EFL STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AS MEDIATORS TO DEVELOP THEIR INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE AT A SCHOOL IN A UNIVERSITY, THE MEKONG DELTA REGION, VIETNAM[i]

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Abstract:

This article describes a research undertaken at a Mekong Delta university's foreign language school. Its goal is to determine the significance of authentic papers based on cultural themes in the development of intercultural competency in English language students. The pedagogical implementation of activities is planned in accordance with the specified criteria for assessing culturally relevant material. In terms of intercultural competence, Byram's (2002) part of intercultural competence (ICCo) is assistance for task planning and execution. Two surveys, a questionnaire, and an interview were used to collect data in this qualitative action research project. The subjects of the survey included 80 students and four fourth-year students majoring in English Studies and Translation and Interpreting and three lecturers of English, teaching Intercultural Communication (ICC) courses from School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University. The findings demonstrate that students comprehend diversity, appreciate other cultures, and are interested in learning about different societies. Similarly, the students stated that they were open to discussing cultural issues. Furthermore, elements from other English classes help students learn and become more interested in culture. Finally, recommendations will be offered to assist

instructors in improving intercultural communication. When using authentic materials as mediators to develop their intercultural competence in learning English, the initiative seeks to assist students to get a different viewpoint and higher awareness. Finally, the researcher will provide suggestions for further research.

Keywords: authentic materials, intercultural communication (ICC), intercultural competence (ICCo), School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of study
Intercultural competence is not only the desired outcome of international study, but it is also a common goal of foreign language education. Developing intercultural competence makes sense for foreign language curricula, both on and off campus.

First of all, it should be understood that developing intercultural competence is a time-consuming and deliberate process. Language learning does not necessarily make a person intercultural, nor does travel abroad automatically confer intercultural competence. The development of intercultural competence cannot be approached in a specific manner or viewed as a guaranteed by-product of language acquisition. It cannot be accomplished solely through reading cultural notes or occasional discussions or presentations about culture in language class. A "capstone" course will not suffice to provide advanced levels of intercultural competence. Instead of intentional, cohesive, and coordinated development of students' intercultural understanding and skills is required. It must run through the student's educational experience and build on a foundation of awareness. It must also move beyond the tip of the cultural iceberg to include deep cultural learning as part of the language acquisition process.

Students must be taught principal process skills throughout their curriculum in order to dig beneath the visible surface of "*the cultural iceberg*". These skills include listening, observing, interpreting, analyzing, relating, and evaluating. Students should reflect on the knowledge and skills they are gaining, as well as any changes in attitudes they may experience, as part of this process. As a result, intercultural competence development must be built into the curriculum from the start. Openness, respect (appreciation of all cultures), curiosity, and discovery (acceptance of uncertainty) are deemed necessary for information and the ability to lead to conceptual change and behavioral adjustments required to develop intercultural competencies.

Cultural knowledge, which includes both awareness of one's cultural norms and sensitivity to other cultural norms, grows in tandem with cultural respect, openness, and curiosity. Cultural understanding, as well as practical and procedural knowledge, has improved. This awareness and comprehension have evolved as a result of the development of critical cognitive and communicative abilities such as hearing, seeing, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating. When these abilities are combined with

the necessary attitude and knowledge, they result in an internal *"changing frame of reference"* in which adaptability and flexibility are essential. This mental shift results in observable (and thus measurable) *"external consequences"* of effective and acceptable speech and behavior in various contexts. Interference from culture Spitzberg (1989) defines appropriate and effective as avoiding violations of valid norms while achieving desired goals.

According to Hymes (1996), plays a critical role in a community's social life; a lack of cultural understanding among members of several communities frequently leads to social inequality that has yet to be recognized. This statement should cause language teachers to reflect on the importance of knowing how to communicate with a member of a different culture; understanding that different culture does not only mean the target language culture but also the students' culture, keeping in mind that they bring their own beliefs, conceptions of life, and so on to the classroom. Similarly, English language teachers must remember that learning a foreign language entails more than just learning linguistic habits and grammar structures; it also entails learning how to communicate with others by using the target language, interacting with others, and appreciating the value of their own culture. English language classes should be a place for students to develop intercultural competence in order to make language teaching an interdisciplinary endeavor in which culture is an overriding component. For example, Agudelo (2007) describes his experience teaching a course titled "Language, Culture, and Diversity" to seventh-semester students at a language teacher preparation program in Medellin. His goal was to determine the impact of using an intercultural approach. According to Agudelo (2007), the implementation of an intercultural approach to language teaching sought to help future language teachers understand not only the numerous socio-cultural factors involved in teaching a foreign language but also the importance of critical cultural awareness in order to understand other cultures without losing perspective of local reality. Thus, from this standpoint, the exploration of the local culture was just as valid and necessary as the target culture.

To delve deeper into this topic, the authors began to consider other ways to address the topics to draw students' attention and provide them with tools to become respectful subjects capable of interacting effectively in an ever-changing society. Under action research, research questions and objectives were established; a survey, a semi-structured interview, and teacher field notes were used to collect data to answer the question: What are the students' perception of authentic materials in the development of intercultural competencies in learning English: A case at a school in a university, the Mekong Delta Region, Vietnam?

1.2 Research aims

The purpose of this study is to examine and assess EFL students' awareness of using authentic materials to develop intercultural competence (ICCo) in English learning and

to make recommendations on how to use authentic materials in ICC learning and teaching effectively.

1.3 Research questions

1) What are authentic materials to develop EFL students' intercultural competence in learning English?
2) To what extent do EFL students perceive authentic materials to develop their intercultural competence in learning English?

1.4. Significance of the study

Nowadays, students study a foreign language for many years but they have many difficulties communicating with native speakers in everyday situations. This does not imply that mastering the various grammatical rules or having a large vocabulary is sufficient for effective communication with people from other countries. Learners must possess specific abilities as well as an understanding of the culture of the other to interact effectively and recognize the various meanings. According to Corbett (2003), "*the ultimate goal of an intercultural approach to language education is not so much "native speaker competence" but rather than an "intercultural communicative competence"* (p.2). Hence, authentic materials are thought to be the best material to promote foreign language learners' intercultural communicative competence. This study aims at highlighting the need for using authentic materials to teach both cultures and develop students' intercultural communicative competence.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of culture

Learning a new language requires an understanding of culture. Culture is identified as a person's way of life, beliefs, and values. Learning about culture include knowing about language, communication, and cultural factors, but it also entails learning about current trends and popular goods. The idea of culture, its aspects, and its implications for English instruction in a larger sense, culture encompasses the arts, music, literary masterpieces, scientific discoveries, and other human achievements. Culture, in a broader sense, refers to a society's traditions, conventions, and social behaviors. Egoism, collectivism, high context, and low context are the four cultural aspects mentioned. Deductive and inductive reasoning approaches are also explored. Culture is divided into three categories in the context of English instruction: local culture, foreign culture, and academic culture. Local culture refers to the beliefs and customs shared by English as a foreign language students. The beliefs, customs, and values of the target language constitute foreign culture. Academic culture refers to the standards and ideals that students follow in school. This paper argues strongly that English as a foreign language instruction should be based on local cultural values and conventions. Language is used

to express ideas and culture. As a result, English is employed as a tool to communicate the thoughts and cultures of English learners.

Since the beginning of this field's methodologies, culture has played a vital role in foreign language teaching and learning. Sun (2013) defines the link between culture and language as follows: "*There would be no culture if there were no language. The language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots if there is no culture*" (p.371). According to Kramsch (2003, p.3), "*language communicates cultural reality*" since "*words reflect attitudes, ideas, and points of view of society*". Culture includes items such as literature, music, art, and folklore; beliefs, values, institutions, and behaviors such as conventions, habits, attire, meals, and leisure that are unique to that civilization (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). Language reflects and transmits cultural values (Sun, 2013, p. 371). Because culture shows itself via language, which is mediated, understood, and documented (Kramsch, 1993, quoted in Mountford & Wadham Smith, 2000, p.82), while teaching a language, it is significant to remember that language is employed in a cultural context (Baker, 2012). Zhao (2011) discovers a link between language and culture and claims that language conveys and reflects culture while culture profoundly influences language. Language education, according to Mountford and Wadham-Smith (2000, p. 82), is a process of acculturation.

According to Brown (1994, referenced in Frank, 2013), acculturation is divided into four stages: enthusiasm for a new nation, culture shock, ration, and adaptability. Learners do not lose their identity during the foreign language learning process; on the contrary, the target society's learning culture develops them linguistically, intellectually, and socially (Porto, 2000). Tomlinson and Masuhama (2004, quoted in Shemshadsara, 2012) feel that cultivating cultural awareness allows students to widen their horizons, increasing tolerance, cultural empathy, and sensitivity.

2.1.1. Understanding intercultural awareness

The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) promotes the notion that distinct languages and cultures should be maintained and nurtured, and that obstacles to diversity should be broken down through understanding and tolerance among European Union members. Intercultural awareness is described as knowledge, awareness, and comprehension of the contrasts and similarities between the original culture and the target culture (Council of Europe, 2001). Intercultural awareness and empathy will reduce the psychological challenges that foreign language learners confront when they encounter diverse cultures (Zhu, 2011). English language teaching classrooms are situations where teachers and language learners are busy practicing multilingual and multicultural topics, allowing language learners to gain intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012).

2.1.2. Implementing intercultural communication

Despite the fact that intercultural awareness is a critical topic, there are just a few scales in the literature. Because the aims of these assessments are so dissimilar, an intercultural

awareness scale is required for use in foreign language instruction. The following scales can be found in the literature:

Chen and Starosta created the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) as an example (2000). They developed 44 items and used them after reviewing the relevant literature. As a consequence of the scale analysis, they arrived at the final form, which had 24 elements separated into five categories. This scale demonstrated good reliability as well as sufficient concurrent validity.

The Intercultural Perception Scale in the literature, as can be seen from the material provided here, is created and executed on a cross-cultural sensitivity level. However, there is no assessment of cross-cultural concerns for students in foreign language teaching departments, despite the fact that enhancing intercultural awareness is a goal for foreign language learners throughout foreign language study. Because a measure based on cross-cultural sensitivity is not appropriate for foreign language learners, the Cross-Cultural Perception Scale was developed to determine whether or not EFL students had enhanced intercultural awareness.

Taking into account the relevant literature, the current study aims to construct an intercultural awareness scale that will cover a vacuum in this field and will be used to measure the intercultural awareness levels of EFL students.

2.1.3 Achieving intercultural competence

Intercultural competency is not just a desirable consequence of studying abroad, it is also a common objective of foreign language instruction. Developing intercultural competency has ramifications for the foreign language program, both on and off campus. First of all, it is critical to recognize that developing intercultural competence is a process that takes time and intentional effort. Language study alone does not guarantee intercultural competency, nor does travel abroad guarantee intercultural competence. The development of intercultural competence cannot be treated haphazardly or as a guaranteed byproduct of obtaining language abilities. It cannot be achieved just by reading through cultural notes or the odd debate or presentation about culture in language class. Even a "capstone" training will not provide advanced levels of intercultural ability. Preferably, pupils' intercultural abilities and comprehension must be intentionally, cohesively, and co-ordinately developed. It must flow throughout the educational experience of the pupils and grow from a foundation of awareness. It must also go beyond the tip of the cultural iceberg, including deep cultural learning in the language acquisition process.

To explore the surface of the culture, students must be taught critical process skills throughout their curriculum—the ability for obtaining deep cultural knowledge by listening, watching, interpreting, analyzing, relating, and assessing. Students must reflect on the information and skills they are obtaining, as well as any changes in attitudes they may encounter, as part of this process. Thus, intercultural competency development must be incorporated into the curriculum from the outlet. As a result, the work of language

program directors (LPDs) with beginning and intermediate language courses is critical, as the framework for attitudes and abilities is already being set at this level.

Students in these courses might benefit from opportunities to explore their cultural norms, improve observational and analytical abilities, and become aware of the need for openness and curiosity when encountering cultural issues. By emphasizing these parts of the model early in the curriculum, students will be better able to learn and comprehend cultural knowledge in more compound courses, later on, allowing them to develop more effectively toward targeted internal and external results.

Intercultural competency development must be encouraged and developed throughout the curriculum, but it must also be measured in process-oriented methods. As a result, the second set of consequences entails assessing intercultural abilities and knowledge. Despite the evident limitations, the intercultural professionals who participated in this study concluded that intercultural competency may be measured.

2.2. Definition of authentic materials

In the literature, the definitions of genuine materials vary slightly. The term "*exposure to real language and its use in its community*" appears in all of these definitions. According to Rogers (1988), it is "*suitable*" and "*excellent*" in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs, and interests, and "*natural*" in terms of real life and meaningful communication (p. 467). According to Harmer (1991), as stated in Matsuta (n.d., para. 1), veritable texts are materials produced for native speakers; they are actual texts; designed not for language students, but language speakers. Jordan (1997, p. 113) defines legitimate texts as works that weren't manufactured for the aim of language training. Authentic resources are influential because they boost students' enthusiasm to study and expose learners to the 'real' language, as noted by Guariento and Morley (2001, p. 347). The following are the key benefits of adopting original resources (Philips and Shettlesworth 1978; Clarke 1989; Peacock 1997, referenced in Richards, 2001):

- They have a favorable impact on learner motivation.
- They give accurate cultural knowledge.
- They expose students to real-world languages.
- They are more directly related to the demands of learners.
- They advocate for a more innovative approach to education.

Claiming that learners are exposed to the unadulterated language and believe they are learning it. These are the elements that motivate us to employ tangible resources in our classes, yet there will inevitably be issues.

Because authentic resources are less expensive and easily accessible everywhere and at any time, English teachers may utilize them to teach in their traditional ELT courses. There are numerous authentic materials available to teach English, including News Papers, Brochures, Pamphlets, Flyers, Advertisements, Greeting Cards, Invitation Cards, Post-Cards, Wall Papers, Comics, Cartoons, Story Books, Agony Columns, Directories, Maps, Magazines, Journals, Pictures, Audio Cassettes, Images, TV

Programmes, TV Ads, Movies, Songs, Internet Notices, Bus or Train Timetables, Recipe, Menus, Stamps, Tickets, Product Labels, Realia such as phones and dolls, Currency, Weather Reports, Puppets and so on.

Authentic materials, such as television comedies (Scollon 1999), are particularly positioned to effect this change in consciousness and increase learners' comprehension of their own and the target culture. This method sees learners as comparative ethnographers (Byram 1991; Cortazzi & Jin 1999; Pulverness 1999), driven to reevaluate their cultural-specific schemata in light of different patterns of behavior.

The third and final type of textbook described by Cortazzi and Jin is one that teaches a wide range of other cultures that are neither source nor target cultures. The benefit of such resources is that they satisfy the demands of the growing number of learners who desire to utilize English as an International Language to communicate with non-native speakers worldwide.

2.2.1. Reasons for authentic materials

The practice of learning a language, in this case, English, should have a balanced emphasis on form and meaning. "*Many instructors still work in circumstances where there is an emphasis on precision that inhibits spontaneous language in the classroom*," write Lightbown and Spada (2013:197).

As a result, using pragmatic material in EFL classrooms may be of remarkable assistance in avoiding rigidity in language acquisition and seeing how the language is utilized in factual settings.

The use of authentic material will not only help learners realize and capture how the language is expressed in real use, but it will also expose the learner to a more comprehensive exposure of the language, which means that students will be able to see how to suit the language functions and expressions more appropriately based on the situations. As previously noted, many teachers were still guided by the emphasis on form - non-meaningful - learning. As a result, learners may receive insufficient exposure to real-world language usage. Although there was an argument that a language set for students in a textbook was strategies to assist students to grasp the target language better, there is still a potential that the students missed a culturally laden phrase when the language was removed from its natural context (Gilmore, 2007). Furthermore, when the speaker's attention is fraught with the substance of the phrase, the natural language environment is revealed. As a result, teachers must imitate real-world treatment of the language in classroom activities.

2.2.2. Benefits of authentic materials

The study discovered that employing authentic materials led to social and academic benefits such as increased motivation and cultural understanding. The mass of students who participated thought that using original texts in reading/vocabulary sessions boosted their drive to read more. One of the most evident benefits of including such

items, according to the participants, is this. The willingness to read more of the articles offered by professors indicated increased student motivation. This outcome is consistent with the previous study (Bererdo, 2006; Lin, 2004; Gilmore, 2007), which ties utilizing authentic materials to higher motivation. "*Authentic writings can be inspiring because they are proof that the language is utilized for real-life reasons by actual people,*" according to Nuttal (1996) (as mentioned in Bererdo, 2006. p. 64). Likewise, Lin (2004) stated that there is a growing recognition of the need of utilizing authentic texts in classrooms to preserve and boost students' enthusiasm to study. Lin (2004) went on to say that these texts offer students the impression that they are analyzing an original language and are in contact with the people or culture of the target language. Furthermore, Gilmore (2007) stated that it is essential for second language instructors to give valid resources within classrooms to enhance all language abilities since they are more motivational, engaging, and relevant to students' lives. This drive will lead to improved language acquisition and growth.

The use of actual materials in reading/vocabulary sessions increased cultural understanding in addition to motivation. This outcome is consistent with Kilickaya's (2004) research, which considers genuine materials to be a good technique for raising learners' cultural awareness. According to Kilickaya (2004), because authentic texts are written for native speakers, English learners may practice comprehending how individuals in the target language behave, offering them a preview of what they may experience in the future. Furthermore, comprehending other cultures entails not just learning their food, imports, exports, and histories, but also understanding how they think and respond. In other words, students may apply their knowledge outside of the classroom by combining language abilities with cultural skills.

According to Tomlinson (2012), some scholars "*suggest that genuine resources can give meaningful exposure to the language as it is used, encourage learners, help them build a range of communicative competences, and increase positive attitudes toward language acquisition*" (161). According to Gilmore (2007), "*authentic resources, particularly audio-visual materials, offer a considerably richer source of information for learners and have the potential to be used in diverse ways and on different levels to build learners' communicative skill*" (103). According to Spelleri (2002), "*genuine materials provide actual language that is contextually rich and culturally relevant*" (16). Peacock (1997) experimentally evaluated the use of authentic materials in the classroom and reported that learners' motivation and on-task behavior rose drammatically when they utilized genuine materials.

To summarize, we can say that authentic materials are beneficial because they:
- Expose students to language that serves a practical purpose.
- Provide a refreshing change from the textbook.
- Focus more closely on students' interests and needs.
- Provide information about a variety of topics.
- Increase students' motivation.
- Connect the classroom with the outside world.

2.3. Language and culture in an EFL classroom

Most individuals overlook the fact that being proficient in a language entails more than just comprehending the rules and mastering the four abilities. It also needs a comprehensive cultural understanding of that language. While instructors must discover methods to teach their pupils about culture, they must also understand and respond to their students' cultures. According to Gollnick and Chinn, in a developing society, an increasing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are enrolling in modern language classes and "*trying to identify effective methods to teach these students*" while "*the need for culturally responsive pedagogical approaches is increasing.*"

While Davis defines culture as a "*important survival strategy passed down from generation to generation through the process of culture and socialization, a kind of road map that serves as a cognitive tool that guides and shapes behavior,*" Owens defines culture as "*what people think is important (values); what people consider to be true (beliefs); and how one perceives how things are done (norm).*" Although definitions differ, it is clear that culture is made up of many different parts, each of which is necessary for understanding a society's whole cultural picture. Traditions, myths, values, norms, conventions, legends, history, religion, culture, and geographical location are examples of these aspects. Culture is a jigsaw, with its aspects serving as the pieces. Each component - each piece - must be addressed and comprehended; otherwise, there will be no clear knowledge and vision of that culture.

Culture is incredibly crucial in language learning and should not be disregarded since culture operates as if flesh and language were the skeleton of society. We all know that language and culture are intricately intertwined and that there is no language without culture. As a result, it is impossible to imagine a language class that does not include cultural components from the target language. Consider the first day of class in a class where the target language is Vietnamese. The instructor of the program would most likely begin by teaching students how to welcome others in Vietnamese. As the welcomes will be done in Vietnamese, the first day of this session will strongly showcase the cultural features of Vietnam. The same is true for an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class: The welcome styles would incorporate cultural patterns from the British or American civilizations, regardless of where this class is in the world. The cultures of both languages are introduced and practiced in both sessions, even on the first day.

2.4. Teaching and learning culture with authentic materials

We now have easy and rapid access to various sources because of technological advances. Almost all printed publications are now available in electronic form on the Internet, where we can simply search for anything at any time. As a result, we have enough cultural material to employ in our schools. Cullen and Sato (2000) propose practical techniques and a wide range of sources for teaching culture in the EFL classroom using three different parameters, namely, information sources, activity-types, and selling-points, and Kodotchgova (2002) discusses the role of role-play in teaching culture

for classrooms and suggests quick steps for classroom implementation. Jordan (1997, p. 105) provides a list of cultural information sources:

- Newspapers: they are a good source of cultural information: local publications will offer you a better sense of what life is like in towns.
- Video: A variety of available ELT video cassettes are a wonderful visual source of cultural knowledge. (Today, we have CD/DVD copies of these videotapes, which give greater quality.)
- Talks/discussions: Some topics may be appropriate for providing information to students in a plenary session.
- Role play/dramatizations: they can be used to spark conversation and introspection.
- Culture quizzes/tests: test the knowledge of cultures around the world
- Magazines: Magazines contain a substantial quantity of information and a wide variety of text types.
- TV programs: Provide a range of articles and information on various topics.
- Movies: One or more tales or events documented on film as a series of widely distributed moving pictures.
- Songs: are at the heart of such algorithms since they provide a scalable method of indexing and recommending music.
- Audio Cassettes: Tape recordings could be used at the begging of a lesson or unit to motivate the learners.
- Literature: The criteria approach attempts to provide criteria that must be met by all texts.

2.5. Improving intercultural competence through teaching and learning culture with authentic materials

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the function of teaching material in a learning technique is a means to represent the nature of teaching material. For example, the content of the subject, practicing it, promoting dialogue among students, or allowing students to practice independently without the assistance of a lecturer. Castilo (2017) agrees with Richards and Rodgers that teaching materials play a principal role in language acquisition since lecturers utilize them to enhance learning both within and outside the classroom. Although most literature focuses on printed material, Kim (2000) and Day (2004), Rogers in Kilickaya (2004), Dorda (2008), Tomlinson (2012), McDonough and Shaw (2012), Polio (2014) defines teaching material as anything that can be used to facilitate language learning, including textbooks, videos, graded readers, flashcards, games, websites, and interactions via event mobile phones.

Al Azri et al. (2014), Rahman (2014), Belaid (2015), Ghanbari (2015), Carmona (2015), Allehyani et al. (2017), Castillo (2017) all use authentic materials to teach English (2017). All of this research shows that using actual content to motivate students boosts their enthusiasm for learning and acquiring languages in the real world. The objective of

this research is ICC, especially the use of inductive methodologies based on actual materials to increase the communicative ability of English Department students. Mastery of communicative competence will be very useful for the development of professional human resources (HR) and is very relevant to the concept of green HR development (Syarkawi M., 2015), namely if students can communicate in English integratively, not partially, between grammar, socio-linguistics, and communication strategies will create good and positive human resources in interfering intercultural competence in all industries.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

Traditionally, research (at least in the "human sciences") has taken two approaches: the first, which is quantitative and aligns with the "pure sciences", is known as psychometry and is described by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as "*the science of measuring mental powers and processes*". The second, qualitative method is known as ethnography, and it entails the study of a group's culture/characteristics in the real world rather than in laboratory conditions. The researcher does not attempt to isolate or influence the processes being studied, and insights and generalizations occur from intimate contact with the data rather than from a theory of language learning and usage. (Nunan 1992: 55).

Several authors have noted that quantitative and qualitative research may be mixed at various phases of the research process, including research question design, sampling, data gathering, and data analysis. The articles for this study were chosen with data collecting and data analysis in mind, and the content was subsequently assessed in connection to these parts of the research process. As the data below will show, sampling issues did arise in the study. Data collection and analysis were highlighted since they are arguably distinguishing characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research. Furthermore, multi-strategy research publications almost typically include both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis (Niglas, 2004).

The topic of the integration of quantitative and qualitative research has become increasingly structured, as seen by the discussion and development of integration typologies. This has received special attention from North American contributions to the field. According to Creswell et al. (2003), naming categories of mixed-methods research provides several advantages. It expresses the quality of the study and informs others about what researchers aim to undertake or have done (for example, funding bodies and journal editors). To that degree, mixed-methods or multi-strategy research typologies can assist researchers and writers in explaining the nature of their aims or successes.

Quantitative techniques seek to control all variables in an experiment to demonstrate a causal link between two items while holding everything else constant. They then seek to persuade the reader of the correctness of their views by measuring

changes and manipulating statistics. Qualitative approaches, on the other hand, prefer to allow theories to emerge naturally from, often, intense and prolonged contact in the field; for example, Shirley Brice Heath (1983) spent nearly a decade living, working, and playing with the families of two communities in the Piedmont Carolinas, Roadville and Trackton, before reaching her conclusions. The sheer weight of detail and exemplification persuades the reader of the truth of the writer's beliefs.

Mixed methods research is becoming more popular as a viable option for either quantitative or qualitative research techniques. Furthermore, combining approaches might provide richer insights and result in additional topics of interest for future research. The goal of integrating quantitative and qualitative research designs is to maintain the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods while reducing the flaws of each (Creswell, 2012; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Greenwood, & Terry, 2012; Salehi & Golafshani, 2010; Truscott, Swars, Smith, Thornton-Reid, XZhao, Dooley, Williams, Hart, & Matthews, 2010; Venkatesh et al., 2013).

3.2 Research participants
Participants in the quantitative research approach were 80 EFL students from the English study program, mainly fourth-year students and three lecturers (2 males, 1 female) teaching Intercultural Communication (ICC) courses for four years, from the School of Foreign Languages, CTU, Vietnam. Such participants would be ideal for study since they have been exposed to a wide range of materials through several lectures over the semesters. Students have particularly enjoyed British-American literature or criticism literature lessons. As a result, these persons might be appropriate as study volunteers.

In terms of the interview, the researcher purposefully chose four-year students since they got more ICC-related teachings than lower-level courses and were instructed and learned about authentic materials. As a result, such backgrounds can assist me in comprehending the benefits and drawbacks of employing authentic materials, identifying areas for improvement in learning, and recommending ideal methods to boost learning effectiveness in English at ICC courses.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is for students to see the perception when using authentic materials as mediators to develop their intercultural competence (ICCo) in learning English.

3.3 Research instruments
3.3.1 Questionnaire
The researcher collected data from EFL students using an English questionnaire (Vietnamese version for readers to fully grasp) on students' perspectives on using authentic materials to promote intercultural competency in studying English. The questionnaire was created with the study aims and the sort of information requested from the respondents in mind. A correctly designed questionnaire may ensure that the same sort of information is collected from a large number of participants in the same way and

also allows for systematic analysis. The initial section of the questionnaire acted as a cover letter and consent form, as well as background information about the researchers. This section also included a definition to assist participants in fully comprehending the study. This section also included the researcher's contact details to let participants vent any concerns regarding the questionnaire. The second section of the questionnaire included demographic information about the respondents as well as information about their companies. Five questions concerning the information provided by the responders (name, gender, age group, education level, email address and course). The third section of the questionnaire has 54 questions, each of which corresponds to a dimensional measuring framework. The items pertain to the model's constructs on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicated entirely disagree, 1 indicated disagree, 1 indicated neutral, 1 indicated agree, and 1 indicated strongly agree.

These are the reasons why the researchers will employ it in this investigation. It is a questionnaire with three major sections: Parts A, B, and C. The questions in parts B and C are constructed on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly opposed. agree, and 5 completely agree.

Part B participants were asked to respond to questions on British-American literature and criticism courses and talents. These questions are numerical and are organized into five major groups: (1) listening skills, (2) speaking skills, (3) reading skills, (4) writing skills, and (5) literature courses.

Part C contains recommendations for boosting performance and effectiveness when utilizing genuine papers to increase intercultural competency in English learning. As well as my personal opinions on the subject.

To revalidate, compare, and contrast viewpoints from interviews, quantitative data were obtained from 80 EFL students in an English research program using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22.0. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to examine the reliability of the quantitative data acquired from the questionnaire. The Scale test findings reveal that the questionnaire's reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.923; Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items = 0.92) is enough for carrying out this study. Descriptive statistics were used to assess quantitative data. Using this procedure, I calculated the percentage of responses that correspond to each of the five questionnaire options. I manually tallied the replies to the five questions before uploading them to Excel for encoding for the total data.

3.4. Procedure of data collection

The interview and questionnaire are the two main parts. Before doing the qualitative investigation, the researcher used a quantitative technique. To start with the questionnaire's reliability is more than 0.92, indicating that it is suitable for data collection. Second, the researcher contacted the English instructor to schedule a visit to many classrooms. After getting thorough information from the teacher, the researcher

visits each class and waits until the lecture is completed. Then I introduced myself and offered specific directions on how to complete the questionnaire. Within minutes, the participants are willing to do and ask the misinterpreted question, and they begin filling out the questionnaire.

Regarding the qualitative research method, the researcher randomly invited five students and three lecturers to participate in the previous questionnaire to have an interview about the effect achieved when using authentic materials to develop intercultural competence (ICCo) in learning English. Due to the different study hours of the students and lecturers; cuz the short time, the researcher actively contacted the participants via email and completed the interview.

3.5 Data Interpretation

3.5.1 Analytical questionnaire on EFL students' perceptions

The researcher examined the number of participants, reorganized it, and then coded it in Excel on a 5-degree Likert scale after obtaining 80 replies from face-to-face participants. For data entry, choose one of the following options: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) highly agree. Before getting the final data for analysis, the researcher employed SPSS software version 22.0 and thoroughly analyzed each topic.

3.5.2 Examining the practice and interview questions of EFL students

In terms of interview analysis, the most common technique to respond to the five questions is to type the response in Word and send it by email. As a result, the researcher reviewed and analyzed the participants' thoughts and points of view in an appropriate section of the thesis. Finally, the researcher divides information into topics and compares them using the quantitative research approach.

4. Findings

4.1 Results from the quantitative portion of the study

There was a total of 80 students who were students in the English studies English translation and interpretation program engaged in the survey.

The utilization of authentic materials to develop intercultural competency has the potential to significantly increase English abilities through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This level of reading reaches with M=4.16, SD=0.702. Although the writing portion of the questionnaire is a touch low at M= 3.68 with SD=0.671 the listening portion is at M=3.81, SD=0.677 and at M=3.96, SD=0.625 respectively. However, in terms of positives, the speaking and reading sections performed admirably.

Table 4.1: Authentic materials improving intercultural
competence through British - American literature courses

No	Item (N=80)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
2.1	Literature use words as building blocks to create images that reflect and express lives among cultures.	1	5	3.84	0.665
2.2	Literature has basic literary devices and literary theories through works of fiction, nonfiction and poetry, which helps better understand characters from different cultures.	1	5	3.89	0.528
2.3	British-American literature teaches students about the phases of growth, genres, and typical writers and works in literature between British and American cultures.	1	5	3.95	0.654
2.4	British-American literature also encourages EFL students to actively participate in group discussions and presentations, enhancing their ability to read, investigate, and research sources relating to the subject's topic, which helps better understand historical development.	1	5	3.98	0.675
2.5	Literary criticism is the attentive reading, analysis, critical appraisal, and interpretation of literary materials, which makes deeply understand the English language in characters' dialogues.	1	5	3.94	0.801
2.6	Literary criticism is typically founded on literary theory (or poetics), which involves methodical thought on the ideas, techniques, and purposes of literary criticism, which is the unique culture of the British compared to the Americans.	1	5	3.63	0.682

Everyone who took the surveyed "Agreed" that studying British-American literature or literature criticism through authentic materials resulted in a certain level of intercultural ability. Although the index is low, the response rate is not less than M=3.63 with SD= 0.682 in Table 4.1.

For authentic materials improving intercultural competence through ICC courses, the study reveals that participants with an index of M=4.06, SD=0.603 who stated their view when authentic materials were utilized to educate in ICC courses were at a higher level. However, employing authentic materials during ICC courses only improves

students' capacity to learn English to a limited amount, as evidenced by a question with a response rate of just M= 3.15, SD=0.873. It demonstrates that authentic materials cannot totally replace textbooks or other sources, but when integrated, they may provide excellent quality to ICC courses.

5. Discussion, conclusions and implications

5.1. Discussion
This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the relevant studies to answer two research questions.

The purpose of this research is to look into the usage of authentic materials in English reading classrooms. It is obvious from the replies and statistics of the participants that the usage of authentic resources in English instruction has become a requirement. According to the participants' stories in this study, there are many evident benefits and some drawbacks to reading and engaging with authentic literature in or outside of ESL classrooms. However, the advantages of adopting authentic materials outweigh the downsides.

5.1.1. Research Question One: What are authentic materials to develop EFL students' intercultural competence (ICCo) in learning English?

Participants reported that they were exposed to authentic materials every day. These materials vary depending on the topic or skill being taught. In other words, each text is used to improve a certain skill or to serve certain ELL needs. Research shows that participants report that they enjoy learning real-life materials to enhance their understanding of intercultural communication (ICC). Many ESL teachers prefer to use authentic materials for teaching because many authentic sources can be used in courses. For example, newspapers, magazines, TV shows, train schedules, restaurant menus, advertisements, and hotel brochures are some of the most popular authentic reading materials that can be used for teaching advanced (Polio, 2014).

These resources contain language that has not been intended to educate or develop certain language skills, such as grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For non-native learners, one of the most significant reasons for reading or engaging with different texts is to learn the language (House, 2008). Similarly, Tamo (2009) asserted that many authentic resources may be culturally biased because they are not intended to be taught. That is, they may contain language that is culturally unacceptable for some students.

5.1.2. Research Question Two: To what extent do EFL students perceive authentic materials to develop their intercultural competence (ICCo) in learning English?

In terms of the advantages of employing authentic materials, research reveals that doing so has social and academic advantages, such as greater motivation and cultural

understanding. The majority of students who took part believed that using authentic materials in vocabulary sessions boosted their desire to study more. According to the participants, this is one of the most evident advantages of incorporating such materials. The urge to research more articles offered by professors increases students' willingness to learn. This outcome is consistent with previous research (Bererdo, 2006; Lin, 2004; Gilmore, 2007) that has linked the usage of authentic materials to higher motivation. According to Nuttal (1996), "*authentic texts can be motivating because they are proof that the language is used for real-life purposes by real people*" (as stated in Bererdo, 2006. p. 64).

Lin (2004) also mentions that there is a growing recognition of the need of employing authentic materials in the classroom to sustain and boost student learning motivation. Lin (2004) adds that these writings offer pupils the impression that they are studying a real language and are exposed to the target language's people and culture. Furthermore, Gilmore (2007) emphasizes the importance of authentic materials in the classroom for the development of all language skills since they are more motivational, engaging, and relevant to student life. This drive will lead to improved language acquisition and growth.

Participants noted that, in addition to motivation, the utilization of authentic texts in the classroom boosted their cultural knowledge. This outcome is consistent with Kilickaya's (2004) research, which considers genuine materials to be an excellent tool for increasing learners' cultural understanding. According to Kilickaya (2004), because authentic texts are written for native speakers, English learners may practice comprehending how individuals use the target language, preparing them for future challenges.

5.3. Conclusions

One of the most important strategies for teaching in the classroom is the use of authentic materials. Its purpose is to motivate and engage pupils in learning a second language. As a result, the current study began with the goal of addressing the two research questions (What are authentic materials to develop EFL students' intercultural competence (ICCo) in learning English?). The findings revealed that the participants had favorable attitudes toward the usage of authentic materials in classrooms. Furthermore, most students favored using authentic materials over textbooks, and they unanimously agreed that authentic materials are inspiring. In response to the second study question (To what extent do EFL students perceive authentic materials to develop their intercultural competence (ICCo) in learning English?), the majority of participants strongly agreed that authentic materials should be used in language learning and improvement.

Respondents agreed that authentic materials aid in their English and vocabulary development. As a result of what has been mentioned so far, authentic materials are regarded as an important aspect in the development of receptive and productive abilities. Furthermore, real materials provide several benefits to learners, making learning easier and more inspiring.

5.4. Implications

The current study discovered that when students are exposed to authentic cultural materials, they have the opportunity to develop their intercultural competence (ICCo), to broaden their knowledge not only in the language as a code but also to be exposed to real language, to real situations that occur in their contexts. In reality, there are shifts in how students see language study and how crucial it is to have something to say in that foreign language, not just knowing how to name things in English but putting together terminology to communicate thoughts.

English language teachers play an important role in assisting pupils in understanding their current reality and modifying their ways of thinking or perceiving the world. Based on course experiences, the use of real resources should begin while students are in their first level of English language acquisition, so that they may acquire the habit of using a variety of materials. In reality, English language teachers should start with short tales, cartoons, recipes, menus, songs, or book extracts to get pupils used to interacting with "real" language. As a consequence, as students reach higher levels, they will have more interaction with the target language and culture.

Learners' insights revealed that if they are pushed, they would solve the grammatical abundance from the actual content. Nonetheless, English language teachers must study the content before bringing it into the classroom. They must determine whether it requires customization for kids so that they are not overwhelmed by the richness of the terminology. Furthermore, English language teachers must have defined objectives for using this sort of material to select the appropriate one for teaching various topics, such as vocabulary. There is occasionally a lot of jargon that isn't important because it's rarely used in real life.

5.5. Limitations

- As previously stated, the classroom-based research conducted in this study intended to offer as complete a picture of what occurred throughout the experiment as feasible. Although the researchers feel this improved the findings significantly, it also introduced several issues. To begin with, the time-consuming necessity of gathering so much data makes replication more difficult: few researchers are going to have unfettered access to learners and resources that I was lucky enough to be provided.
- Next, the case-study interviews would have yielded better results if they had been conducted in a more relaxed setting; as it was, they were frequently packed into the gaps between classes and were therefore hurried.
- Finally, further effort is required to develop trustworthy and practical measures for assessing communication skills comprehensively. Although measurements of linguistic ability (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, and so on) are well established, the same cannot be said for the model's other components.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Both authors strongly agreed on the publication of this paper and there was no contention or rivalry during finishing the work. In other words, the authors declare no conflicts of interest in this article. Both authors are fully and equally responsible for the benefits and harms after this article is published. The authors, moreover, declare that the material presented by us in this paper is our original work, and does not contain any materials taken from other copyrighted sources. Wherever such materials have been included, they have been clearly indented or/and identified by quotation marks and due and proper acknowledgements given by citing the source at appropriate places.

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