Investigating Intercultural Awareness Development and Attitudes towards Intercultural Activities in an English for Intercultural Communication Course: A Case Study of Thai University Students

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the development of 24 students' intercultural awareness and their attitudes towards intercultural activities based on Baker's (2022) model of Intercultural Awareness (ICA) in a course on English for Intercultural Communication. In addition to the university's course evaluation, pre- and post-test questionnaires, classroom observations, and document archives were used to collect data over a semester. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal a significant change in students' intercultural awareness through the use of intercultural activities. However, as a reversion of students' ICA levels is also observed, this study suggests that the development of their knowledge and attitudes may progress at different rates. Nonetheless, students hold high satisfaction with the content and methods.

Introduction

Due to its first spread from the influence of colonization to the current technological development and globalization, English holds its rank as the world's most spoken language among 7,164 languages used in this rapidly changing world (Eberhard et al., 2024). The language is served as a medium of communication "at local, national, regional, and global levels" (Baker, 2012a, p. 23) in different domains, such as business, media, tourism, science, and technology (Galloway & Rose, 2015). As a consequence of its diaspora and usefulness, English is perceived as a language of power leading to the country's political, economic, and social development, and individuals' success (e.g. McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Therefore, English language education is in global demand, and many countries embrace the language in their education policies, especially Asia where English becomes the first and foremost foreign language (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2012). Then, the number of English language speakers has significantly increased, and non-native speakers contribute the largest proportion of the total English users (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Regarding its significant function as a global lingua franca, the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in this paper does not only represent "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7), but also includes the use of language in "multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 73).

However, although there has been a paradigm shift from viewing English as a monocentric to a pluralistic language because of its present role (Boonsuk et al., 2022), this phenomenon does not strikingly affect English language education considering the slow change in English language teaching (ELT) (Galloway & Rose, 2015). As many researchers point out, ELT particularly in expanding circle countries is still under the impact of Standard English ideology and native speakerism (e.g. Fang & Ren, 2018). Seeing and treating English in ELT as a foreign language, language and culture of native speakers, particularly British and North American is thus valued as the standard form and a model of learning and teaching (Galloway & Rose, 2015). The mismatch between policies and practices contributes to challenges in English language education worldwide, with Thailand experiencing similar issues. The transition from traditional teaching methods to more pluralistic

approaches in English language education seems to be a gradual process, reflecting an ongoing adaptation that is influenced by the specific context.

In fact, focusing solely on teaching native speakers' language and culture in ELT is insufficient for students to use English effectively in intercultural communication, as interactions involve the flow of heterogeneous cultures within both local and global contexts of English use (Baker, 2018). On the account of the complexity of language and culture in intercultural communication through ELF, specifically transcultural communication (Baker, 2022), it means speakers have to use their available linguistic resources in order to adjust themselves for effective communication in ELF situations (Seidlhofer, 2011). Instead of native speakers' competence, the current objectives and processes of language learning need to be reconsidered (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 81). Language learners should be equipped with intercultural awareness (Baker, 2022) for this reason. In line with research in other settings, studies conducted in Thai contexts suggest enhancing learners' accommodation skills in English language education, and adjusting pedagogy and assessments to be more relevant to its ELF context (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). In addition, there needs to be the development of ELT teachers' awareness of ELF (e.g. Boonsuk & Fang, 2024; Nomnian, 2013a) and also their intercultural awareness, particularly in pre-service teacher education (Pattaraworathum, 2021). In this regard, it is necessary to find alternative approaches to raise language and cultural awareness in ELT pedagogies. Hence, the current study was conducted with the aim of enhancing students' intercultural awareness and examining their attitudes towards applying intercultural activities based on Baker's (2022) model of intercultural awareness (ICA) in a course on English for Intercultural Communication in a Thai university.

Theoretical Background

The section firstly presents a short examination of intercultural approaches in English language education, and also in the Thai context. Afterwards, it provides Baker's (2022) ICA model with the addition of previous research to exemplify how the model can be implemented as a frame of reference in diverse ELT settings.

Intercultural Approaches in English Language Education

As mentioned earlier, the concept of culture in ELT is traditionally viewed as the shared knowledge, practices, and values of members in a particular group or nation (Pattaraworathum, 2021). This inseparability relationship between language and culture is reflected in the strong

attachment to English language and culture of Anglophone speakers from inner circle countries (Baker, 2015). As native speakers are highly regarded as "a model for linguistic norms" and also "a guide to the target culture" (Kirkpatrick, 2012, p. 133), the native speaker competence becomes the ideal aim of English language and intercultural education (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). In accordance to this structuralist perspective of language and culture, ELT teachers emphasize on teaching students' own culture and the target culture in a foreign language classroom, apparently in the belief that students will adapt these standard norms to communicate with other speakers in communication (e.g. Sifakis, 2004). English language learners are expected to "think and act like an English native speaker" (Baker, 2015, p. 79) while their own languages and cultures become "a hindrance or a source of interference" in intercultural communication (Fang & Ren, 2018, p. 386). These ideologies in cross-cultural approaches subsequently create substantial barriers for ELT teachers and the limitation of culture teaching in English language curriculums, so cultural teaching is often ignored or excluded from a foreign language classroom (e.g. Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020; Snodin, 2016). On the other hand, although the Thai national curriculum primarily focuses on native speakers, it is found that some ELT teachers still make efforts to incorporate cultural teaching, and they are striking the balance between the varying expectations of stakeholders regarding standard-based linguistic competence (Pattaraworathum, 2021). The overrepresentation of native speakers in ELT can also bring about significant impediments to students' learning, perceptions towards non- native speakers, and even self-identity (e.g. Hayes, 2016; Nomnian, 2013b).

Nonetheless, the impact of technological innovations on the relationship between language and culture and also the diversity of cultural references and practices in communication should be taken into account (Baker, 2018). Considering the flexibility and co-construction of emerging culture through ELF across blurred boundaries, it is possible that members in the same speech community do not share the same way of thinking, acting, and interpreting language and culture (e.g. Baker, 2015). Since English language is no longer attached to a particular culture and nation in communication, it is problematic to make a linguistic and cultural reference from only Anglophone speakers in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Instead of following Anglophone speakers' norms, many scholars thus call for more diverse and flexible norms in intercultural communication (e.g. Holliday, 2012). This contributes to the endorsement of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in ELT to develop the individual students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical awareness (Byram, 2012), aligning with the support of many researchers for ICC implementation in Thai ELT (e.g. Banjongjit & Boonmoh, 2018; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017;

Snodin, 2016). Due to using these communicative and cultural activities, such as students' collaborative discussion (Mitchell et al., 2015), students are well-prepared for interpreting meanings, negotiating, and cooperating with others in the global communication (e.g. Byram, 2012). However, in parallel with other research settings, it is reported that applicable resources, assessing methods, and teachers' ICC training are a major challenge to the ICC implementation in Thailand (e.g. Banjongjit & Boonmoh, 2018; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Nomnian, 2013b), and hence teachers give preferences to the conventional teaching methods (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017). In this regard, a more effective method for cultural learning and teaching is needed in the ELF context, specifically in Thailand, with reference to its linguistic diversity and cultural heterogeneity (Boonsuk & Fang, 2024; Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Integrating Intercultural Awareness into English Language Education

To this point, it appears that the conformity to native norms in ELT adversely affects language learners' development. Non-native speakers' status and identity thus becomes a matter of concern, and intercultural approaches in ELT have been gradually changed on the basis of the linguistic and cultural plurality. However, there have been few studies on teaching culture in the ELF settings suggested developing not only ICC approaches, but also expanding the concept of culture in pedagogies to include the more complex nature of language and culture through English language use (Baker, 2015; Pattaraworathum, 2021). Cultural teaching practices, such as content and materials should be based on local cultural knowledge rather than Anglophone norms (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2021). Since learners need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes, plus ideological and multilingual awareness in transcultural communication (Baker, 2022), a model of Intercultural Awareness (ICA) by Baker (2022) is accordingly selected to be a research framework. That is because its approaches are more critical in relation to given issues and it also corresponds to learners' local contexts and cultures (Baker, 2022).

Baker's (2022) ICA model is comprised of 12 components ranged in three levels. The cultural presentation of the ICA model firstly creates a broad understanding of culture (Level 1: basic cultural awareness), to become aware of a more complex nature of culture within social groups (Level 2: advanced cultural awareness), and to finally understand the most complex concept which is culture as hybrid, emergent, and transitional in communication through ELF (Level 3: intercultural awareness). Applying the ICA approaches in ELT necessarily depends on the educational context because learners have

to explore and discuss local cultures and cultural groupings in a national level. They also critically assess cultural representation through the examination and discussion about language learning materials, media, and arts. Learners' own experiences of intercultural communication are welcomed in class discussion and reflection, so local and non-local teachers or students can be cultural informants (Baker, 2012b). Yet, due to varied intercultural interactions and experiences of learners, it is likely that they will not develop their ICA level in an exact sequence, and their ICA development can also go in reverse (e.g. Humphreys & Baker, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to consistently revise and update their knowledge, awareness, and skills (Baker, 2015).

Despite existing challenges, the implementations of intercultural activities based on the ICA model in ELT and intercultural education has received positive feedback as to successfully developing learners' intercultural awareness. To illustrate some studies in Asian contexts, Baker (2012b) himself designed an online self-study course on intercultural communication and ICA for a group of university students in Thailand. Abdzadeh and Baker (2020) also ran a course on Global Englishes and ICA with the use of a variety of tasks, such as classroom discussions and written assignments in Iran. Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2018) applied digital photograph-mediated intercultural tasks to an English as an additional language (EAL) classroom in Indonesia. In spite of different tasks and contexts, researchers agreed on the further examination of students' intercultural awareness development, changes in students' attitudes, and their experience in intercultural learning over an extended period and across various settings. Therefore, this study was conducted to address the gap concerning the lack of instructor feedback in Baker's (2012b) online self-study course, while also incorporating a wider variety of intercultural tasks (e.g. Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020) within a longer teaching timeframe.

Methodology

To effectively promote awareness of ELF and intercultural education in ELT, intercultural tasks based on Baker's (2012b) guidelines were applied to one required English course in the tertiary level: English for Intercultural Communication. The objectives of classroom-based research were to raise university students' intercultural awareness; and to examine students' attitudes towards provided intercultural activities based on Baker's (2022) ICA model. The research questions are as follows:

(1) To what extent does the developed course on English for Intercultural Communication enhance students' intercultural awareness?

(2) What are students' attitudes and experiences regarding learning with teaching interventions, as well as their evaluations of the course?

Participants

Since the use of ELF, such as in English-medium education, has been extensively found among Thai middle classes in the metropolitan areas (Baker, 2015) and it is assumed that tertiary students would have higher experience in English language learning and intercultural communication (e.g. Ambele & Boonsuk, 2021), a public university in Bangkok was purposively selected as the research setting. The research was carried out with students enrolled in a course on English for Intercultural Communication which was a required course for English-majored students in the Faculty of Education. To take part in the research, students voluntarily gave a written consent with ethic approval from the university (COA No. 283/66). The participants thus involved a total of 24 students: 22 second-year students in Secondary Education (15 females and 7 males), and 2 third-year students in Elementary Education (1 female and 1 male).
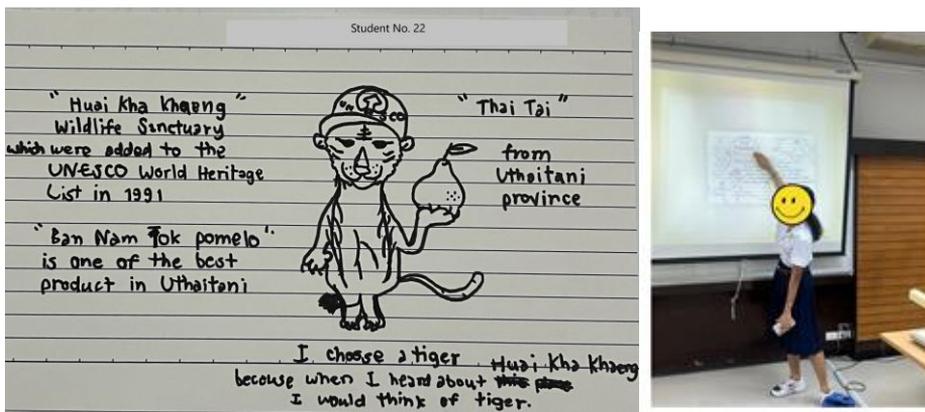
The Use of Intercultural Activities in the Course

The previous course objectives had focused on seeking knowledge and describing similarities and differences among about native English speakers' culture, students' culture, and international culture. However, to further develop the course, the objectives and content were revised to remove an emphasis on teaching any specific culture. As a result, the course included 14 topics covered over 15 class periods, totalling 48 hours. In each class period, students were provided with a lecture on the topic before they did a variety of cultural tasks. For example, students learnt about the relationship between language and culture, and then they discussed various issues partly derived from Baker's (2012b) questionnaire (e.g. Standard English, language ownership, and the intelligibility of language varieties). Moreover, when they learned the basic concept of soft power and how culture could affect people's practices, they evaluated and discussed local and foreign news about famous Thai cultural products. Individual students later explored culture of their hometown before creating their own mascot and presenting it in front of the class (see Figure 1). Due to the constant revision of the lessons regarding the model (Baker, 2015), they had the opportunity to learn about the general background of Halloween Day and express themselves by wearing fancy dress costumes, for example. Apart from the inside class activities, students were also assigned to do the outside class activities, such as exploring any cultural topics in groups based on their interest and presenting their group project in class.

Since ELT teachers' self-awareness can be developed in teacher education by reflecting on their learning (e.g. Lourenço et al., 2018), students were asked to write at least five reflections on their cultural exploration. They expressed themselves individually or in groups depending on the task, and they received feedback later. In the final stage, students compiled all of their assignments and reflections on their learning (with photos if preferred), and submitted them in terms of a portfolio. The course content and intercultural tasks in each class period were summarized in Appendix A.

Figure 1

Examples of a Hometown Mascot and a Short Presentation in Class

Data Collection

To collect the participants' insights on the implementation of intercultural activities in authentic classroom context, the researcher used the participatory qualitative methodology (Dörnyei, 2007; Silverman, 2017), and with that the researcher took an insider role as a lecturer involving in class instruction and intercultural activities to support the participants' learning process and engagement in knowledge collaboration (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). However, while the insider role could provide valuable context and access, there were factors (e.g. power dynamics, researcher's status, and the observer effect) which possibly influenced the data collection and the participants' performance (Dörnyei, 2007; Rose et al., 2020). Moreover, relying on a single data source might not be sufficient to fully support the findings, and the uniqueness of a particular case, along with the researcher's personal biases, could be considered as a limitation of the study (Dörnyei, 2007; Hood, 2009).

To minimize potential biases and ensure the validity and reliability of the study, several qualitative methods (e.g. classroom observations and document analysis) were employed to collect data from the participants, and these multiple datasets were triangulated over the term time to enhance data accuracy (Silverman, 2017). Additionally, the participants were asked to clarify and elaborate on their ideas through assignments and reflections to ensure valid conclusions and accurate inferences. This process also helped minimize the researcher's misinterpretation and bias. Hence, methodological and data triangulation further enabled the participants to review and refine the researcher's interpretations, enhancing the study's validity (Silverman, 2017).

As Silverman (2017) suggested, combining different research instruments allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the participants' development, class participation, and attitudes towards learning, several research instruments were employed for data collection. During the data collection process, pre- and post-test questionnaire, classroom observations, and document archives were used. Before and after undertaking the course, the participants answered 10 open-ended questions about language and culture which were partly adapted from Baker's (2012a) questionnaire. For instance, they were asked to define culture, explain the relationship between language and culture, and also identify the most important aspect of studying English. These questions helped elicit the participants' knowledge and attitudes towards language and culture in ELT, so the researcher could assess their understanding and awareness of culture in relation to the ICA model. The participants were also surveyed about their learning aims at the beginning, and their learning outcomes at the end of the course (see Appendix B). In so doing, the researcher could compare whether there were any changes in the participants' learning (Dörnyei, 2007) and attitudes (Baker, 2012a).

During the instructional process, classroom observations were conducted to gather insights into students' learning and the impact of intercultural tasks in the natural educational setting (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Dörnyei, 2007). Both structured and unstructured observation methods were employed, so the researcher recorded the participants' ICA level in an observation scheme (see Appendix C), and any additional emerging issues in narrative field notes[1] (Dörnyei, 2007). The researcher also took photos of classroom activities for later review, and the participants' faces were included in the frame only with their approval, in line with ethical guidelines (Dörnyei, 2007).

In addition, the researcher archived or copied the participants' works throughout the semester, as documents provided insights into their attitudes and behaviors with minimal researcher interference (Silverman, 2014). Compiling their assignments and reflections over time into a portfolio

allowed the researcher to examine and track changes in their attitudes, behaviors, and also intercultural experiences in a long-term timeframe (Dörnyei, 2007; Rose et al., 2020). Therefore, the individual participants' portfolios were collected at the end of the course.

To ensure students could provide feedback on course development without pressure and interference, the results from the university's course evaluation at the end of the semester were also taken into consideration, as students could anonymously rate the course content, pedagogy, and assessment methods.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was employed to analyze and interpret the data. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher utilized content analysis in conjunction with qualitative data software, NVivo 14, to analyze and interpret the data continuously and simultaneously (Silverman, 2017). Following the completion of the pre-test questionnaire, data were coded to assess the participants' initial ICA level. Subsequently, data from all observations, field notes, and document archives were coded and re-coded multiple times, and categorized to identify patterns and interpret the participants' attitudes and behaviors (Dörnyei, 2007; Silverman, 2014). If new data emerged, additional codes were created and analyzed to examine recurring patterns in participants' behaviors, as well as their shared views and experiences with intercultural activities (Dörnyei, 2007; Silverman, 2017). The recurring data were then developed into common codes and sub-categories (Dörnyei, 2007; Silverman, 2017). The researcher then mapped emerging topics and themes to Baker's (2022) ICA level to identify developments in the participants' intercultural awareness as well as their attitudes and learning experiences with intercultural tasks.

Furthermore, all datasets were organized into categories using the qualitative software NVivo 14, which efficiently facilitated the researcher's management of categorized data and large volumes of collected information. This process enabled a thorough examination of the participants' attitudes and experiences regarding intercultural learning, intercultural activities, and course evaluations. By quantifying common codes and categories and analyzing data frequency, the researcher was able to assess the consistency of measurements, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of data interpretation (Silverman, 2017).

At the end of the course, data from the post-test questionnaire were coded to assess any development in the participants' ICA levels. The participants' ICA levels across all datasets were then compared to evaluate the degree of enhancement in intercultural awareness. The analysis also aimed

to investigate their attitudes towards intercultural tasks and their evaluations of the course. Along with their anonymous responses from the university's questionnaire, the recurring data related to participants' ICA levels, attitudes, and experiences with intercultural tasks were integrated to explore the development of their intercultural awareness, as well as their perspectives on intercultural tasks and the English for Intercultural Communication course.

Findings

The findings are part of a larger research project. The first section presents the extent of students' enhancement in intercultural awareness through a brief overview of findings derived mainly from the data analysis of the pre- and post-test questionnaires. The second section deals with students' attitudes towards provided intercultural tasks and evaluations of the developed course.

The Extent of the Development of Students' Intercultural Awareness

Due to the participation in the intercultural tasks, there is a significant increase in students' ICA development from basic cultural awareness to advanced cultural awareness. The comparison between the pre- and post-questionnaire results reveals that the vast majority of participants were at level 1 before the course, but a half of them achieve level 2 at the end of the course (see Figure 2). However, when the data from the portfolio was tabulated by counting the numbers of the participants regarding their ICA level throughout the semester (Silverman, 2017), it is found that there is a greater degree of students' ICA development shown in the portfolio, that is, 22 participants can reach level 2.

Figure 2

The Pre- and Post-test Questionnaire Results of Students' ICA Development

	Pre-result	Post-result
■ ICA1	22	12
■ ICA2	2	12
■ ICA3	0	0
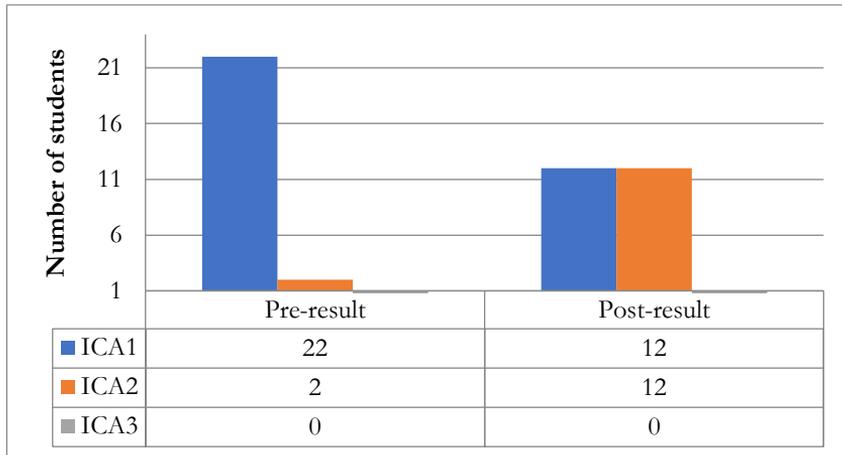
To examine more deeply the effect of applying intercultural tasks on students' ICA development, the pre-test questionnaire results prior to the course reveal that most participants perceived culture as static and inseparable from language usage. The participants believed that culture was constructed and belonged to members of a particular speech community, particularly in the national level (Baker, 2015; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Therefore, they strongly attached English language to native speakers, who became their linguistic and cultural frame of reference in learning English and also in intercultural communication (see extracts).

> S8: [Culture is] The behavior that show about people's thought in each country.

> S12: [My learning aims are] Understanding more about how native speakers use English; what do they think, what are their thoughts, and the way they express themselves.

However, it is evident from the post-questionnaire results that the participants' viewpoints of culture and language learning change after taking the course. Most of them gain the broader concept of culture, and over half of the participants include three elements of culture in their explanations. As they observe the flexibility of language and culture in different contexts, they identify individual differences within the social groups or culture at various levels. Some of them also connect culture to a group's identity (see extracts).

> S17: Culture is products, practices and perspectives which reflect the identities of communities, societies, countries, nationalities or nations around the world.

> S12: I would say communication [is the most important aspects to learn about when studying English]. Language exists mainly for this purpose, so to study English effectively means you must be able to communicate properly. You do not need to have 100% correct grammar, you do not need to be careful of every single word you say (You still need to be careful of SOME words.), but you need to be able to express your thoughts with as least miscommunication as you can. Because using English improperly can cause big troubles, such as using wrong formality levels or communicating with rude gestures or impolite words, we have to be aware of the language usage and cultural context.

Although the participants show their ICA development in terms of cultural understanding and aspects of English language learning and recognize the importance of intercultural awareness in English teaching and learning, one-fourth of the post-responses simultaneously reveal their lack of awareness regarding the types of English students should learn. In spite of being aware of Englishes, they still view British English or American English as the standard varieties to learn, due to the high value they place on native English.

> S21: I might sound a little biased here, but I would say that they should go for an American accent. The United States of America is home to over 240 million English speakers. There, students can find all types of Englishes, which makes the language super inclusive and modern.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the incorporation of intercultural tasks regarding Baker's (2022) ICA model can greatly improve students' awareness of ELF and intercultural communication. Yet, while students' ICA level can be significantly developed from basic cultural understanding to a more advanced cultural awareness, there is a possibility that their intercultural awareness can regress to none. This suggests that students' intercultural awareness of different aspects of language and culture may develop at varying rates, with their knowledge and attitudes possibly not advancing concurrently. However, due to the positive effect of intercultural tasks on students' ICA development, it is important to understand students' thoughts on learning with teaching interventions and the developed course.

Students' Attitudes and Experiences Regarding Learning with Teaching Interventions and Their Evaluations of the Course

All of the participants show their positive attitudes towards provided intercultural tasks over the semester. The vast majority of the participants express their enjoyment and eagerness in cultural learning in class. Not only do they state their development of knowledge, practices, and perspectives, but they also show a strong motivation for their cultural lifelong learning (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

An Extract from S4's Final Reflection

I enjoyed learning and loved to see new areas of the community across the world. I would say that this course makes me feel like I fly away to places I have never been before. It broadened my view and attitude to the endless horizon. I know that I only learned a little—I still have many things to understand. That's the reason why some say that the learning doesn't stop when you end the course! I won't stop learning about cultures. The knowledge that I grasp in these classes will be used to apply to myself and teach others as well. I'm sure everything you taught will benefit everyone sooner or later. Thank you for all the knowledge you taught us in this course and all good memories. (+snacks!) :D

Moreover, it appears that provided intercultural tasks, such as group discussion and presentation, can create good opportunities for the participants to express themselves. Regarding their differences (e.g. hometown and religion), the participants recognize that they can gain new experiences and cultural perspectives from each other when sharing ideas. As they discover language diversity and cultural heterogeneity within social groups, they express positive feedback on attending intercultural activities. Besides an increase in intercultural awareness and learning motivation, the participants show respect and interest in others and experience a sense of pride, particularly when they have the opportunity to share their local culture through task engagement (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

An Extract from S20's Reflection 3

> As Muslims, we're genuinely happy when others appreciate and respect our beliefs and culture. I was so happy to have my friend S10 join the demonstration of salaam. S19 and I even acted out a playful scenario on how to salaam with the opposite gender. We pretended to ride motorcycles and shouted salaam to each other, which was so funny! Everyone was interested and attentive, which made me even happier. I'm honored to be one of the Muslims who help others understand more about my religion.

As a consequence, the participants assert that the intercultural activities can reduce their bias, and cause changes of their attitudes towards themselves and others. A few participants even expressed regret for what they had said, behaved, or thought before (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

An Extract from S12's Reflection 1

> Sometimes I think I am quite neutral for many cultures because it has nothing to do with me, it is their culture and I don't think I have a say in it. But after we discussed about how we look at immigrant and migrant worker, it did occur to me that oh, maybe there's some bad attitudes toward other things that I thought I didn't have. And we discussed about why and what makes us think about things differently. All in all, this class was very fun.

Although there were 13 participants showing a glimpse of negative attitudes towards provided intercultural tasks, their unpleasant feelings were due mostly to their self-expectation. For example, they anticipated successfully performing the activities, especially when preparing or presenting the group project. They reported time limitation or their group members' insufficient contribution when doing the activities, such as in discussion and brainstorming (see Figure 6). Moreover, two participants expressed disappointment because they could not wear the fancy dress costumes in class. One participant also mentioned in her second reflection the difficulty she had in finding group members for in-class activities, which made her feel "awkward and silent for a moment".

Figure 6

An Extract from S21's Final Reflection

> While this final project presentation was still in progress, we faced a lot of difficulties we thought we would not be able to solve. Since our group members all lived in very different places and areas, it was hard enough to look for the perfect place to discuss and brainstorm our ideas. It was double as difficult when we could not find as much time to meet up due to each person's personal lifestyle. However, at last, we did this presentation with our hardest will and really hoped it was beneficial and interesting to the audience.

In addition to the participants' responses above, their attitudes towards intercultural tasks and evaluations of a course without the instructor's interference can be collected from the university's questionnaire. Students were asked to fill out the online evaluation form for each course in the university's system at the end of the semester. Questions within five domains were rated from 1 (the least or strongly disagree) to 5 (the most or strongly agree); and additional comments could also be made. There were 22 students anonymously completing the questionnaire, and they overall expressed a high level of satisfaction across five domains ($\bar{x}$ = 4.88). Nonetheless, if considering each domain, it is noticeable that teaching quality received the highest rating, followed by student assessments ($\bar{x}$ = 4.93), instructors ($\bar{x}$ = 4.92), learning outcomes ($\bar{x}$ = 4.85), and facilities or course administration ($\bar{x}$ = 4.75).

However, it is worth taking the teaching quality domain into consideration since it specifically deals with the course content and methods besides the development of students' 21st-century skills. Although it was the general course evaluation, students' opinions on the course content and teaching methods directly correspond to the integration of Baker's (2022) ICA model into the course. It is reported that students agreed with the appropriateness of the course content ($\bar{x}$ = 4.91) and methods ($\bar{x}$ = 4.95). Students were also of the same view on the promotion of lifelong learning skills ($\bar{x}$ = 4.91), and the development of analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking ($\bar{x}$ = 4.91). They strongly agreed that they had practiced communication skills, presentation skills, and IT usage in the course ($\bar{x}$ = 5.00). The students' high rate of satisfaction can signify the appropriateness, usefulness, and relevance of the course content and intercultural tasks in reference to the ICA and ELF approach in this regard.

Irrespective the course's high achievement, students' additional comments nevertheless showed mixed responses to the course. Apart from two participants' negative comments on the faculty's "*quite old facilities*"

affecting their learning experience, four students gave positive feedback on the instructor's "*fun class with knowledge and very interesting content due to very good teaching preparation and materials from real life experience*", "*high attention to students*", "*good instruction*", and "*clear and easy explanation with many examples and activities and content usefulness*". Therefore, it can be summarized that the participants hold a high level of positive attitudes towards the intercultural tasks and the course on ELF and ICA, with the instructor serving as a learning facilitator.

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study aims to investigate the extent of students' ICA development and to examine their attitudes and experiences in intercultural learning through the application of intercultural tasks based on Baker's (2022) ICA model in a course on English for Intercultural Communication. In correspondence with other researchers (e.g. Kusumaningputri and Widodo, 2018), the classroom-based research reaffirms that the intercultural tasks can help enhance students' ICA development to a greater degree, especially in basic cultural awareness (level 1) and advanced cultural awareness (level 2). However, although the evidence correlates with researchers reporting that the ICA development of learners is non-linear (Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020; Humphreys & Baker, 2021), the current study demonstrates the possibility that students' ICA development may progress across various aspects of language and culture at different rates, with their knowledge and attitudes potentially evolving at varying levels. This also suggests the potential for simultaneous reversion in ICA. While students may reach a higher level of ICA, they can still lack awareness even in the later stages of the course, and this intercultural unawareness does not align with any levels in Baker's (2012) ICA model. Therefore, the findings from a longer timeframe urge the expansion of components in the ICA model and the adoption of varied assessment methods. They also challenge earlier studies (e.g. Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018) by indicating that the participants' intercultural awareness can simultaneously revert from more complex cultural understandings to none. The regression of the participants' intercultural awareness is likely due to their strong beliefs in Standard English and native speakerism, and this ideological impact on ELT of expanding circle countries is commonly noted by researchers (e.g. Fang & Ren, 2018).

Nevertheless, on account of the positive effect of intercultural tasks, it is recommended to use communicative and intercultural activities, such as classroom discussion (Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2015), cultural performance, and presentation regarding students' local cultures in English language classrooms. It is observable that the participants' different experiences were important to their cultural learning because they all became

cultural informants who could provide each other with experience and perspective on different social groups (Baker, 2012b), and hence the participants enjoyed exchanging their ideas on different cultural topics. As there is a high degree of students' intercultural awareness development and positive attitudes towards instructors' feedback on cultural learning, the evidence suggests that learners' written reflections are useful tools for enhancing self-awareness of ELF and intercultural communication, in line with other research (Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020; Lourenço et al., 2018).

In accordance with Baker's (2022) recommendation to reflect and discuss intercultural and transcultural experiences based on local contexts and cultures, the participants see that the tasks offer them a chance to comfortably share their thoughts and gain knowledge from one another. Hence, it is noticeable that this provided space can raise the participants' awareness of both themselves and others. Despite the fact that the participants' negative feelings mostly stem from their self-imposed pressure to perform well, as revealed differently in the current research, their positive attitudes towards the intercultural tasks are similarly found in other studies of ICA practices (e.g. Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Moreover, the participants' gradual ICA enhancement and their commitment to continual cultural exploration puts forward the ideas from earlier research (e.g. Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018) that the intercultural tasks can be applied to minimize learners' cultural stereotypes, facilitate their decolonization as independent language users, and develop their 21st-century skills and lifelong learning capabilities. Regarding the participants' reflections and the result from the university's course evaluation, their great contentment in the instructor together with content and intercultural activities grounded in the ICA model implies that students need to be closely supported by teachers who should regularly review and equip students with the relevant knowledge, awareness, and skills (Baker, 2015). This facilitating role also includes providing continuous feedback on students' cultural learning and experiences. If ELT teachers can provide suitable content and materials in relation to students' context to the utmost, they will have a higher possibility of triggering students' interests, meeting students' needs, and promoting students' sense of pride in their own identities.

Moreover, the participants' prior educational experiences in linguistic learning and limited cultural learning align with previous findings regarding the lack of cultural instruction in English language classrooms (e.g. Abdzadeh & Baker, 2020). Taking a Halloween lesson as an example, it is expected that Halloween will be taught in an EFL classroom using cross-cultural approaches because the festival originates from the West. From an EFL perspective, students should at least engage with the language and culture of Anglophone speakers to enhance their intercultural learning (Humphreys &

Baker, 2021). Yet, many participants report none to a few chances to experience cultural learning in their secondary education. This means there is a tendency for Thai students to learn only a small amount of cultural content, for example, a Christmas festival, because of ELT secondary teachers' personal preferences. From the small number of selected cultural lessons, it can be inferred that only linguistic features of Anglophone speakers are a centre of interest in Thai ELT. Due largely to ELT teachers' preferences, many cultural aspects are often ignored in EFL classrooms. Therefore, the study verifies that ELT teachers are the key factor in intercultural education (Pattaraworathum, 2021), and it is important to promote their intercultural awareness and pedagogy, rather than their knowledge of cultures. Since ELT teachers integrate what they are cognizant of into their teaching (e.g. Sifakis, 2014), their teaching preferences, in particular Standard English and native speakerism ideology can affect students' intercultural awareness and also intercultural education in English language education. Nevertheless, it is confirmed that new cultural learning experience of the ELT pre-service teacher participants can affect the development of their intercultural awareness, which can in turn have a possible impact on their culture teaching practices (Pattaraworathum, 2021). The future cultural instruction can be demonstrated through one of the participants' responses regarding their learning outcomes in the post-questionnaire.

> S14: [I have got] Broader cultural awareness and how to adapt cultures into English teaching [from the course]. I did have a course about World Englishes, but that was in M.4[2] and I did not learn everything. In this course, I have an opportunity to study more about a variety of cultures. I have seen the perspectives I have never thought of before, or something that is hidden in a plain sight yet we cannot pick it up. It is great to see many new things and how to put them into classes. Thai classes have been focusing on solely grammatical structure, and while it is important, cultural insights are also something that should not be left behind. So, I think I have something more in my storage that I can provide to my students in the future.

In this regard, the study strongly supports the application of intercultural tasks based on Baker's (2022) ICA model in English language classroom, and the necessity of promoting students' awareness of ELF (e.g. Boonsuk & Fang, 2024) and intercultural communication, especially in teacher education (Pattaraworathum, 2021) in order to boost intercultural education in a long run. However, although the study addresses the gaps by taking different research instruments over a term time, it was conducted with only one class in one university. Thus, it cannot represent students in other

educational levels and settings. Moreover, the researcher's insider role as a lecturer could potentially impact the participants' behavior in class, possibly affecting the validity of the collected data (Dörnyei, 2007). In agreement with other ICA studies (e.g. Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018), the research calls for more empirical evidence on alternative teaching approaches on ICA. Additional research on ICA practices in other institutions is required, so that the effects on intercultural tasks can be fully investigated and improved upon as necessary to promote cultural lifelong learning in English language education.

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About the Author

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Endnotes

[1]Transcription conventions
    Sno. marks a student participant with a classroom number
    italic marks translate from Thai language
    [ ]   marks an omitted word
[2]M. is an abbreviation of a Thai word Mattayom, which refers to secondary level (Grade 7 to Grade 12). The upper secondary level in Thai education is from Mattayom 4 to Mattayom 6 (Grade 10 to Grade 12).

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Appendix A

The Course Content and Intercultural Tasks in Each Class Period

Class Period	Content	Task
1	Culture and stereotypes	Evaluating local and foreign news about elder care home and pageant beauty, and discussing in a group; Reflection 1
2	Culture, identity, and communication	Discussing the language use in different social groups; going to the university's memorial hall and exploring culture within the university.
3	English as a Global Language	Discussing why English becomes the global language, and exploring the use of English in different domains, including students' use of English.
4	Varieties of Englishes	Exploring and discussing the different varieties of English language, including Englishes in daily life.
5	Intercultural communication and intracultural communication	Evaluating and discussing English used in signs, media, and IT resources; exploring the use of English for intercultural communication and intracultural communication in students' daily life
6	English and social factors	Exploring the effect of social factors on different use of English; creating and presenting 7-day greeting messages in a group.
7	Language in context: formal and informal English	Doing a role play, and analyzing the language use in different given situations; Reflection 2
8	Dangerous English and taboos	Evaluating the language use in comic strips; Evaluating local and foreign news about a change of names.
9	Culture in idioms, proverbs, similes and metaphors	Analyzing the use of idioms, proverbs, similes and metaphors in different languages and cultures, including ELF; Reflection 3
10	Culture as soft power	Evaluating local and foreign news about the cultural products; creating and presenting a mascot of an individual student's hometown.
11	Non-verbal communication	Exploring non-verbal language and the different interpretation; analyzing and evaluating people's message from their behaviour in communication.
12	General social etiquette	Discussing, performing, and practicing different social greetings; Exploring social greetings during the COVID-19 pandemic; Reflection 4
	An extra lesson on Halloween	Performing cultural behaviour, such as wearing a fancy costume, and doing trick or treat.
13	Digital communication	Evaluating false news and online propaganda; evaluating local and foreign news about the use of emoticons and emojis and the different interpretation between social groups; discussing how teachers could teach students to use internet appropriately.
14	Intercultural communication and language teaching	Exploring cultural teaching techniques; evaluating images and content in ELT textbooks; discussing and presenting ideas of how teachers could integrate culture into their English language classroom; Reflection 5
15	A group project	Presenting cultural exploration with their own teaching activities; Submitting a portfolio.

Appendix B

Pre- and Post-test Questions, Adapted From Baker's (2012a) Questionnaire

Direction: Answer 10 questions about English, culture, intercultural communication, and English language teaching.

1. Write your own definition of culture.
    _____

2. What is the relationship between language and culture?
    _____

3. Have you ever heard or experienced of any stereotypes?
    _____

4. What type of English do you think students of English should learn? Why?
    _____

5. Do you think whether an American person will change their accent when living in the UK or not?
    _____

6. Will you change your name when you contact with foreigners? Why?
    _____

7. Have you ever heard of the word soft power? Can you think of any other examples of culture as soft power?
    _____

8. Can you give some examples of non-verbal language with the meaning?
    _____

9. What do you think are the most important aspects to learn about when studying English?
    _____

10. Do you think intercultural awareness should be part of English language teaching and learning?
    _____

Direction (for the pre-test): The last question is about your course expectation.
- Your learning aim(s) for this course
    _____

Direction (for the post-test): The last question is about your learning outcomes.
- What have you got from this course?
    _____

Appendix C

Observation Scheme

dd/mm/yy _____ Time _____ Place _____

Topic _____ Activity _____

Number of students _____

ICA Level 1:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ICA Level 2:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ICA Level 3:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Others:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Photos of Students' Doing an Activity