2020). There were both similar and different viewpoints between data from the questionnaire and the interviews, which might be explained as follow.

EFL teachers' perceptions and reported practices on enacting the communication and culture section had some different points. Firstly, the focus on ICC's four dimensions is different among the two instruments. From the questionnaire, data shows that EFL teachers focus their teaching on ICC Knowledge while interviewees believe they taught the four dimensions, but the focus will be based on each unit content and objective of every lesson. The participants add more that they concentrate on teaching ICC Skills. These findings, despite having contrast, are pretty much alignment with the studies of Yeşil & Demiröz (2017), Bouslama & Benaissi (2018), and Ahmed et al. (2019). It is understandable that EFL teachers may have different focuses when providing the communication and culture section. Hence, their choice of each ICC dimension to teaching appears different. Secondly, the difference in EFL teachers' selection of ICC dimensions leads to their teaching practices. In fact, the respondents' choice of ICC dimension matched with the teaching activities they chose to teach that ICC dimension. Similarly, the interviewees showed their alignment between ICC dimensions and teaching practices.

Despite the different points mentioned above, the results of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices remain the same. In particular, the participants' attitudes, challenges or difficulties, and the observations on students' learning outcomes share common sides. Firstly, results from both instruments show teacher participants' various attitudes toward teaching the communication and culture section. These attitudes are ranked as positive, neutral, and negative. Secondly, the challenges or difficulties EFL teachers encounter when teaching communication and culture remain unchanged through much research in the field. Prominently, teachers' insufficient time allowance to integrate culture into language teaching did not get a solution over the years. These challenges or difficulties do not only happen in the Vietnamese context (Vo, 2017) but in other countries as well (Xiao, 2015). Lastly, researchers started to focus their research in this field from students' perspectives. Obviously, many scholars have suggested looking into students' learning outcomes in the completion of the communication and culture section. This paves the way for further research investigating the integration of culture into language teaching.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

Based on the results of the study, the author has fully answered the research questions under the proposed working framework. For the first research question, EFL teachers' perceptions appeared various from the examined aspects, including the choice of ICC dimensions to teach, the implementation of the communication and culture section, students' learning outcomes, and the challenges or difficulties the participants encounter when teaching the section, and EFL teachers' attitude toward teaching the section. For the second research question, the participants had a high level of agreement on implementing teaching activities in the communication and culture section. Their practices reached the highest consensus about teaching activities related to ICC Knowledge, and the lowest agreement on those related to ICC Attitudes. Teaching techniques related to ICC Skills and Awareness shared the same level of agreement among the participants.

6.1 Limitations

Although the study could have investigated EFL teachers' perceptions and their reported practices in enacting the communication and culture section, there remained some limitations related to the size of the population, and timeframe of the study. For the size of the research, the author expected to reach over 100 participants to join the study. However, only seventy-two EFL teachers took part in the research, which limited the generation of the findings, and restricted the research value. For the timeframe, the study would be done with a more detailed analysis and embraced more in-depth aspects if the time allowance was expanded to two more months.

6.2 Recommendation

Despite the research limitation, it brought about some significant values. Firstly, the research suggested doing further follow-up with different subjects, students learning the communication and culture section. Secondly, the study answered existing gaps from previous studies, which stated that EFL teachers had inadequate practices in teaching the section in the new English textbooks. Finally, the work recalled challenges or difficulties that EFL teachers encountered when they integrated culture into English language teaching. This suggested that the authority should take action on erasing these obstacles as they confronted teachers from successfully exploring the new teaching materials if any in the future.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix 1: Themes and subthemes of data from the semi-structured interviews

Theme	Subtheme	Coding
1 = Attitudes	Positive Attitude	AP
	Negative Attitude	AN
	Neutral Attitude	ANe
2 = ICC dimensions	Knowledge	K
	Skills	S
	Awareness	Aw
	Attitude	A
3 = Challenges/ Difficulties	Teachers' lack of teaching materials or sources of activities	CL
	Teachers' lack of culture/ new culture knowledge	CK
	Teachers' insufficient time allowance	CI
	Students' cause of challenges or difficulties	CS
4 = The implementation of the communication and culture lessons	Teaching activities related to ICC Knowledge	TK
	Teaching activities related to ICC Skills	TS
	Teaching activities related to ICC Attitudes	TA
	Teaching activities related to ICC Awareness	TAw
	Frequency level of teaching the lessons	TF
	Integrated teaching	TI
5 = Students' learning outcomes	Students' attitude	SA
	Students' competence	SC

Appendix 2: Coding extracts for the qualitative data from the questionnaire and the Interview

Coding	Examples of Extracts	Coded for
QAP_R1	"Quite interesting."	Q = Questionnaire A = Attitude P = Positive R1 = Respondent 1
QAN_R40	"Difficult to teach this section."	Q = Questionnaire A = Attitude N = Negative R40 = Respondent 40
QANe_R52	"Ok."	Q = Questionnaire A = Attitude Ne = Neutral R52 = Respondent 52
LA1_AP1	"But the new textbooks have this section and I find them really interesting."	LA = Teacher's name 1 = theme AP = subtheme 1 = line
TG2_S25	"The focus of the Communication and Culture section is speaking skill."	LA = Teacher's name 2 = theme S = subtheme 25 = line
VL3_CS70	"Well, yes. Students also cause some problems such as lack of confidence or passiveness. So, sometimes the lesson appears slow."	VL = Teacher's name 3 = theme CS = subtheme 70 = line

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TV4_TK89	“Usually, I have students learn about relevant cultural knowledge so that they can apply the knowledge learned.”	TV = Teacher’s name 4 = theme TK = subtheme 89 = line
TG5_SC131	“Students want to know more about culture in other countries besides Vietnamese culture.”	TG = Teacher’s name 5 = theme SC = subtheme 131 = line

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